

Janet and Jim Israel, owners of Culinary Concepts, prepare for an event at the College of Physicians of Philadelphia

EVENTS

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or 'out.' I try to get a feel for what the client likes, and then I create the look and feel they want for their menu. If I am given carte blanche, I work on reinventing foods and their flavors."

"For example," he continued, "at a dessert station there will be cardamom battered, thick-cut mini-French toast prepared tableside with accompaniments that include ice cream and honey pepper watermelon salsa."

"The general public palate has really expanded, and we get to try many different things. Small portion presentations allow us to provide a wide variety of flavors and can make the food a real focus at any event. This concept is one that has been around for a couple of years, but it is being taken to the extreme with mini-burgers, mini-mango trifles, and Indian chicken vindaloo salad served in votive cups. The list of options in this area is virtually endless," added Israel.

Special Effects, Lighting

Steve Wildemann, vice president of rental and staging for Advanced Staging Productions, offered some advice pertaining to lighting and effects used for spectacular events.

Advanced Staging Productions provides audio, video and lighting services for business meetings and special events across the country. By integrating a company's business objectives with their experienced professionals and state-of-the-art equipment, they are able to create dynamic and successful events.

According to Wildemann, to ensure such success, it is important to understand an event's overall design and the extent to which it will utilize lighting. When selecting a host venue, for example, ceiling height can be critical because the lighting crew must have the ability to rig - or fly - the lighting

system in order to use the lighting to its fullest capability.

"Where the lights are positioned in relation to the subject being lit," Wildemann explained, "and the angle and distance from where the light is originating really dictates what you can do and the quality of the lighting and the design itself. Many architecturally beautiful venues present obstacles in being able to do this, so it is important that you weigh one against the other."

The next important thing, he noted, is the availability of power in the venue. For a planner looking to put on a spectacular light show, they should make sure that the venue can provide the additional power that will be needed, otherwise they will likely have to incur the cost of renting a generator.

Wildemann also suggested that planners should be cognizant of why they

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With the ever-increasing use of digital technology, especially digital imagery, the events industry seemingly has no bounds.

With regard to what's coming up in the future, Steve Wildemann, Advanced Staging, said that the possibilities are endless. "HD (high-definition) video is just a start, and I foresee a number of new products coming out that will capitalize on the digital revolution."

are using lights in the first place. Is it just for creating ambience, décor, or a special stage look? Or are they video-taping or broadcasting a videoconference during the event? Do they need or want special effect lighting, and if so, to what end? Also, do they want to dazzle their audience, or simply make the experience comfortable for them so they will be able to see everything that is going on?

Understanding the end goal of the use of lighting and special effects will help the designer to cater to the planner's specific needs and budget.

As for who is "going all out" when it comes to creative and spectacular events, Wildemann said, "We are finding that the groups who are spending the most money on spectacular and creative events are the pharmaceutical companies, especially where their sales force is concerned. Most of our high-end light shows, entertainment and scenic designs are utilized in pharmaceutical launches or sales meetings. Many of the non-profit events or awards galas are increasingly using lighting to set the mood for their event, as they try to capitalize on the look of the unique venues they are booking."

With regard to where special effects and lighting is headed, Wildemann said his feeling is that "as we trend toward a younger audience, the special effects and multimedia aspect of events will continue to grow in importance. I can only imagine what the world will look like when today's teenagers, with their total immersion in the world of technology, will be in our positions just a few years from now."

In terms of "what's hot," Wildemann said that Advanced Staging has seen the advancement of LED lights as "the next big thing." Lightweight and using little power as compared to conventional fixtures, LED is able to color mix smoothly across the entire light spectrum, yet they are incredibly versatile and able to deliver a powerful punch for the dollar.

Wildemann also noted, "While not really lighting or an effect, we have used the Encore wide-screen, blended video system to create spectacular back-

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grounds and palettes upon which a client can present their typical video and data content. It can replace traditional hard-set scenic design and give the user an infinite number of flexible looks from which to choose that can give an event a fresh, dynamic look."

With the ever-increasing use of digital technology, especially digital imagery, the events industry seemingly has no bounds. With regard to what's coming up in the future, Wildemann said that the possibilities are endless. "HD (high-definition) video is just a start, and I foresee a number of new products coming out that will capitalize on the digital revolution."

Linens, Décor

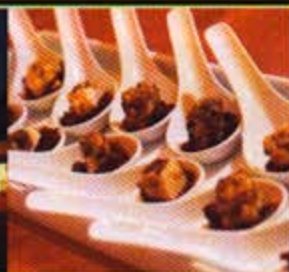
Norm Longman and Ken Kelk founded Choice Party Linens, Inc. in 1991 to provide the Greater Philadelphia hospitality community with a wide variety of quality party linens at reasonable prices. Choice has since become a pre-eminent party linen rental company in the Greater Philadelphia area, and has a delivery service area that includes eastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland.

For those putting together a special event, choosing appropriate linens and decor can be a challenge. Ken Kelk said, "First, we find out what type of atmosphere or theme they are trying to create. What are their expectations? Do they have any budget constraints? Also, the table scheme and size are very important. We always ask clients what size and shape table they will be covering, and what drop length they would prefer."

He noted, too, that it is important to be familiar with the host venue. The room decor, flooring and lighting are all important considerations when designing a special event. Tables and chairs are important, too. "You may not be able to work with the tables and chairs provided by the venue," Kelk said. "You may need to rent them elsewhere. Choice Party Linens provides free samples of linens and chair covers to clients prior to their event to ensure all parties are happy with the items they have chosen."

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