

JANUARY 2010

catersource

2010 TRENDS ...and 10 great ideas from and for caterers



Chasing Winter Blahs
Getting the Contract
Conference & Tradeshow Update

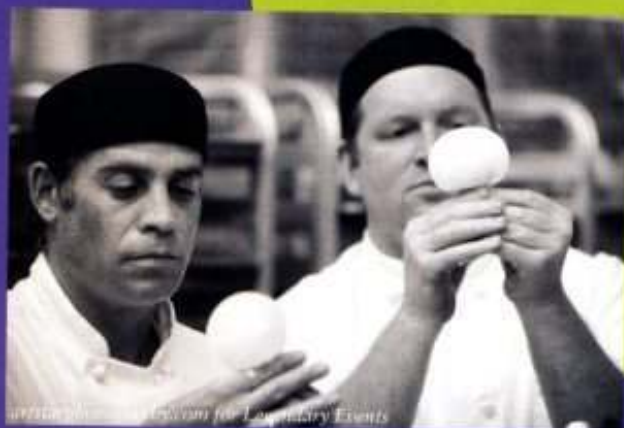
EDUCATION, PRODUCTS & NEWS FOR PROFESSIONAL CATERERS

2010 TRENDS

Including
10 new and
different
ideas you
can try

Mozzarella balloons

At Legendary Events in Atlanta, the culinary team is experimenting with nitrous oxide—which takes practice, according to owner Tony Conway, but looks spectacular. For an off-site event for 250, Legendary Events made mozzarella balloons flavored with black garlic. The process took about 90 minutes—and that was after practicing the technique—so it's not for everyone. If you haven't experimented with molecular gastronomy techniques, it's time.



artstarphotography.com for Legendary Events

idea 1

by Linda Picone

Go natural. Or not. Serve up exotic flavors. Or go back to comfort foods. Stick to blue. But don't be afraid of deep colors. As is true every year, trends may or may not reflect what's best for your clients. But the odds are that even if this year's hottest taste would make your customers cringe, in a year or two or three, you'll be serving it up and they'll be loving it. Consider this a discussion of trends for the next few years, not just 2010, and adapt it in ways that make sense for your catering, in your market.

Let's take the ubiquitous slider, for example (and we know there are caterers out there saying, "Yes, please take the slider"). When they were first spotted at events a handful of years ago, tiny meat patties on tiny buns were novel and interesting and, most of all, tasty. Customers loved them because their guests loved them, and who wouldn't? A familiar flavor, easy to handle as an hors d'oeuvre, but looking almost elegant in this small presentation. The first caterers to do them were out ahead of the pack, but

not for long. Today, sliders are everywhere, including family restaurants, bars and even fast-food restaurants. Which means that some caterers are getting tons of requests for them, some are ready for them to become a former trend—and some are figuring out ways to put a new twist on them. Like making them from something other than beef, or shaking up the flavor profiles, or creating a dessert slider that looks just like beef on a bun with trimmings. ✨

THIS ECO-SENSITIVE TABLE FROM LEGENDARY EVENTS USES VOTIVES, LIVING PLANTS AND EVEN FOOD AS DÉCOR, RATHER THAN ELABORATE FLORAL DISPLAYS.
artstarphotography.com
for Legendary Events

Here's what caterers around the country are saying about business, décor, menus and more.

DOING BUSINESS IN 2010: REORGANIZE YOUR EFFORTS

Fingers crossed, but business in 2010 should be better than it was in 2009—and even in 2009, there were caterers who were quite successful. The slow economy, however, has created different ways of doing business for both customers and caterers.

A number of caterers have looked hard at their bottom line and made adjustments in their operations. “We closed a café we had at a museum that was busy in the summer but not in the winter,” says Andrew Spurgin of Waters Fine Catering in San Francisco. “Although we didn’t lose money, we just weren’t seeing it was worth it for the effort we put into it. A word of caution: Make sure a venue will support your business, rather than want deal after deal after deal.”

Bryan Young of Catering Plus in St. Louis has, like many caterers, been looking for new opportunities. “Home parties are on the rise, which is good for our size company,” he says (more about that in the March issue of *Catersource* magazine). “I’m working with a lot of new independent event planners; I have one I just did bereavement menu for. I’m looking at new venues and working out deals to be one of three caterers in them.”

Paul Neuman of Neuman’s Catering in New York says he’s trying to find new ways to partner with clients. For example: “Sharing the cost for equipment for an event with the client, then owning it and using it again.” His company did that with an event that required 50 ottomans.

“If you have the ability, now is the time to trim underperforming staff and add new, improved blood to the organization,” says Tony Conway of Legendary Events in Atlanta. “Many times in a recession, very good employees end up looking for work due to cutbacks or layoffs and it’s possible to improve the strength of your team and maybe even get an ‘in’ on new clients if you can hire salespeople who may have a book of business or loyal clients.”

JDK Catering in Harrisburg, PA, has created a new company every year for the past three years, starting with a rental company and then a design company. In 2008, the company eliminated its corporate drop-off and continental breakfast catering to focus on specialty events. “During this change, we realized we needed to restructure our staffing,” says Jen Delaye, president of JDK. “In 2009, we developed the JDK Staffing Network, utilizing an online system for our staff members to select the days they can work, similar to a temporary service agency. We formulated a concise training program for our staff that gives them the opportunity to advance.” Currently, Delaye says, there are about 150 employees on the network. *

Purple

Greg Ziegenfuss at Butler’s Pantry in St. Louis says many clients are going the less-is-more route when it comes to décor but, when they do decorate, they want either earth tones or jewel tones. “Browns and grays are immensely popular,” he says. “And purple seems to be *the* color.” In an event universe where earthy, natural colors abound, try injecting a dash of purple. There’s a reason it was considered the royal color.



idea 2

ALTHOUGH NEUTRALS AND EARTH TONES PREVAIL, WHEN CLIENTS WANT COLOR, RICH JEWEL TONES APPEAR.

Butler's Pantry



IT MAY LOOK LIKE A SLIDER, BUT THE VIETNAMESE BANH MI SANDWICH IS MUCH MORE INTERESTING.
Jai Girard Photography for Blue Plate



CLIENTS ARE ASKING FOR SIMPLE, UNCLUTTERED DÉCOR, WITH VOTIVES AND NEUTRAL TONES, SPOTTED WITH BRIGHT BITS OF COLOR.
Butler's Pantry on left, Sofia Pona for Culinary Capers on the lower right.

Jewel-sized hors d'oeuvre

Jonathan Chovancek, chef de cuisine at Culinary Capers in Vancouver, says they are creating a new collection of eight to 12 "jewel-sized" hors d'oeuvre for the company's premier corporate and social clientele. "This collection was inspired and initiated by clients who wanted a very elegant, one bite, no sticks, no picks, no dips, no bones hors d'oeuvre for their events," he says. "They are more expensive than the regular hors d'oeuvre as they have premium ingredients and require more labor and on-site assembly."



Sofia Poma

idea 3



Sofia Poma



Sofia

DÉCOR: LESS IS MORE

Clients want Wow!, but, increasingly, they want it with décor that is not fussy—and that respects the environment. "It used to be that people wanted centerpieces that were 30 feet tall and had a flying trapeze holding a fishbowl with live fish," says Tamara Goldstein, senior catering and event consultant for Jewell Events Catering in Chicago. "Now they would rather use cleverly placed lighting and great looking smaller centerpieces. A beautiful swath of fabric with uplighting, rather than walls of water and glitter."

"Both corporate clients and private clients are asking for less décor and spending the money where it counts: food and beverage," says Bianca McCann, catering manager of Butler's Pantry. *



SIMPLICITY WILL BE THE RULE IN 2010

Butler's Pantry

Waters Fine Catering is doing less floral and more “living” décor, says Andrew Spurgin. “Like living walls with herbs and produce, succulents and more natural feels,” he says. “I love blending sleek tech with natural, organic feels.”

Lighting, in-season florals and live plants are popular because they not only cost less than elaborate displays, they reflect an interest in the environment. David Yanchuk at Culinary Capers says, “Using cost-effective lighting, such as floor-based

stands instead of flying truss on the ceiling, cuts down on labor costs.”

Yanchuk says clients are not spending as much on specialty linens. “I suggest to clients who are on a budget to go with the basic linen in a neutral shade, such as white or ivory, then introducing some color with the addition of a seasonal floral arrangement or a bright-colored napkin.”

COLORS: NO PALE PINK

The Wedding Color Trends 2010 Report says primary colors will dominate, with most couples choosing blue. Couples are looking for warm, bright, bold and vibrant tones, the report says. That squares with what the Pantone® Fashion Color Report for spring predicts. Although Pantone® is looking at clothing fashions, those color trends move into furnishings, linens and décor as well. The Pantone® report says vibrant brights and “practical neutrals” will dominate. ✨



FIGS ARE ONE OF THE OLDEST FOODS AROUND—AND NOW TRENDY. ROASTED FIG STUFFED WITH GORGONZOLA IS SERVED AS HORS D'OEUVRE.

Bakers' Best

idea 4

Dark fruit

“Dark fruit is huge,” says Jim Horan of Blue Plate in Chicago. “We have always been very keen on dark fruits and included ingredients like dark cherries, cranberries, pomegranates and black currant in our menus. It seems that the industry is following suit.” Dark fruit is healthier than light-fleshed fruit, although we’re pretty sure that’s not why people like it. The rich colors and flavors add to every part of a meal, from cocktail to hors d’oeuvre to salad to entrée to dessert.

Create some unique recipes for your customers with dark fruit.

UPPER LEFT: PASSED HORS D'OEUVRE ARE REPLACING SIT-DOWN DINNERS FOR SOME EVENTS.

Butler's Pantry

LOWER LEFT: FIRE-ROASTED TOMATO SOUP WITH GRILLED CHEESE IS EXCITING COMFORT FOOD.

Bakers' Best



Caterers are expecting similar color trends. David Yanchuk, in-house designer for Culinary Capers, says the popular colors are browns, greens, natural earth tones and shades of gray—along with eggplant and “shades of yellow from pale yellow to bright lemon. We’re also seeing bright colors such as hot pink and orange.”

Kristina Luabreras of Fandango Caterers in Houston says younger clients—those under 50—want “the fuchsias, the lime greens, for indoor and outdoor.” Older social clients and corporate clients tend to play it safer, with blue and white, alone or paired.

“No pastels,” says Linda Sample of A Thyme to Cook. “Earth tones, strong colors and textures.”

●●

**CUISINE:
FLAVOR, FLAVOR,
FLAVOR**

Is it Southern cooking or Mediterranean or Asian-fusion? Rather than a single cuisine, what seems consistent across the country is that customers are looking for new and interesting flavors. According to a study from Technomic, about two thirds of restaurant customers say that discovering a new flavor can persuade them to come back to the restaurant.

Comfort food is still popular—probably always will be in some form—but guests are looking for flavors that surprise and delight them, whether they’re in the context of a comfort food meal or a cuisine they haven’t tried before.



TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN DISHES, LIKE FROGMORE STEW, ARE SEEING AN INCREASE IN POPULARITY ACROSS THE UNITED STATES. artstarphotography.com for *Legendary Events*

idea **5**

A la carte your menu

Customers like packages, but one way to get a better return is to unpackage your menu, says Cherylle Winacott, event coordinator for Country Style BBQ Catering in Saskatchewan. “Most caterers have a full-meal deal, but we started eliminating the beverage a few years back without any consequences,” she says. “We now get paid for beverages—more money. We then eliminated the dessert, again no consequences.” Are there ways you can repackage your offerings that make sense—and money?

Mid-week events

“Thursday is the new Sunday,” says Tony Conway of *Legendary Events*. “We’re seeing a big trend away from the large corporate weekend gatherings, toward having smaller, more intimate gatherings in private homes on Thursdays. Literally, Thursdays.” Don’t let your corporate clients give up on social events; help show them they can do them in a different way that costs less—and provides business on what otherwise would be a slow day.

idea **6**

“Savory and sweet combinations are really hot right now,” says Tony Conway of *Legendary Events*. “For example, in a first course, we’ll have blue cheese ice cream and beet marshmallows and then later, for dessert, a blackberry and goat cheese Bavarian torte with candied prosciutto, blackberry sauce and white chocolate curls.”

Linda Sample of *A Thyme to Cook* says customers are interested in something other than the traditional entrée of starch, vegetable and protein. “I think we can get away from it by minimizing choices,” she says.

“We’re using a dish almost like a soup bowl; you can contain a bed of lentils with some fish, topped with some vegetables.” She’s finding that one-plate meals satisfy clients’ wish to keep cost (and fuss) down, while not stinting on flavor.

On the Cover

Green influences décor,
menus and everything else

The cover photo of a simple but elegant table setting illustrates how the emphasis on the environment is no longer a novelty, but an integral part of today's catering. The Feast in the Forest tabletop design was created by Legendary Events in Atlanta for the 2009 Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS Dining by Design fundraiser. Legendary Events' designs made use of natural elements, like the moss and pear at this setting, coupled with dinnerware and flatware that echoed the natural look.

*Photo by Laura Stone,
artatarphotography.com.*



Cuisine that caterers say seem to be increasing in popularity include:

- Mexican, but “not tacos and burritos, but high-end Mexican with complex and unusual flavors,” says Jim Horan of Blue Plate Catering in Chicago.
- Regional menus for where you are, or where you’d like to transport the event. Bakers’ Best does a Boston Garden picnic or a Napa Valley picnic.
- Caribbean flavors. Todd Lough, chef d’cuisine at Butler’s Pantry, says taro root, plantains, tamarind, Scotch Bonnet peppers, jerk spices, guava and mango can spice up any menu.
- Exotic spices. “Argan oil from Australia, Balinese long pepper, Iranian saffron, Thai chiles and herbs,” says Jonathan Chovancek, chef de cuisine at Culinary Capers. “This is balanced with a food program of local and seasonal foods.”



THIS “MOUNTAIN” DECOR CREATES THE ILLUSION OF MUCH MORE THAN A FRUIT AND CHEESE DISPLAY.
IDK Catering

Hot rocks


A Thyme to Cook was asked to do pretzel rolls for a wedding. “Now we’re doing them all the time and we usually serve them on hot rocks,” says Linda Sample. “They’ve become really popular.” (Pretzel rolls are shaped like dinner rolls, but they taste like soft pretzels.) A Thyme to Cook builds an open box with bricks, with canned fuel inside and a grate over the top [the number of cans of fuel depend on the size of the box]. Smooth river rocks then cover the grate. With the heat from the canned fuel, the pretzel rolls—or anything else—stay warm, and the whole effect is more interesting than a warming plate.



A Thyme to Cook



idea **7**



CUT FLOWERS HIGHLIGHT ONE-BITE HORS D'OEUVRE
Butler's Pantry

Innovative incentives

Especially in this economy, you want clients to sign on the dotted line—and, especially in this economy—they're reluctant to do so. Many caterers have incentives for signing, but some are being particularly creative right now. Russell Morin's Fine Catering offers passed sangria (made with wine left over from other events), cordials with coffee or five votives per table. "Low cost items that add value," says Morin. Brainstorm incentive ideas with your staff.

idea 8



MINI FOOD ITEMS, LIKE THESE OYSTER SHOOTERS, ARE HERE TO STAY.

Jai Girard Photography for Blue Plate

- Southern-style—but not necessarily in the South. Tony Conway says contemporary Southern-style cooking is big, “perhaps because of a couple of Atlanta chefs who are performing very well on the current season of Top Chef, especially co-owner and executive chef of Woodfire Grill, Kevin Gillespie, who enchants the viewing audience and judges alike with his elegant yet homespun Southern-style cuisine.” A Legendary Event does a Southern-Style Low Country Frogmore Stew that would satisfy appetites anywhere.

STATIONS: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

Clients may not want elaborate décor or menus, but they want their guests to have fun. Increasingly, that means interacting with the food while it's being prepared and served. “Clients are seeking a tasting menu-style experience, even at large events with multiple food stations,” says Jonathan Chovancek of Culinary Capers. “The food needs to have a flow and synergy not only with each of the stations, but with the event itself.”

For a British Columbia regional menu, Chovancek put together three grazing stations with chefs creating small plates at each station: Cedar Baked Salmon with Succatah (juniper berry and honey-glazed salmon baked in charred cedar paper served with corn, local tomatoes, leeks and tarragon and a salsa verde); Chilliwack Honey Glazed Duck Breast (roasted and served with an Okanagan cherry and pecan relish, wild rice salad and braised fennel); and Cabernet Braised British Columbia Venison (served with organic baby vegetables over creamy lemon risotto). 🍴

LOCAL FOOD, LIKE CABERNET-BRAISED BRITISH COLUMBIA VENISON, IS IN DEMAND.

Culinary Capers

JDK is developing new food concepts like the crostini bar, says Jen Delaye. "This make-your-own station provides all the ingredients for a crostini, like beef, arugula, horseradish and baguettes, and the guests compose their own mini meal," she says. "This is cost-efficient for our clients, portrays an upscale impression via the display—and is simply delicious."

BEVERAGES: BACK TO BASICS

A few of the caterers who shared ideas for this article said they're done with the whole signature cocktail thing. It's back to high-quality liquor and classic drinks. "I find that the signature drink, a concoction of neon-colored liqueurs and mystery flavors, is a thing of the past and no one ever drinks them," says Jim Horan of Blue Plate. "Vodka, scotch, beer and wine are king."

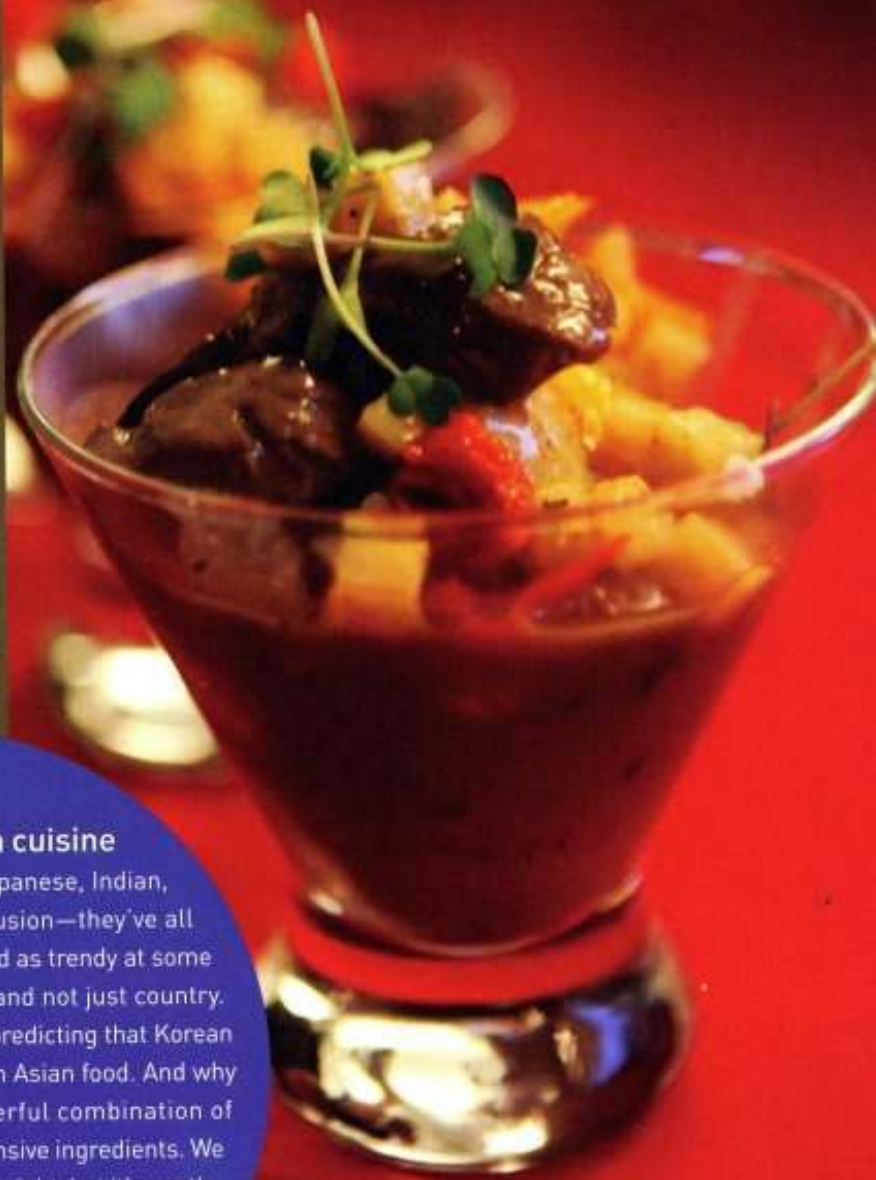
"It's all about back to basics," says John McGuire of Butler's Pantry. "The days of Cosmopolitans with their high sugar content and unnaturally pink *

idea 9

Korean cuisine

Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Thai, Asian-fusion—they've all been announced as trendy at some point, by region and not just country.

But the *Boston Globe*, at least, is predicting that Korean cuisine will be the next big thing in Asian food. And why not? Intense flavors, that wonderful combination of spicy and sweet, relatively inexpensive ingredients. We don't know if the *Boston Globe* is right, but it's worth trying out and incorporating elements of it into your menu.





UNIQUE ITEMS USING LOCAL INGREDIENTS IN NEW WAYS.
*Top two photos from Butler's Pantry;
bottom photo from Culinary Capers.*

hue are over. These days the trendiest bars are serving up traditional favorites like Manhattans and champagne.”

Quality counts. Not just the quality of the alcohol, but the quality of the drink. The proportions should be right, the ingredients should be fresh and the service should be impeccable.

Tony Conways says that “champagne-like” sparkling wines are popular, and a good choice for cost-conscious customers (basically, all of them). Sparkling wines with class, but not the pricetag of champagne, include cava from Spain and prosecco from Italy.

Cava is made using the same process as champagne; prosecco is made in a slightly different process.

ENVIRONMENT: GREEN IS EXPECTED

A few years ago, a caterer who made special efforts to be green could stand out from the crowd. Today, customers who care will simply expect that you are making significant efforts to reduce your impact on the environment in everything from the food on your menu to the way you dispose of trash.

“In our region in particular, we expect to see a continued use of sustainable plant products,” says

Tony Conway, in Atlanta.

“We started using

Torch station

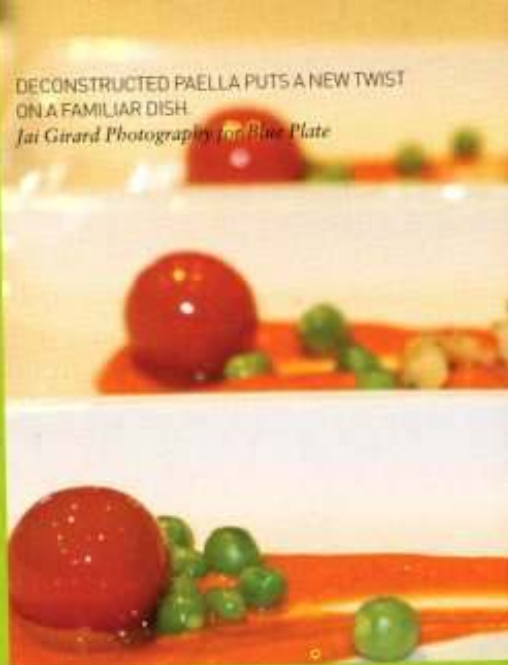
Guests are no longer content to nibble, sip and talk; they want to be entertained while they fill their plates and glasses.

Interactive stations of all kinds are in demand. What Sterno® is calling “precision flambé” offers the opportunity to cook or finish food quickly and with flair. The Sterno® Professional Culinary Torch, which uses a butane fuel cartridge, has been showing up at events doing everything from cooking thinly sliced salmon to finishing off a 3-dimensional crème brûlée. One of the most novel uses is for Clothespin S’Mores. Graham crackers, chocolate and marshmallows are held by clothespins, then torched and served. “It’s a wonderful item; everyone that uses it finds new things to do with it,” says Thad Smith, director of business development for Sterno®. “I’d love to get everyone a holster to wear it like a cowboy.” (See the torch in action during the Tuesday night party Anthology at the Catersource 2010 Conference & Tradeshow.)



DECONSTRUCTED PAELLA PUTS A NEW TWIST ON A FAMILIAR DISH

Jai Girard Photography for Blue Plate



more succulents in our floral décor a few years ago and that trend has continued to grow. Now, we have clients asking for our Sustainable Table by name. We consider that a great compliment.”

Clients sometimes have an expectation for sustainable-organic-local menus that isn’t realistic in some parts of the country. “Because we are in the Midwest, we find that our clients may ask for local, organic and sustainable, but realize it is not always possible—especially when they are working with a limited budget,” says Tamara Goldstein of Jewell Events Catering in Chicago. “When a client asks for SOL items, it often doubles and triples the food cost. Additionally, when planning menus six to eight months out, one cannot always be guaranteed of availability of product.”

Kristina Lumbreras at Fandango Catering in Houston says many customers find her company because they are looking for a green caterer. “We book heavily throughout the year for that,” she says. “We have different price points. Maybe half our business is currently about sustainable foods, and people are willing to pay more for that.” **CS**

idea 10



GNOCCHI AND GRILLED RACK OF LAMB.
Culinary Capers



POACHED PEAR, PECAN AND BLUE CHEESE SALAD PLATE.
Butler's Pantry