

# THE CLAIRE DIARIES

rx  
for Catering<sup>llc</sup>

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www.rxforcatering.com

WOW – it has been almost a year since I have written a diaries – let me explain why. In 2009 my father has been ill with cancer and died this past December. My priorities this past year was to make a living and spend quality time with dad. He died on the front side of Christmas and people say how awful that is when Christmas rolls around you will remember your father dying. I am tickled by their concern because we are Jewish, December 25 is just the day we volunteer to work so our Christian friends can have off.

Drum roll please – things I have learned the past 9 months!

The last time I wrote a diaries my web designer Tiffany had a new addition to her family. A Great Dane puppy. As of Jan 23 she has another new addition but this time isn't in the form of an oversized puppy. It is on this cold winter day that we said hello to Tiffany's first child – daughter Ivy. May the experience of being a mom be as beautiful as the websites you create.



Read **“The Unspoken Event”** – I wrote a short article published in January issue of *Plan Your Meetings Magazine* of what it is like planning my father's funeral from an event planners perspective.

<http://www.planyourmeetings.com/advice/2010/01/the-unspoken-event%C2%A0january-2009-morsel/>

Things I have learned as executor of my father's estate:

- Being in charge where I have the final say is definitely a weird feeling and this is coming from someone who is used to being in charge.
- Female executors are called executrixes – I say just call me “Trixie”.
- Find out lawyer fees BEFORE you dive into anything. Some lawyers charge a % of the estate and if the will and paperwork is in order then financially this isn't the way to go.
- Being the adult child to be the one to go through my fathers belongings continues to be a very intimate experience – it is like I get extra time to be with him.
- You never know someone until you go through their things. I discovered my father had a passion for stamps – all 10,000 of them that at the end of the day have no value. But I will have postage for the rest of my life.



- Force the terminally ill loved one to discuss their assets and go see a lawyer together so the executor has a clear understanding of the task at hand prior to the death.
- Reading letters that my father wrote more than 50 years ago to his parents has made me realize the “art” of handwriting a letter is sadly gone.

Perhaps they are not stars, but rather openings in heaven where the love of our lost ones pours through and shines down upon us to let us know they are happy.  
-Eskimo Proverb

### Now onto food!!

Everyone loves their trends so let's start off with them since I have neglected the diaries for so long.

### Trends!

Don't always look for it to be in the form of food. I think a trend is creative and fun cost saving menus. An example is doing the amuse bouche for a starter instead of a full blown appetizer course.

Hot foods for a cold day? Individual Sheppard's Pie and Individual Chicken Pot Pies – save on labor and food cost on the chicken pot pie by having the puff pastry crust just on top not around the entire pie.



Chicken Pot Pie



Sheppard's Pie

Still in style and going strong my favorite chopped salad bar. Many hotels have a caesar salad as an action station – BORING. Do 3 different types of chopped lettuce with several types of chopped toppings. Combine it protein toppings of ahi tuna, blackened shrimp, chicken, tofu or skirt steak. Add to the fun: offer french fries as a topping and you have a salad Pittsburgh style. Continue the interest by offering old fashioned salad dressings like Green Goddess. Continue to add to the cool factor by putting salads in interesting large salad bowls of different material. These bowls don't have to be expensive go to IKEA and get them for a little over a buck.

Food Concept - I want to develop this but haven't had the right client for it is a station called, “Take Your Pick”. Every food item is presented on a different form of a skewer or a very hip “pick”.

Raising The Bar – I have been doing this station for quite some time it consists of a variety of dessert bars. My favorites are Rocky Road and Chocolate Caramel Bars. Say GOOD-BYE to boring Lemon Bars and Blondie's. I also have signage made letting people know the our client is “Raising The Bar”.

Want a different way to warm up when it is chilly? Hot chocolate topped with homemade flavored marshmallows. Start this station by using a variety of creamy upscale hot chocolates. Add interest by using different flavor marshmallows to compliment the flavor of hot chocolate. For example, make hot chocolate using dark chocolate with a peppermint flavored marshmallow and a garnish of crushed candy canes. I recommend that this station gets designed to be very visual. If displayed properly it can be a lot of fun.

This trend doesn't come on a plate but in the form of 4 wheels - FOOD TRUCKS! Bravo to the City of Portland for showing the rest of the country how to do this right. I will write more about this in my next diaries.

**I don't set trends. I just find out what they are and exploit them.**

**Dick Clark**

You think it would be a trend for banquets but it really isn't and that is organic. I have talked to a lot of banqueting chefs this past year about this topic. We are all in agreement that as much as we like organic and agree with it, that financially it just doesn't make sense. Unless local farmers can be sourced at the same cost and that the planner does not have to pay additional then it is a nice selling feature. If additional costs are incurred then most planners will pass in these belt tightening times.

While working in Prague this past summer my group was at The Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza and we stayed at a hotel the Russians built in 1953. Wait I want to correct that statement in true Communist rein the hotel was started in 1953 completed in 1957. The Russians used it as a training facility hence the dorm rooms and the meeting space. When Communist regime fell apart in the late 1980's it made sense to turn this facility into a hotel. We talked to the hotel staff who was in their mid 30's and asked them what it was like to a child in a communist country. They said you have no comprehension of the outside world. No access to anything outside the communist boundaries. For me – Claire- it would be like living in the state of Georgia and being allowed to go to Alabama as that is communist but not allowed to go to Florida because that is democratic. It was overwhelming to hear them discuss having a small nibble of chocolate was a rarity. They never saw an orange or a banana until the free world started trading with them. Then when the staff talked about getting a piece of bubble gum as a small child their face lit up as that was truly a HUGE treat. I sound cheesy when I say we have no idea how lucky we are to be living in this country.

What is big in the Czech Republic is their version of a doughnut it is called a Tredelnik. It is delicious when it comes off the rotisserie hot and dusted in a cinnamon sugar. It is hard to explain so let me show you the pictures. And ask this question – HOW AWESOME would this be for a coffee break?



**The finished product**



**Hot Sausage Sandwich**



**6 seater gliders at a Pilsner House**

The folks of the Czech Republic are also known for their Pilsner beer. It was founded in their country. But one of my favorite snacks was their hot sausage sandwiches that you could buy right off carts in the street.

**The Bullshit Buzzer is out and working:**

First hit: ANYONE WHO CHARGES 24% service charge in this economy.

again

I saw a planning guide that has a room reset fee based on square footage.

and again

I worked with a hotel in downtown Atlanta that offers only ONE dessert on a buffet. A buffet is all about options and choices that is why we pay more for it and it is called a buffet. Obviously this well known property is clearly missing the point. When questioned they were not very cooperative in wanting to make good on the word buffet. If I wanted an extra dessert there were extra fees. Crazy, crazy.

and again

Still on desserts, if I am at an upper class hotel and doing a dessert buffet please cut the dessert in wedges and not in squares. Square sheet cakes I can get at the high school cafeteria; wedges I would expect from a 4 or 5 star hotel.

one last hit of the buzzer

A contract I just read has a clause that food is served on plastic if I want china, silverware it is \$3.95 extra-**yet I am paying china prices.** Turns out the facility doesn't have enough china to accommodate a banqueting group plus the restaurant – then here is my polite piece of advise – then don't sell banquets. Don't penalize the client because you do not have enough equipment to do the job you are selling.

**“I've been accused of vulgarity. I say that's bullshit.”**

**Mel Brooks**

Such a Deal – I was doing an event at Georgia Tech in Atlanta and we were allowed to bring in our own catering. I found out by accident that Einstein Brothers DELIVERS. I ended up using them for breakfast and lunch. What's there not to love about Einstein schmear? and the price is right on. The Atlanta Einstein folks were prompt with their delivering at 6:30 in the morning and back at 12nn. Nosh away!

Want to get a better pulse on temperature of food? When I was in college I worked in a pastry department of a 4 star hotel. The pastry chef taught me to get a true temperature on food you need is to touch the item on the skin right below your bottom lip. That is one of the most sensitive parts of your body and this will give you a real time reading on food temperature.

Many of my clients are going to beer and wine instead of full alcohol bars to save money. How is this working out? Are people complaining? The answer is yes it is working out with no complaining at all. Attendees just appreciate the client is hosting an event. But here is a note of caution; I am seeing where wine prices are the same as alcohol. Just double check this to make sure by doing just beer and wine you are indeed having a cost savings.

**While working in Dubai- name dropping! –**

- Yes, I did go to the Sail Hotel;
- Yes it looks as cheesy in real life as it does on the Travel Chanel.
- And yes I am pleased to write we did go to the famous rooftop bar that overlooked the ocean.
- Want to know what we saw? Nothing – it is so dark up there you see nothing.

What was I doing in Dubai for 12 days? Many of you know I do exhibit marketing and design. Therefore I was attending the Dubai Airshow for Aerion Corporation. They are doing the engineering for the world's first supersonic business jet. While in Dubai I took a ton of pictures which include the desert, Ski Dubai, The Spice Market, food, my exhibit and of course all the construction. It was all very interesting even down to the Mecca pointer and prayer rugs in every hotel room. Here is the web address that will take you to my blog that has many great pictures.

<http://rxforcatering.com/2009/11/> - keep scrolling down as I uploaded pictures a couple of different days.



Burg Al Arab Hotel



Construction in Dubai - look at all the cranes



Picture of the Daily Airshow



Sky Dubai

**What new in Rx's medicine cabinet?** The name of the company is in the midst of being changed. At the advise of a very wise customer she looked at me at lunch one day and said you should call your company Rx for Events. She was absolutely right so it is taking me a bit but I will soon be Rx for Events, LLC and Rx for Catering will be a division.

Folks, you can follow me on Twitter which is still under Rx for Catering and I do blog regularly at [rxforcatering.com/blog](http://rxforcatering.com/blog). On the blog you can sign up so every time I post a blog you will receive it automatically via email. I update food and event notes on both places almost daily.

*The world is a stage but the play is sometimes badly cast*  
-Oscar Wilde

I want to thank everyone for reading my diaries.  
This is my story for now and I will be sticking to it.

With Appreciation,

*Claire R. Gould*

Claire R. Gould  
Rx for Events, LLC

[www.rxforcatering.com](http://www.rxforcatering.com)

