

eat

# BACK TO NATURE

NAKED FIG TAKES ON THE ART OF VEGAN EVENTS BY ELIZABETH KEYSER

When Marcia Selden Catering (MSC) got a call from Matthew Kenney Cuisine, looking for a partner to expand his plant-based restaurant empire into the world of high-end catering, it was a full-circle moment.

Robin Selden, MSC's managing partner and executive chef, was a fan of the chef since the '90s, when he opened Matthew's on the Upper East Side of NYC. She and her friends would eat there, enjoying the food, and moments when the handsome chef, named Best New Chef by *Food and Wine* in 1994, said hello.

Since then, Kenney has devoted himself to raw and plant-based cuisine. He's opened many restaurants nationally and internationally (now operating thirty-nine, according to his website), including Double Zero. He's published ten books, including *Everyday Raw*.

Meanwhile, last June MSC catered a vegan wedding for 300 in Greenwich. The guests, even the meat-and-potato types, were blown away. "Wait a minute. This is vegan?!"

Naked Fig, the partnership between Stamford-based MSC and California-based Kenney, will create luxury, plant-based, vegan party food for catered events across the country and in Canada. Robin Selden will lead the culinary team that'll execute

and create Naked Fig events, while Jeffrey Selden is running the planning and execution.

"Seventy percent of the recipes are Matthew's," Selden says, "And about 30 percent are ours. We know the catering world, and it's different from what Matthew Kenney does in restaurants," she says. "We needed to create one-bite hors d'oeuvres."

Cooking Kenney's recipes re-ingited her passion. "Matthew's food is exquisite and sophisticated," she says. At a recent launch party for Naked Fig in MSC's NYC event space, guests tasted mini raw zucchini lasagna, sweet pea falafel, and kelp noodle cacio e pepe.

Plant-based eating is not a trend, Selden says, it's the future. "I would love our clients who aren't vegan to have one of these Naked Fig events," she says, "and surprise their guests."



PHOTOGRAPHY: FOOD © ADRIAN MUELLER; PARTY BY PHILIP VAN NOSTRAND PHOTOGRAPHY

Naked Fig Catering, a culinary brand from Marcia Selden Catering and Matthew Kenney Cuisine, celebrated its launch at Above Twelve (a Marcia Selden exclusive NYC event space). The party, called Garden of Eden, served plant-based cuisine.

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