



MAKING THE MOST OF BEING A HOST

ENTERTAINING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Today the phrase “dinner party” can conjure up images of a bygone era: a **MAD MEN**-like picture of kitchen aprons, hors d’oeuvre trays, and a table full of fine silver place settings. Hosting an in-home gathering of family or friends can be enough to intimidate even the most kitchen-savvy among us. These days, who has time to send out mailed invitations, dress up your dining room décor, and plan and cook a multi-course meal? The good news is, ‘entertaining’ has evolved to mirror our busy modern lifestyles. It’s still fun to put on a party with plenty of panache — and you don’t have to be a domestic god or goddess to do it. All it takes is a little forethought, some fine food, and a guest list full of your favorite people!

Serving Up Social Grace

When it comes to playing the part of a polite host or hostess, no one knows more than the Emily Post Institute. After publishing her first book of etiquette advice in 1922, Post created the Institute in 1946, and today her legacy is carried on by subsequent generations of her family, including her great-great-granddaughter, Lizzie, who recently contributed to the 18th edition of *Emily Post’s Etiquette* as well as *Great Get-Togethers: Casual Gatherings and Elegant Parties at Home*.



Photos courtesy of Private Palate

spotlight

Please see “Making the Most of Being a Host” on page 4



food for thought

by David Rolston
President and CEO

The “complication equation”

Think about the things you dreamed of having. As a young person, your goals probably included marriage, children, and a home. Over the years, you might have dreamed of a red convertible sports car, or that boat for weekends on the lake, or a second home getaway — or all of the above.

If you are like most people, you originally visualized these things in terms of one exquisite moment: you’re carrying your wife over the threshold of your new home, or playing with the kids. You’re cruising along in the sports car with the top down, watching the speedometer climb, feeling the thrill of the wind in your hair. Or (depending on the boat), you’re sailing into a beautiful sunset, landing that record muskie, or hosting friends for a get-together. It might be a “compound” moment as you drive the sports car to your weekend getaway where you keep the boat.

Please see “food for thought” on page 5

on the menu

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Weathering Rough Waters

PREPARING YOUR FOODSERVICE OPERATION FOR A STORM OR FLOOD

With images of the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy fresh in our minds, now is a good time to consider the fact that such tragedies can happen anytime, and to anyone. Between Sandy and the multiple recent episodes of flooding throughout the Midwest, it's worth remembering that a deluge of water can be an especially insidious form of damage to facilities in our industry — and to start thinking about what *you* can do to protect *your* business.

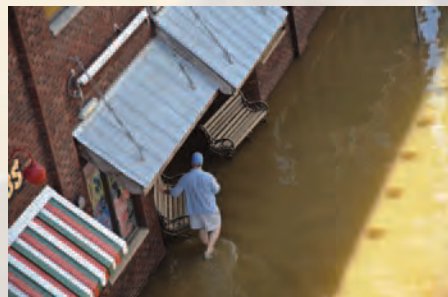


Photo courtesy of Daniel Cima/American Red Cross

“Floods are the most common form of natural disaster,” notes Jim Judge, a Certified Emergency Manager with the American Red Cross (ARC), “and up to 40% of affected businesses never recover. The two main reasons for that are a lack of preparedness and too little, or no, flood insurance.” According to the National Restaurant Association’s website, “Emergency preparedness is crucial.”

Make Hay While the Sun Shines

“The single greatest thing you can do,” Jim tells us, “is to make ready well in advance. Assess your risk, and create a plan of action.” The ARC recently released a quick, easy, and free online program to help you do exactly that. ReadyRating.org can help evaluate vulnerability to a range of natural disasters and other scenarios and can also help design customized plans of action in the event of an emergency. “Another great site,” Jim continues, “is Floodsmart.gov. They can help with assessment and recovery, as well as putting you in touch with resources in your local area.”

The NRA makes some valuable points about having a plan in place for closing down your



Photo courtesy of Vincent Kraus/American Red Cross

operation quickly, including reducing perishable inventory (i.e. clean out walk-ins, ice bins, etc.), securing equipment, and removing critical business records and valuables. Doing this can reduce damage and facilitate re-opening. Keep all of your most important documents (payroll, taxes, insurance policies, etc.) backed up — either on a mobile USB drive or through an online service.

When the Clouds Roll In

As with any urgent situation, the number one concern is always the people around you. The first piece of advice the NRA offers is that “the safety of employees and guests is first and foremost.” For this reason, foodservice operations should consider closing their doors in advance of any severe weather. This will allow customers and employees time to get to, or stay in, a safe environment.

Based on Jim’s experience, “Once businesses know the weather is going to be really and truly severe, the best thing for owners and managers to do is follow their prepared plan — that may include getting furniture to a higher place, or, if there’s time, transporting small equipment to another location — and ride out the storm. Those operators who’ve made ready for such a situation don’t panic — they wait to see how the flooding plays out, and prepare to assess the damage after it’s over.”

After the Storm

“In the best case scenario,” Jim says, “there may be no damage at all. But in the worst case, you’ve got water and/or sediment in your building. If that’s the case, get out the insurance

policy and start to think in the long-term. You can’t take chances with food safety, and all flood water is contaminated. When in doubt, throw it out.”

If there is no immediate food safety danger, you may consider donating whatever can be saved to local recovery efforts.



Photos courtesy of Gene Dailey/American Red Cross

Beyond inventory, the most urgent thing is to assess damage to your facility. The NRA recommends “documenting any damage in photos and/or video” as soon as possible, for insurance purposes. Jim advises, “From removing water and sediment, to getting your doors back open for business, the insurance companies are vital in recovering from any serious damage. Or, if the damage to your restaurant is not that severe, it may just be a matter of waiting for the lights to come back on.”

Jim closes with the same wisdom he offered at the start: “It may not always be possible to prevent tragedy, but by *preparing* for the worst, you can be more educated while you’re hoping for the best. An ounce of prevention, made while the sun is shining, can be worth more than a pound of cure after the clouds have rolled through.”



See www.redcross.org, www.restaurant.org, readyrating.org, and floodsmart.gov for a variety of useful flood-related resources. ■

the big tickets



TRADE EXHIBITIONS

February 2013

- NAFEM
February 7 - 9
Orange County Convention Center
Orlando, FL, USA
Booth #1612

March 2013

- International Pizza Expo
March 19 - 21
Las Vegas Convention Center
Las Vegas, NV, USA
Booth #1841

Hi Folks! Have you heard
the crazy rumors about me?
Find out the truth by
following me on Facebook!

See you at NAFEM,
Booth 1612!

Your pal,
Billy



Flavors and Fun, By Way of Old Italy *and* Old New York



New York City,
New York, USA



specialty 
of the house

“**N**ew Yorkers are always looking for the next ‘new’ restaurant to discover,” says Il Vagabondo owner Ernest Vogliano, Sr., “and in the nearly fifty years I’ve been working here, we’ve been re-discovered more than a few times.” The restaurant’s continuing popularity is a testament to both its delicious Italian entrées and to its casual, fun atmosphere — helped in no small part by its classic, all-wooden bar, open kitchen, and full-sized backroom bocce ball court.

Vogliano and his partners have owned the three brownstone buildings that hold Il Vagabondo since 1965, though the restaurant has a history that extends back to post-prohibition New York. “I grew up around here,” Vogliano explains, “from the days when the Upper East Side of Manhattan was mostly full of big Italian families.” Il Vagabondo has stayed true to its ethnic roots, serving simple, hearty Northern Italian fare such as prosciutto-stuffed mushrooms, homemade manicotti and gnocchi, and Chicken Marsala. Their Veal Parmigiana even earned a spot on celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse’s show, “The Best Thing I Ever Ate.”

“Il Vagabondo is old fashioned, old New York,” Vogliano says. For tourists and locals alike, that’s a style that’s always worth discovering — over and over again.

For more information on Il Vagabondo — or to reserve the bocce court today — go to www.ilvagabondo.com. ■



GNOCCHI (potato dumpling)

8 servings

Ingredients:

8-10 Potatoes – Idaho or Russet

2 Eggs

1/2 Cup (90 g) Parmigiano Reggiano
cheese, grated (additional Ricotta
cheese optional)

2 Cups (199 g) Flour

Salt

White Pepper

Instructions:

Boil potatoes (with skin on) in salted water until cooked. Remove from water, peel skin, and mash potatoes gradually, adding eggs, cheese and flour. This will create a bread-like dough. Knead the dough for 10 minutes, then roll mixture into a rope-like shape. Flour hands, then cut dough into 1" pieces and roll into balls. Cover with additional flour to keep from sticking together and place on a floured surface until ready to cook.

In a larger saucepan, bring water to boil. Drop gnocchi into boiling water in small batches. Gnocchi are cooked when they rise to the top of the water. Remove gnocchi, drain, place on platter, cover with favorite sauce and sprinkle with grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese.

HOW TO “get invited” TO DINNER PARTIES

Dinner parties — whether intimate gatherings of four or major events of 40 or more — can provide additional profits for your foodservice operation, and introduce your food and service to a newer, wider audience. Here are a few hints for attracting — and keeping — new business:

- **Let people know what you can do.** A simple, “Call on us for your next dinner party!” on your menu or table tent, website and/or Facebook site, and/or an advertisement in local magazines can build your reputation as more than a dining establishment.
- **Offer menus online specially tailored to dinner parties.** Quick and easy to create, these show customers you’re serious about offering more than take-out.
- **Provide real services to your customers.** Connect with local rental firms who can be trusted to do a good job with chinaware, linens, tents, flowers, etc., that your customer can easily access.
- **Make sure you have sufficient equipment and well-trained staff to do an excellent job.** Don’t depend on the host’s kitchen — or hands. You may want to bring your own foodwarmers, other equipment, and any personnel you need.
- **Be flexible.** Don’t limit yourself to going “by the book.” Offer to work closely with hosts to tailor the food you make to the event they’re hosting.
- **Don’t bite off more than you can chew.** Be realistic about the size of event you can handle. Be upfront with the customer, and prepared to recommend another service for larger parties. Remember: referring business to others among your contacts can benefit you down the line.

You may want to start small, but as you grow, you’ll find that, as long as people entertain, good food and service — like the kind you have to offer — will always be in demand. ■

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“The first step to a successful party is one of the easiest,” Lizzie tells us, “just be yourself. Start by planning the party you would enjoy going to — your guests are, after all, *your* family and friends.” According to the etiquette expert, this can include more casual styles of gathering: “Overall, there’s been a cultural shift to more relaxed, laidback forms of entertaining. That’s not because we care less about our guests — in fact it shows people are more comfortable, and we don’t feel the need to overcomplicate things.” As a result of this loosening of the rules, the host has more options in what kind of party to plan — from asking guests to bring side dishes or their favorite beverage, to the possibility of teaming up with a friend and co-hosting a party — at home *or* out on the town.



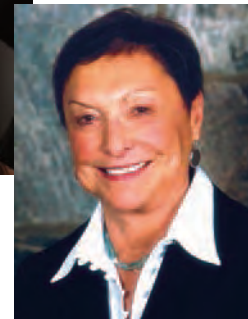
Reaching Out to Restaurants

As early as 1980, the *New York Times* reported that rents in the city were getting so high (and apartments so small) that entertaining at home was no longer always an option. As Lizzie enlightens us, “An option that’s become more common, especially for singles, is hosting a party at a restaurant or incorporating a dining destination as either a prelude or after-party.” In many cases, restaurants are more than happy to plan menus in cooperation with the host (see sidebar).

If you have the space to host, restaurants still offer extra help supplying or supplementing a meal with take-out, delivery, or catering. In addition, some foodservice companies allow private parties to rent equipment and supplies. Lizzie Post mentions the contrast with dinner parties of old: “These days, so few people own the traditional ‘wedding china’ or silver flatware. Those kinds of things can be borrowed, bought, or even rented.”



Chef Britta Kramer



Abigail Kirsch

Other Party Professionals

Another choice, for those with the resources, is to take the pressure off preparation by employing a food professional. According to personal chef Britta Kramer, owner and operator of Private Palate, “Clients frequently ask me to help them put on a party in their own kitchen. Whether I’m teaching a hands-on ‘cooking party’ for a group of friends, or simply preparing the meal, having a professional there to lend a hand can lighten my client’s workload, leaving them free to spend more time with their guests.” Chef Britta has assisted with everything from children’s birthday parties, to romantic couples’ dinners, and even a bachelorette party — all in the comfort of her clients’ homes.



Photo courtesy of Private Palate

Abigail Kirsch, a New York-based caterer, agrees that “dinner parties” can take a lot of different forms, and can include anyone you want: “The host is in control of what drives the party — the dishes on the table, or the people enjoying them. For a small, intimate group, you’ll want to put the focus on the food and prepare something unique and interesting. For a larger group, you might consider even a buffet style, which makes the socializing more flexible. These days, nearly anything goes — as long as your guests enjoy themselves.” Kirsch is not only speaking from decades of experience in catering — she also put the focus on the food in a recent book she co-authored with the Culinary Institute of America, called simply *Entertaining*.

Tailoring to Many Modern Tastes

One thing Lizzie, Abigail, and Chef Britta all cautioned was the increased presence of dining restrictions. Looking back on her experience, Abigail recalls, “Whether it’s a dining preference (as with vegans and pescetarians), a religious practice against pork or other ingredients, or a food allergy to nuts or gluten — there’s definitely a need for all



Photo courtesy of Private Palate

party hosts to both request that information from their guests, and to think through their culinary plans for the evening.” Lizzie Post says there’s no restrictions on how you ask — it’s important enough to be a part of how you invite your guests to the party: “Whether you’re calling, texting, creating an Evite or an event on Facebook — when your guests RSVP, be certain to find a subtle or private way of confirming with them what

they can and cannot eat.” Again, if you’re employing a foodservice professional or restaurant to assist in the food planning, they can frequently offer a wide range of field-tested dishes, as allergies and restrictions are something they deal with on a daily basis.

Find Your Focus: Your Friends and Family

Chef Britta notes, “Whether my clients are asking me to prepare something, or learning together with friends how to cook for themselves, the real moment when an event is successful is when they look around the table and see their friends or family enjoying themselves.”



Photo courtesy of Private Palate

Throwing a “dinner party” doesn’t always mean polishing the silver and spending all day in the kitchen. In the twenty-first century, that’s just one among many options for how to host an evening at home. As Abigail Kirsch points out, “Ultimately, the goal of any good host is simple: offering a pleasant and memorable evening for their guests.



“However, keep in mind,” she jokes, “that even with modern conveniences, there’ll still be dishes to wash after it’s done.”

(Note: For more information on the contributors featured in this article, please visit www.emilypost.com, www.privatepalate.com, and www.abigailkirsch.com.) ■

“food for thought” from page 1

Each of these moments (and many others depending on your personal interests) reflects the pinnacle of achievement — a sense of contentment and satisfaction that comes with making a dream come true. Unfortunately, just about every dream comes with strings attached. Couples sometimes disagree; houses — even dream homes — require maintenance, upkeep, and tax payments; kids are wonderful, but if you’ve ever had them, I don’t have to say any more. Cars inevitably need repair and parts and, the more unique the automobile, the higher the price. Boats have been defined as “a hole in the water in which you pour money,” and second homes, well, please revisit the comment on houses.

The complications that derive from any and all dreams and goals rarely show themselves at first — but they inevitably turn up. As a trained engineer, I have tried to apply some analysis to this and have derived what I refer to as the “complication equation” which is expressed as $H + E + S = C^3$ where H equals number of hearts (people plus pets), E equals the number of engines, and S represents the number of structures. C is compounded by a factor of three because

complications rarely occur singularly and can complicate each other, leading to even more complexity. An excellent example of this might occur when you blow the engine of the sports car just as you reach your second home. On calling back to share the news with your wife, she tells you that your daughter needs braces. Then, you smell smoke.

Although my equation may never be as famous as Dr. Einstein’s $E = mc^2$, it will certainly be understood, at least in spirit, by many more people.

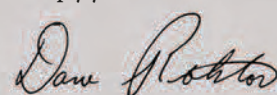
The good news is that the C factor tends to rise and then decrease as we age. As young people and into middle age, we frequently “bite off more than we can chew.” Over time, however, kids leave home — at least for a while — thereby reducing the H variable, and we acquire enough wisdom to know that it is time to downsize. In sorting out the things that are really important to us and discarding some of the others, we can hopefully reduce the complexities to the point where we can retain some semblance of control.

This does not mean that we will ever be free from all complexities, as that is characteristic

of life — especially in 21st century America. In fact, even such an eloquent equation as my own may be somewhat dated, as it does not take into account the ever-increasing number of gadgets that the electronics industry continues to produce in an effort to drive society to the brink of madness, even as they supposedly improve our lives.

In every civilization, since ancient times, there have been certain people who have renounced all earthly goods and retired to a cave or monastery to live the simplest life possible and meditate on weighty matters. For myself, I can only say that I love my wife and children, enjoy our home and our cottage at the lake, and love to ride my motorcycle or go out in the boat. There are times, however, when — just for a fleeting second — the thought of the monastery holds some appeal.

Simply yours,



David Rolston
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Think *Outside the Box* with 's Eye-Catching

Flav-R-Savor[®] Curved Display Case

Sometimes straying from the *straight* and narrow can be a good thing — especially when you're highlighting your best selling products in the Flav-R-Savor[®] Convected Air Curved Display Case from Hatco! Whether you're looking for a new point of sale for hot food, or to maximize some prime countertop real estate, these exceptional — and exceptional-looking — convected air display cases are an attractive alternative.

Perfect for applications from C-stores and deli stations to sports stadiums and cafeterias, the latest Flav-R-Savor model continues the long tradition of quality food holding technology, with added benefits such as:

- Uniquely appealing curved glass design,
- Stylish Swanstone[®] shelf in one of four colors,
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For more information on how Hatco can help *round out* your product display, contact your representative or visit www.hatcocorp.com today! ■



product profile