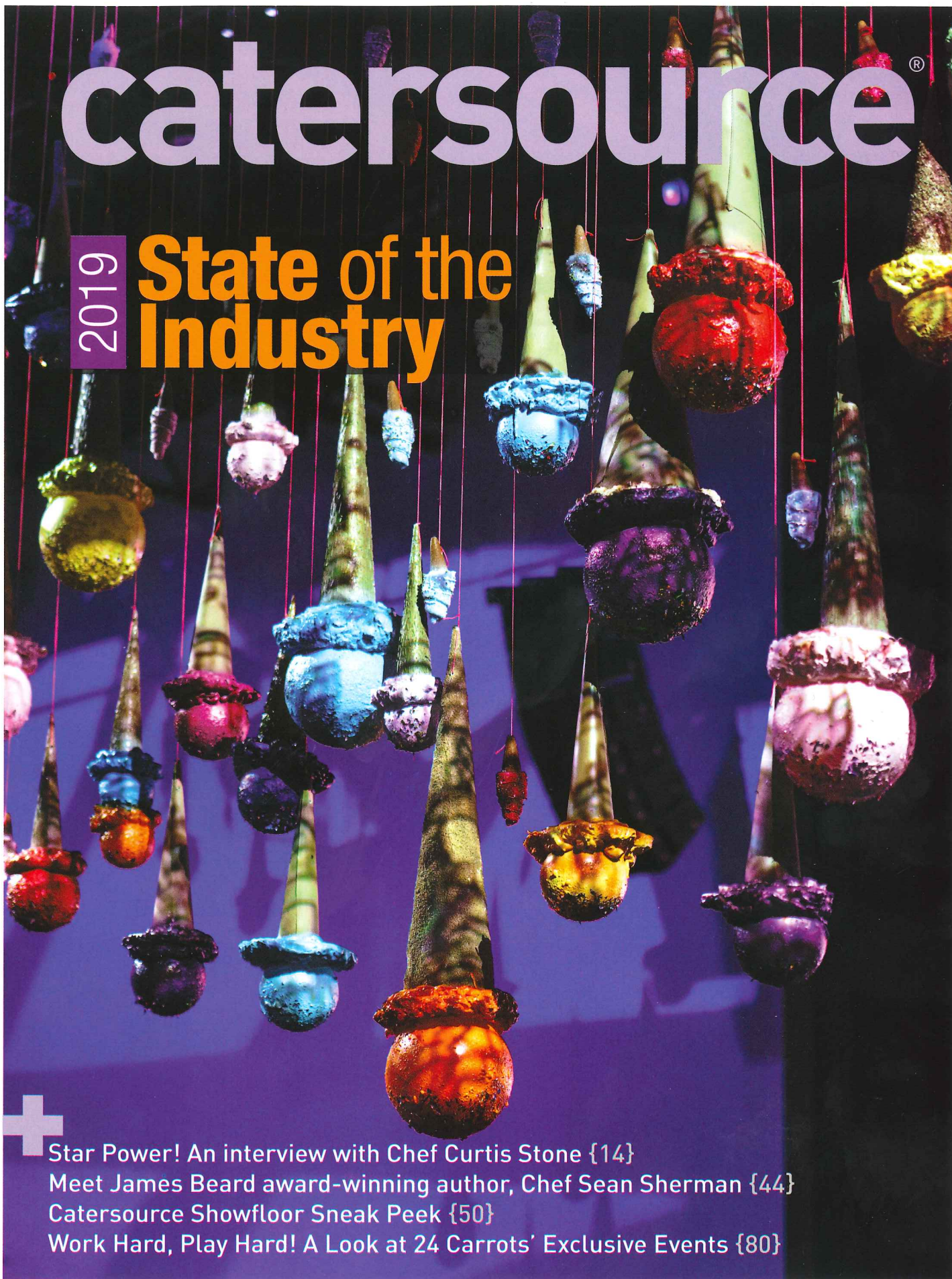


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2019 State of the Industry



Star Power! An interview with Chef Curtis Stone {14}

Meet James Beard award-winning author, Chef Sean Sherman {44}

Catersource Showfloor Sneak Peek {50}

Work Hard, Play Hard! A Look at 24 Carrots' Exclusive Events {80}

By Sebastien Centner

THE PATH TO EVENT INSPIRATION

I strongly believe every company must choose from one of two distinct paths as to where they want to be in their event and catering businesses.

The first path—where innovation and inspiration are set aside—is a path leading to consistency and tradition. This isn't necessarily easier, but does require less effort toward evolving a business. While many catering companies have built extremely successful models around this approach, it has never really appealed to me. Frankly, I didn't get into this business to do the same thing day in and day out. While it may be easy to press the repeat button, I think we owe it to our clients and the industry in general to be less monotonous!

For me, the event and catering business has always been about pushing boundaries, creating, designing, and inspiring others (clients and peers alike) to get excited about what we do. This path is long, sometimes frustrating, and usually expensive (just ask my controller who is constantly surprised at how much we put toward Research & Development). When you can lead instead of follow, however, you will find that this path is tremendously more rewarding.

We should be seeking inspiration every day. I look at fashion, technology, graphic design, furniture, and so many other industries with the idea of finding elements that ignite my curiosity.

It's up to the team

Luckily, I am surrounded by amazing people who share my passion, which is absolutely the key to executing new ideas and concepts. Each idea has to be supported by everyone in the company or it will undoubtedly fail on execution—even if this means having a long and healthy debate over the details.

A great new dish or food presentation may be spectacular in prototype, but unless your Executive Chef and kitchen team believe in it and help figure out how to best execute it, there is no way the end product will work. A breathtaking new food station display on paper will never look as good as



Photo courtesy Ernesto Di Stefano

RAW BARS ARE ALWAYS A HIT, BUT THE CLOUD PROPS ELEVATED THE EXPERIENCE AND ACTIVATED THE SPACE

it was intended if your event and delivery teams don't care about it as much as you do. A new concept, however ground-breaking, will fall flat unless your staff wants it to work as much as you do. New ideas are not just about the idea, they are about working together as a team to bring them to life.

For the past two years, Eatertainment has hosted a client and industry event where the goal is to showcase completely new ideas and concepts. This event has become one of the most rewarding times of the year for our team as it represents true collaboration and a shared passion to push ourselves and the industry to new heights. This year (our second annual Eatertainment Beats + Eats bash) our team outdid themselves creating food displays, photo ops, cocktails, and an overall atmosphere that blew our guests minds. Some of the highlights included:

The Heavenly Raw Bar

We know a raw bar will be a hit at any event, but to us the presentation of the bar needed to be elevated, and so was born the Heavenly Raw Bar. Simple ice trays featured an array of the most premium of seafood, from giant poached shrimp with house horseradish infused cocktail sauce, a selection of oysters from both coasts and mignonettes curated by our chefs to match, to scallop and octopus ceviche cured with tequila, shallots, and lime.

While the clean and crisp presentation on the stations may have been stellar, it was the clouds (made by our very own Sydney ... who spent HOURS handcrafting each one) that will be forever etched in people's minds. The clouds floated effortlessly over the station, with a stream of lights, making them shimmer. Once again, while the station itself may have been pretty cool with just the raw bar itself, it was that last effort that made all the difference, making it stand out from any other raw bar our guests had ever seen!



12 DIFFERENT CEREAL TYPES OFFERED A LOT OF OPTIONS FOR LATE NIGHT SNACKING



Photo courtesy Ernesto Di Stefano



Photos courtesy Ernesto Di Stefano

SWEET TREE CLOSE UP—DELICIOUS!

The Cereal Bar

Who doesn't love cereal? Of course, we have seen late night cereal bars before, but in an attempt to completely re-invent it, our team set out to design a striking, slick, and playful new cereal station. Our guests could select from modern white dispensers filled with 12 cereal types (for the record my favorite is still Captain Crunch) and then choose to top their cereal with either plain, strawberry, chocolate milk, or soft serve frozen yogurt and a selection of colorful sprinkles!

It was a cereal station on steroids between the product offering, the customized branding, and the contemporary design. The end result... three clients who attended the event ordered the same cereal station for their events in the following weeks, proving that it was absolutely worth the effort!

The Sweet Tree

I've always found that bitesize treats are a crowd favorite. When you make it easy for guests to enjoy a small serving of something sweet, they rarely don't take full advantage. The challenge, however, is that bitesize sweet stations or passed sweets always look so boring—that is, until the Eatertainment Sweet Tree! The concept was to present individual sweets that tasted as spectacular as they looked, but on a three-dimensional tree stand that stood out as absolutely fabulous!



Credit



CUSTOM ACRYLIC CUBES FOR CANAPÉS

Photo courtesy Ernesto Di Stéfano



YES, THE S'MORES TREND IS STILL ON FIRE

Photo courtesy Ernesto Di Stéfano

Photo opp

There's something you might notice about every food display I've described. While we are in the business of feeding people, we need to remember that in the age of Instagram everything is (or should be) a photo opp. When we design our stations, we focus on food that looks great and tastes even better, but equally as important is the environment in which it is served. We want our guests to enjoy the food, but they are also constantly looking for photo ops. If you can serve up a great dish and an Instagramable moment, even better!

We can't forget about passed item displays! Since passed canapés represent about 50 percent of the menus we send out, we are always looking for ways to present them in new and exciting ways. This fall some of our favorite new canapés ideas include:

- Acrylic Cube Displays – We simply had a local acrylic company cut us small square and rectangle acrylic cubes on which we place our canapés for a visually stunning first impression.
- S'mores on a Stick – Taking the traditional camp side favorite, we modernized this with custom-drilled oak trays where each s'more is presented on an elongated wooden dowel.



Photo courtesy Ernesto Di Stéfano

Cocktails ... of course

It wouldn't be an event without some spectacular cocktails! Once again my advice is put the effort in and make sure every one of your events has a specialty curated cocktail. Trust me, it makes a huge difference and what better way to start an evening than with perhaps a Basil Gin Lemonade or a Watermelon Jalapeño Margarita?

The choice is yours, path one or path two. If you choose path one I won't fault you, the road is at least a little less rough. But if you choose path two, I am very sure we will meet somewhere along the way! **CS**
Bon Appetit! Sebastien

A SPECIALTY COCKTAIL, SUCH AS THIS BASIL-GIN-LEMONADE IS A REFRESHING START TO THE EVENING



Photo courtesy Ernesto Di Stéfano

WATERMELON JALAPENO MARGARITA

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