

OH, WHAT FUN!

December events that added extra holiday sparkle to make spirits bright

BY SARA PEREZ WEBBER

Events that take place during the holiday season have an extra bit of revelry built in—whether they're celebrating the holidays or another happy occasion that happens to coincide with the season. The following events took full advantage of their calendar date, warming guests with good food, festive décor and much merriment.

A butler-passed hors d'oeuvre at D'Amico Catering's December wedding at the Machine Shop in Minneapolis featured pickled beet, goat cheese, pistachio dust and wasabi.





A Warm Winter Wedding

D'Amico Catering, Minneapolis ●●● damicocatering.com



WEDDING PLANNER

Rita Swanson with Premier Planning Services

●●● premierplanningservices.com

VENUE

Machine Shop in Minneapolis

●●● machineshopmpls.com

D'Amico Catering helped guests warm up on a December Minneapolis night at this elegant wedding, which glittered with gold and ivory. The décor was tailored to fit not only the season, but the event space as well; Machine Shop is an industrial, historic venue in Minneapolis, and copper and slate details complemented the space.

"Our goal was to create a seasonal menu with touches of comfort and elegance," says Rachel Bruzek, senior creative event and trend specialist at D'Amico Catering. "This client loves our signature miso-glazed sea bass and seafood, so it was an important focus of the dinner and hors d'oeuvres. We had a broad range of palates to accommodate in this event, and this menu accomplished that."



Butler-passed hors d'oeuvres included pickled beet, goat cheese, pistachio dust and wasabi; housemade ricotta cheese tartlet with duck confit and fig; Korean BBQ pork belly slider with pickled vegetables; and mini Maryland-style crab cakes. The first course of the plated dinner was a mixed green salad with caramelized apples, toasted walnuts and a hard cider dressing with freshly baked breads. Main course selections included miso-glazed sea bass with potato puree and grilled asparagus; short rib of beef with sweet balsamic glaze, Yukon Gold potato puree and Brussels sprouts; and angel hair pasta cakes with fire-roasted vegetables and spicy tomato jam. The wedding cake was banana with caramel mousse, chocolate ganache and white chocolate buttercream. Before venturing home, guests could choose from a late-night snack buffet of miniature blueberry pancake stacks, BLT egg sandwiches and waffles with fried chicken sliders.

TOP THREE AND MIDDLE LEFT PHOTOS BY LA VIE PHOTOGRAPHY MINNEAPOLIS; MIDDLE AND BOTTOM PHOTOS BY OLIVE JUICE STUDIOS

TOP PHOTO BY NOAH WOLF PHOTOGRAPHY; BOTTOM TWO PHOTOS BY LA VIE PHOTOGRAPHY MINNEAPOLIS



From Glittery Gala to Festive Family Fun

Albrecht Events,
Lansdale, Pa.
●●● albrechtevents.com

CATERER
Brûlée Catering
●●● brulee-catering.com

Challenged for nine consecutive years by the CEO of an organization to produce a holiday party for clients and employees that is more memorable than the previous celebrations, Albrecht Events created a two-day event in December 2015 that transitioned from swank sophistication in the evening to whimsical wonder the next morning.

The event took place in Franklin Square in the heart of historic Philadelphia, where the annual Electrical Spectacle light show inspired Albrecht Events to weave illumination throughout the entire experience, leaving more than 200 guests with a cheerful holiday glow. On a Saturday night, guests (who didn't know the location or theme of the event until the moment of arrival) were greeted by illuminated butterflies, guiding them to a tent draped in gold metallic, with a partial clear ceiling to allow the exterior light show and stars to add to the ambiance. After holiday spirits and appetizers from



Brûlée Catering, the gold drape was opened to dramatically reveal the dinner space—a theatrical black box, featuring a fiber optic curtain with programmable twinkle lights on the ceiling, so guests dined “under the stars.” Entertainment included dancers from iLuminate—wearing glow-in-the-dark costumes—and a light show that pulsed to the beat of the band's music.

Overnight, the Albrecht team transformed the tent into a bright and festive space to host guests and their families the next morning for brunch. Kid-friendly activities included a giant coloring wall, play areas with mini cardboard ice cream trucks, a photo booth with coordinating themed props, and unlimited sweet treats. Children received gifts from the company, and Willy Wonka characters led a bubble-gum-blowing contest.



“Our event designers drew inspiration from the twinkle of the holiday light show, and expanded the concept of illumination to dazzle attendees throughout the evening, then transformed the space into a Willy Wonka-themed brunch for families the next morning,” says Ashley Albrecht, president of Albrecht Events. “The guests were amazed, surprised and entertained, so it was a success!”





Stylish Sweet Sixteen

Elegant Affairs, Glen Cove, N.Y. ●●● elegantaffairscaterers.com



EVENT DESIGNER
Sincerely Yours Events, Inc.
●●● syeventsinc.com

VENUE
Haute Durvo in Roslyn, N.Y.
●●● hautedurvo.com

CAKE
The Cake Don
●●● thecakedoncreations.com

Elegant Affairs helped pull out all the stops for a winter-chic sweet 16 party in December for a lucky girl with a Christmas Eve birthday.

The caterer for the event, Elegant Affairs created a menu that included a vegan sushi bar, “which was not only delicious but visually stunning,” says owner Andrea Correale. Featuring a variety of vegetables, sprouts, greens and rice, the vegan sushi bar is an “impressive and unexpected” station that Correale offers to her



clients in the New York market, where, she notes, healthy food options are a must.

At the Texas Smokehouse Taco Bar, guests could choose from 16-hour slow-smoked BBQ pulled pork, slow-smoked dry-rubbed pulled chicken, seared mahi mahi and braised short rib, as well as cilantro-scented corn, black bean and tomato salad, hard and soft taco shells, and 16 side sauces and condiments. Among the desserts were s'mores pipettes.

Sincerely Yours Events (whose owner is the mother of the birthday girl) came up with a designer theme, with Coco Chanel as the focus. The Chanel logo appeared throughout the event space—even evoked by the backs of the black chairs. An oversized wall decal featured Coco Chanel's famous quote: “A girl should be two things—classy and fabulous.” The show-stopping cake by The Cake Don featured a three-dimensional Chanel boutique scene.



Successful Seasonal Launch

Innovate Marketing Group, Pasadena, Calif. ●●● innovatemkg.com



CATERER
Panda Catering
 ●●● pandacatering.com

VENUE
OUE SkySpace in Los Angeles
 ●●● oue-skyspace.com

To launch a high-end product in the U.S. market last December, Innovate Marketing Group emphasized the color of the season—red—which also happened to be the brand's color.

The Moutai Sensorium event at the OUE SkySpace in downtown Los Angeles introduced the luxury Moutai liquor to the U.S. at an exclusive VIP dinner. Innovate Marketing Group created an “East Meets West” design that included red up-lights adorning the perimeter, alternating white and black Louis chairs, red linens, gold plate settings and bold centerpieces.

As guests entered the event, they were greeted by ambassadors in traditional Chinese qipaos and served a mixed cocktail highlighting the spirit of Moutai. During the cocktail reception, guests learned about the history and distillation process, and experienced Moutai through all five senses:

- Taste—A highly curated Chinese menu was created by Panda Catering to pair Moutai perfectly with each entrée to bring out the flavors of the drink. The plated dinner menu included crab meat



salad with mountain yam, golden lobster tail, miso sea bass, Peking duck with scallions, and more.

- Touch—Guests could feel the sorghum wheat and activate a short video about the distillation process by placing the sorghum into a distillation filter.

- Smell—Sorghum and the extract Moutai fragrance was available for guests to smell as the aroma lingered in the air at the small activation station.

- Sight—The Moutai Mountains in China's Guizhou province where Moutai is made was projected on the windows overlooking the downtown Los Angeles skyline. The scenes changed throughout the evening.

- Sound—Traditional Chinese music from the Guizhou province played gently in the background.

“Through the Moutai Sensorium, Western elites were introduced to the most sought-after liquor in the world and had the opportunity to interact with the brand at all different levels,” says Amanda Ma, CEO of Innovate Marketing Group. “The food menu was an essential element of the evening, as we needed the food to showcase the festivities and to pair beautifully with the exquisite drink. Throughout the night we received so many compliments on the menu and all the plates returned to the chef empty.” ●