



## What's A Caterer To Do?

### What's a Caterer to do Part 14

Greetings on another glorious Rochester morning. It's barely 6 am and we're back home from our morning walk. While my husband is in the kitchen preparing our breakfast (the very predictable egg cup, banana and flavored coffee, where I must guess the flavor before indulging) I thought I'd say a quick hello before the day moves into full steam ahead. Early morning walks...if you haven't been pounding the pavement or even leisurely strolling at 5:30 am you might want to give it a try. It's quiet, it's peaceful, it's pretty. The neighborhood wildlife is scampering about with reckless abandon. The fawn prancing, leaping and loping totally unattended by any siblings or parents is having the time of its life. The bunnies are sitting around nibbling, always nibbling on something, green, fresh and hopefully nutritious. The dog walkers are treating their canine friends to their early morning constitutional providing them with an occasional treat to keep them moving. We chat, we commiserate, we are grateful for such an amazing start to what no doubt will be another unpredictable, up-and-down kind of day.

It's unbelievable (there's that word again), or as someone said "unimaginable" that we are in this pickle. This pandemic pickle that has forced us into life changes, big, hard decisions, uncertainty, and potential fear of what might or might not lie ahead. To survive, to fight back, to counter the challenges what do we do? We

WORK. That's how we are wired. We can't help it. We're type A. We get things done. We mask (no pun intended) our concern for the uncertainty by staying busy. Really busy. That's how we roll. There have always been people in my world with answers to my tough questions and problems. I'm having trouble finding anyone that wants to tackle the questions and challenges that this pandemic has created.

Maybe that's because the questions are too hard and too many. The challenges are great, not just financial, but health, safety and well-being are also at the top of the long list.

Are we busy at work? Hmmmm, interesting question. It's all relative. In the past we might have 8-10 event sheets hanging on the long rack for each day. Now the whole weeks worksheets fit in that same space. Are we busy? Well, considering that we're operating without most of our beloved staff most of the time, even a little bit of business keeps one or two of us busy. As each month draws to a close, and we look at the numbers, we just shake our head and wonder "Is this really worth it?" Barely covering fixed expenses, minimal payroll, and basic purchases, we ponder, thinking is this really what catering has become? We like numbers, volume, lots of talented staff working together hard, really hard, to do the juggling act and execute the logistical particulars, to make those big, busy, bountiful days happen without a hitch. What party, how many guests, which van, which staff,

which food, which color scheme, which equipment, what time, where are we headed, who's our contact, when should we leave, when should we return, how much can we do along the way, just a few questions that are common most days. So, now, not so many questions, not much discussion, not much volume, not many color schemes, not much equipment, not many vans out and about. It's different.

We work harder and longer for less. We are spending a fortune exploring and purchasing single use containers for the individual meals that we are creating. Labor costs are higher scooping/portioning/counting than setting up beautiful buffets and stations like in the good old days. We have become an ala carte operation, much like a restaurant. So are we busy? Yes. Are we busy doing what we want to be doing, and have been doing for 35 years? No. But we're still afloat, we're paying most bills without dipping into credit lines and loans, and we have high hopes for the future.

In my next life, I'm thinking my career will be naming paint colors, selecting uplifting music to listen to for the hours that we all spend "sitting on hold" or maybe playing the harp where I can wear a pretty long skirt and a ruffled blouse, and have a helper carry my stuff for me.

Time for breakfast...hubby has it all ready. Have a great day and remember, we're praying for better days ahead.

Sandra

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*To persevere is important for everybody. Don't give up, don't give in. There's always an answer to everything.*

*~Louis Zamperini.*

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