

BY AMY LORENZEN

The POWER of a pencil



A CATERER'S SOLUTION TO BEING MORE PROFITABLE

When suggesting a menu to potential clients, you can explain it in words 100 times and they'll eventually understand. Better yet, sketch it for quicker results because, as the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words."

Growing up in a family of artists, Andrew Spurgin always had pens, pencils and paint at hand. Now as executive director at San Diego-based Waters Fine Catering, he finds those tools more useful than ever.

Diagramming for dollars

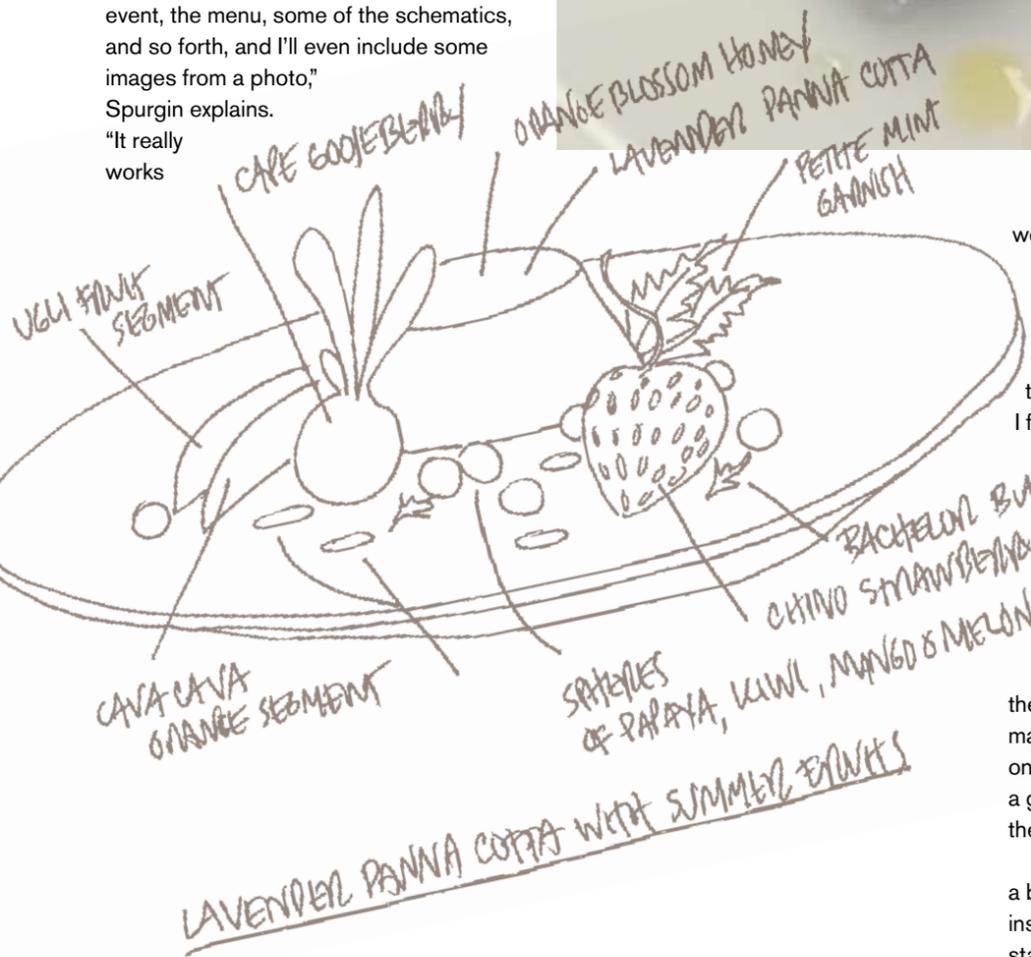
It's amazing what a picture can convey. Spurgin recognizes this and uses it to his advantage when working with potential clients. He sketches everything from station set ups to hors d'oeuvres and desserts for clients and catering crew.

"I do these for almost every event; sometimes even twice," he says. He especially finds sketches to be a beneficial tool when working with intense menus.

Spurgin will construct detailed drawings while hashing out ideas with possible clients. "If you or the client has a vision or an idea of not only an event, but specifically an individual plate, an hors d'oeuvre, or station, I found the easiest way to do it is to draw it," he says. When the meeting is concluded, he will let the clients take the sketches.

When he meets with a prospective client, Spurgin says he knows he is competing with other catering companies, and he believes that by providing the rendering, he's giving Waters Fine Catering an edge over the competition.

"These days, most of the mid process is done entirely over the Internet," he says. "Whether it's in PDFs, DOC files or JPEGs, I'll send a description of the event, the menu, some of the schematics, and so forth, and I'll even include some images from a photo," Spurgin explains. "It really works



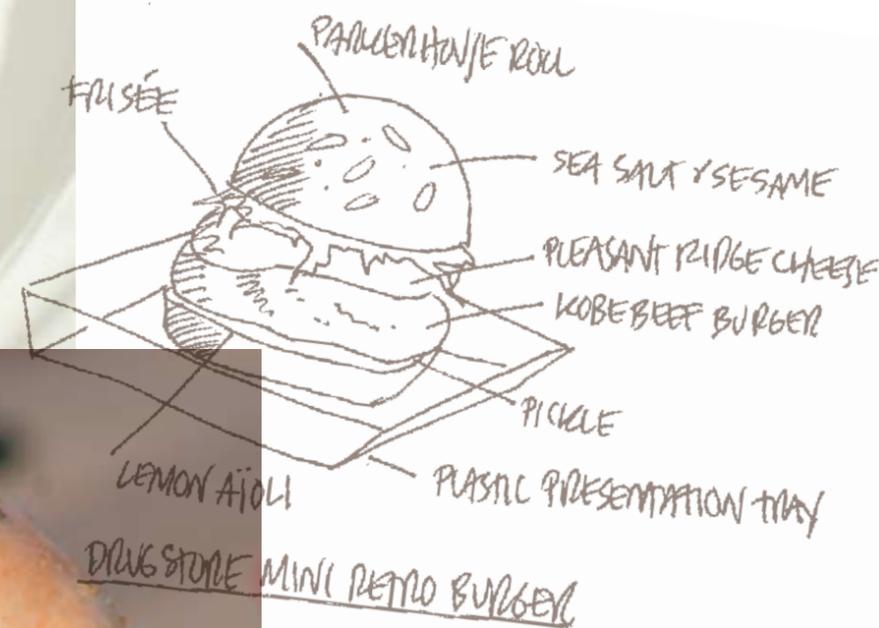
well, not only because they see you made a little extra effort, but instead of trying to imagine a party by looking at words, it's one of those 'tell me a hundred times or show me once' things. You know how that adage goes. I find that clients really react to it."

Picture perfect

During the hustle and bustle of catering an event, it's nice to have some uniformity amidst the chaos. "I think concise communication is imperative to produce events that are all about the details," Spurgin says. "There are so many things that are just fluid as you work on events, and the less you can make it a guess work or individual interpretation the better."

Dealing with the particulars can seem a bit overwhelming without precise instruction and guidance. Making sure the staff, whether front- or back-of-the-house,

Spurgin drafts an illustration of the food at the beginning stages of preparation at the Waters' kitchen. He'll then draft a final version for the actual party site. "I just found that it's such a valuable tool, because things turn out the way you envision them and everyone is on the same page," he says.



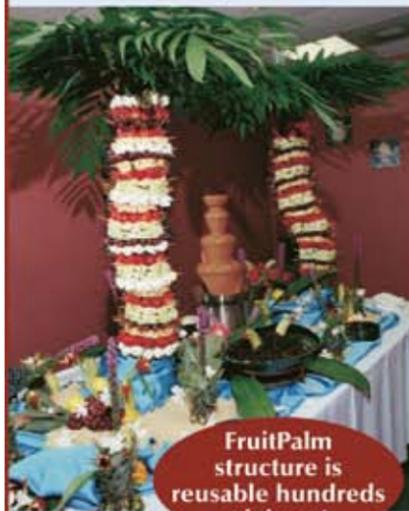
is on the same page is imperative to making an event successful.

Spurgin drafts an illustration of the food at the beginning stages of preparation at the Waters' kitchen. He'll then draft a final version for the actual party site. "I just found that it's such a valuable tool, because things turn out the way you envision them and everyone is on the same page," he says.

From chef to server to manager, a visual guide is ideal for verification of plated foods and station set-ups. An illustrative graphic of a plated dish ensures each staff member knows if everything is on the plate appropriately before sending it out to the customer.

A creative culinary configuration is a fantastic directional tool for staff members.

fruitpalm
Introducing
the world's first
edible fruit palm tree!



FruitPalm structure is reusable hundreds of times!

The fruit palm tree is structurally engineered and weight-balanced, standing 5-feet tall. Your FruitPalm comes with everything you need for easy assembly. All you need to do is add the fruit!

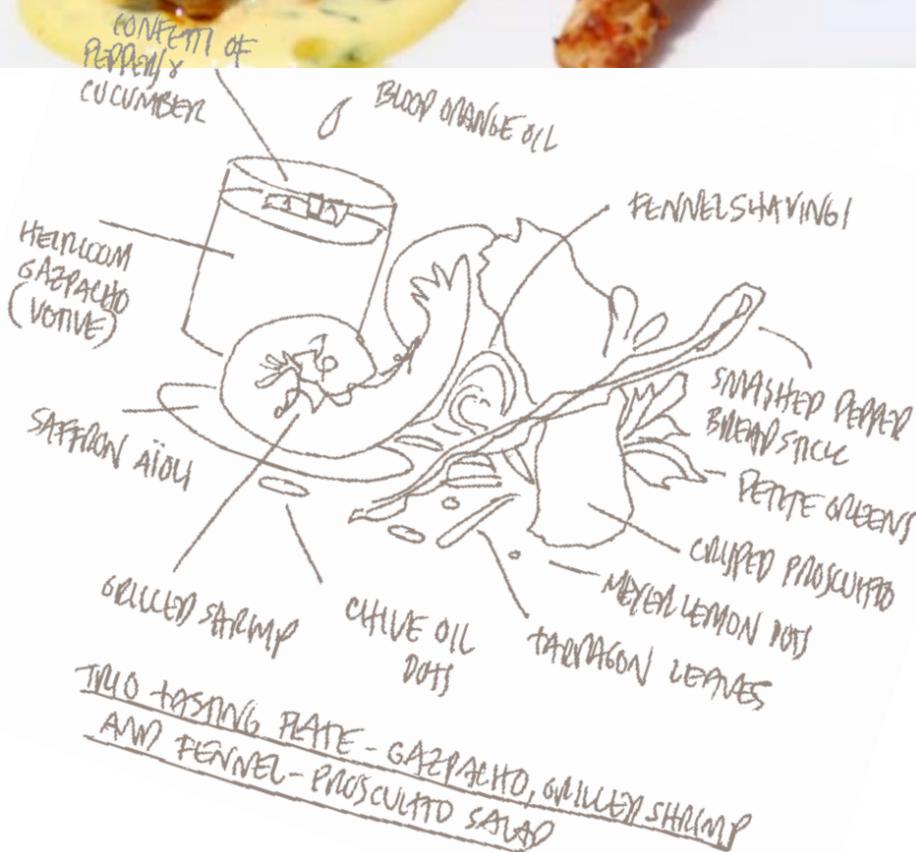
This innovative idea was conceived through the creative minds of catering professionals, and has been a smash hit with food service professionals and their guests who have experienced it. The FruitPalm has been successfully involved in all aspects of catering functions with overwhelming success, including:

- Weddings
- Sunday Brunches
- Picnics
- Garde Manger Buffets
- Theme Parties
- Luau
- Sweet Tables
- Company Functions

A caterer in the Chicago suburbs writes, "talk about an innovative show stopper... our clients have requested it over and over again. The FruitPalm has paid for itself several times over. I was able to recover the cost by booking just TWO of these trees at an event. After that, it's just a sheer profit...it really adds to the bottom line!"

Visit us online for complete details!
For ordering and pricing please call 630.299.7484 or order online at www.fruitpalm.com or contact us by email at sales@fruitpalm.com.

feature



"They'll have not only a written menu, but they'll also have schematics of everything from layouts of the event down to more specifics like the plate design, the hors d'oeuvre design and the set ups for stations or buffets," Spurgin says.

Big picture

Spurgin actually draws a new plate for a client before he writes it out. This allows him to concentrate on harmony and balance. He says he checks to see how the colors balance and figures out how many steps it takes to design the plate.

"You may write something out, and then you realize after you draw the plate that you have six things that have to go on the plate, which makes it a slow plate out of the kitchen," he explains.

By combining or eliminating elements so the plate can be reduced from six steps to four, Spurgin can speed up the time it takes for the plate to leave the kitchen. "I think most of the time less is more," he says. "The visual impact of a clean plate, to me, is almost always more balanced with harmony, color and texture. You weigh it all together and see how it all hashes out in the end."

Even with stations, Waters Fine Catering doesn't allow guests to make their own plates. Instead, chefs plate dishes from behind the station. By using a drawing of the finished plate, the chefs at each station know where everything is supposed to go on the plate.

Spurgin acknowledges that he even uses his drawings when entertaining guests at home. He admits he's somewhat obsessive about the sketches. "Inevitably when I don't use them, I'll find crisp kale garnish on top of the fridge that I forgot to put on one of my dishes because I just forgot."

You don't need to be a Leonardo Da Vinci to make an impression with potential clients, but if you start doodling now, who knows, maybe you can develop an inspirational menu and plate design to capture your clients' appreciation and get a leg-up on your competition.

the next level is here...

Introducing
caterease v.8
www.caterease.com



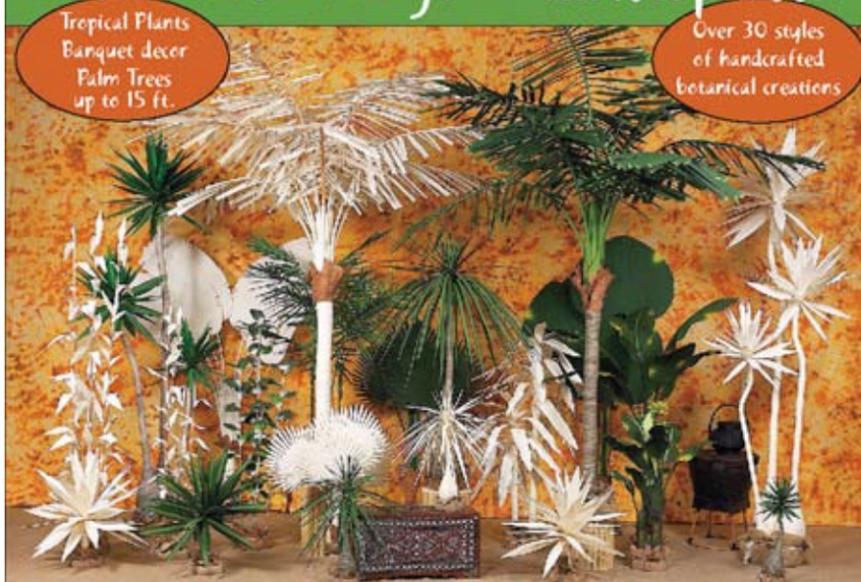
See for yourself why Caterease is the world's most popular catering & event management software!

Call or visit our website today
800.863.1616

www.caterease.com

caterease
catering & event management software

Decorative Foliage & Tabletop Decor



Tropical Plants
Banquet decor
Palm Trees
up to 15 ft.

Over 30 styles
of handcrafted
botanical creations

For a catalog call

800.226.3335

"Caterers and event pros have discovered the beauty, durability and the quick and easy set-up and storage of our products."

www.thecanvasnursery.com

The Canvas Nursery, Inc.
growing since 1987