

Creating Great Events

By Chef Roberta

If you want to be at the top of mind with your guests and media; create an "event" production from the moment your guests arrive. The successful ingredients include the theme and overall design look that has visual elements, entertaining food and the right amount of festive atmosphere. Here is how our event planners create those events, while keeping an eye on the budget.

The Theme is the message or idea that will be carried throughout the event. It may be a single topic, a destination, a period of time, or newest "hot" list. It can be subtle or over the top. The most important aspect is that all of the elements communicate the same theme. With a cohesive theme, your guests enter into a visual world from the moment that they receive the invitation to the last goodbye that creates and sustains an underlying buzz.

First "use what you got". Start with the selection of a venue with the theme in mind, instead of the "how much" criteria. For example, does your local country club have a "Gone with Wind" ambiance with big Southern pillars and the grandeur of 2nd story winding staircases? A Great Gatsby theme is perfect for a local Train Depot. Historical churches and museums have magnificent Spanish courtyards. Botanical parks can easily be converted to tropical oasis. More importantly, if your venue enhances your theme, your budget can be reallocated for the entertainment and food.

Secondly, rethink the entertainment and music and when it is scripted into the event. A few trends that we see are the TV Reality genre which is driving themes to be more genuine. So instead of following the traditional cocktail hour, dinner, dancing drill, add an entertainment script so your guests feel that they are part of the show from the moment they arrive. Instead of a 10 person orchestra for the cocktail hour, consider a violin quartet (the music script) with strolling violists (the entertainment script). Add a cappella choir to greet your guests with additional singers who stroll through the cocktail hour. Consider Tango or Salsa dance troupes that mingle and dance to the background of a Spanish band. Create a visual media documentary with plasma screens and techno rock music and create small flash mobs with character actors. Add interactive scripts with living statutes, palm readers, airbrush tattoo artists and photo cutout stations.





Country boil, carving stations for BBQ ribs and a live oyster shucking bar. The guests were able to interact with the chefs in action. Another idea is to consider adding a different method of cooking, for example, a wood burning fire pit that cooks food in a novel way that will fascinate your guests.

You can also just create a “menu nod” to the theme. For our 9.11 Tribute to Heroes luncheon for Manatee County Emergency Operations, we created an American Parfait for dessert, white chocolate mousse with raspberries and blueberries, but served in contemporary parfait cups.

Finally, the catering staff can be dressed in theme appropriate costumes. At the All Children’s Hospital Annual fund raiser, our strolling waiters were costumed in Moroccan shirts and fez caps to compliment the Casa Blanca theme. We utilized serving trays that were tiled mirrors and diamond shaped crystals for that Moroccan theme.

Finally, select a caterer that can create themed menus that will spike your guests’ enthusiasm throughout the entire event. A menu theme is based upon complimentary ingredients for that period of time, the genre, the geographical area and the culture, and fits within our contemporary palettes.

We recreated the first class passengers menu for the Titanic opening exhibition. On April 14, 1912, the passengers dined on a ten course dinner including Consomme Olga, poached salmon with mousseline, lamb with mint sauce and pate de fois gras. To keep within the confines of the theme and insure that all of the guests ate, we re-created these classics. The Consomme Olga (boiled veal stock) was converted to pan seared scallops with a brown butter drizzle.. The salmon mousseline became grilled salmon lollipops served with horseradish crème fraiche. The lamb with mint sauce was served with a mint and cranberry relish;. Pate de fois gras was served with pan seared apple Confit. This menu kept the buzz alive, the foodies were ecstatic and the cohesiveness of the theme kept the buzz alive.



Another catering concept is the food preparation that is a performance itself. For the MD Anderson Cancer benefit, the Old Florida cuisines included a Low

By choosing the right venue, utilizing scripted entertainment and adding themed menus, your event will be a success, that night and for a long time afterwards!



We are a contemporary, full service catering and event design company. We offer services for large galas (over 1,000) to intimate parties of 50, from Naples to Tampa Bay. We have been awarded the 2011 Hot List for Tampa Bay, as well as 2009, 2010 and 2011 recipients of the Brides Choice awards from Martha Stewart’s Wedding Wire that represent the top 5% nationwide in wedding professionals. We are approved caterers at the finest Tampa, St. Pete and Sarasota venues. Contact us at 941.312.0000 or www.MilanCatering.com