

Sweet Endings



Carefully crafted desserts are upsell opportunities that leave guests smiling

BY ROBIN SELDEN,
MANAGING PARTNER AND EXECUTIVE CHEF
OF MARCIA SELDEN CATERING

Marcia Selden Catering's carefully crafted desserts include (clockwise from above) dark chocolate salted caramel tart; pear and orange sorbetto; chocolate caramel popcorn cake; and Tahitian vanilla and orange panna cotta.

I don't know about you, but I'm often tempted to skip right over a meal to the dessert! It's amazing to me that no matter how exquisite a dinner I am served and how full I am after it, I always seem to have room for dessert. Who's with me?

Our clients are, as they crave beautiful restaurant-quality plated desserts to round out their menus. We delight their sweet teeth with desserts that have just the right amount of sweetness, an occasional touch of savory, a creamy delicious texture and, of course, that much-needed crunch to round out the indulgent experience.



Wedding Couples Take the Cake

Our wedding clients often want to have their cake and eat it, too—so we will serve a specially curated dessert as well as wedding cake. We never suggest eliminating the cake, as that tradition is a beautiful one. We suggest they do the cake-cutting ceremony for those nostalgic photo ops and save the top for their one-year anniversary. After we serve the plated dessert, we pass around slices of cake to the guests.

Don't get me wrong—there are couples who want the cake as their dessert, in which case we often find ways to embellish the plate with berries or a custom gelato that enhances the experience. We always recommend adding sweet treats to the tables that complement the cake. In addition, we love to offer a few passed desserts while guests are up and dancing after the meal. Who wouldn't love a custom popsicle, crispy churros with dulce de leche or a warm, fresh-out-of-the-oven cookie served with a mini Bailey's milkshake? Trust me, when those warm cookies start to circulate and the smell of fresh-baked goodness envelops the room, you'll have guests falling at your waiters' feet to get one!





Mini Sweet Treats

At all types of events, clients want to embellish their tablescapes with small, sweet treats. We are seeing the return of elegant and painstakingly perfect little petits fours, tiny Madeleines and chocolate-dipped gooseberries, to name a few bite-sized desserts. These beauties are always devoured, and often as we watch from the sidelines I wonder if the guests realize how long it took us to glaze and pipe that perfect petit four, as it gets gobbled up in a matter of seconds.

We charge a lot for these precious gems, and our clients keep coming back for more. Can you say "awesome upsell"? Serving these stunning and precious bites really can make the night. Guests who are watching their weight or are on a never-ending diet always feel like if it's just one bite then maybe it doesn't count. Our sales team is there to help share in that sentiment, and it works well for us!

Bite-sized desserts served up by Marcia Selden Catering include (top to bottom) white chocolate gooseberries; a trio of tiny cupcakes; raspberry almond petits fours; and (opposite) mini orange Madeleines.



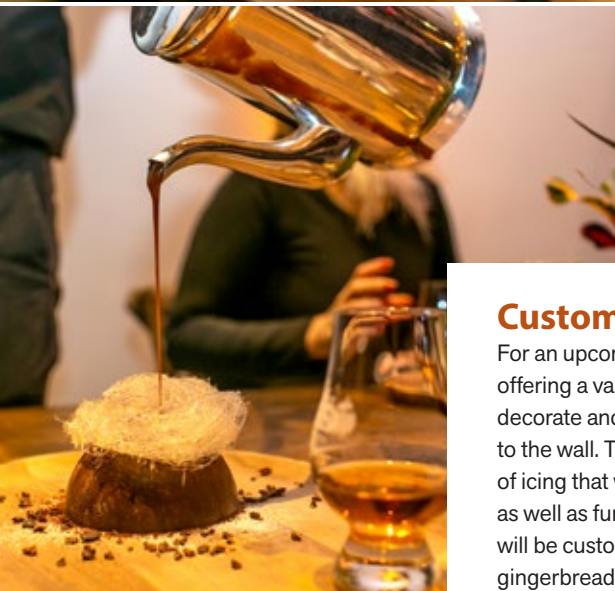
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We spend a lot of time getting to know our clients and designing just the right dessert that has elements of what they love and more to ensure that the very last bite of the night will be as special and memorable as the first. Our iconic Dessert Wall has become a signature staple at many a wedding, mitzvah, gala and corporate event. Guests are like kids in a candy store when they approach. We hand them a bakery box so they can pick out their favorites, and they go to town like they are about to have their last meal and will never have sweets again. We customize the signage of the wall in the style of the event, creating specialty branded cookies and other items that reflect the event's branding or the guest of honor.



Marcia Selden's iconic Dessert Wall (above) is a guest favorite.

LEFT PHOTO BY ROBIN SELDEN; RIGHT PHOTO BY HECHLER PHOTOGRAPHERS



Marcia Selden sweet treats that keep them coming back for more include (clockwise from above) chocolate melting domes with bourbon bread pudding; birthday cake favors; raspberry Eton mess; lemon panna cotta with minted raspberry soup; and a dessert tree of deconstructed cake globes.



Customized and Interactive

For an upcoming corporate holiday party, we are offering a variety of cupcakes that guests can decorate and design to give an interactive element to the wall. The display will include custom tubes of icing that we fill and sticker with their branding, as well as fun holiday candies and sprinkles. There will be customized gingerbread cookies, with the gingerbread people wearing T-shirts displaying the client's logo. How cute is that? At the station we will also have a big hot chocolate display, where guests can select their favorite kind of hot chocolate and top it with three different kinds of whipped cream, crushed candy canes, custom homemade marshmallows, and large pieces of Belgium chocolate that our station elves will be shaving.

At a client's recent birthday event, she wanted to serve a beautiful dessert but didn't want the cake to go to waste. So we created small cylinder cakes in Lucite boxes, so each guest could take home a piece of the birthday cake as a favor rather than eat it there.



Dessert is the opportunity for you to showcase your creativity and leave the guests with a sweet conclusion to your events that has them begging for more. It should never be an afterthought and always should be something memorable. I've never seen a client eat one of our desserts and not smile when they are finished. That is the best gift we can give to our clients at the end of an event! ●



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robin Selden is the managing partner and executive chef of Connecticut- and New York City-based Marcia Selden Catering and Naked Fig Catering.

She and her brother Jeffrey Selden were named two of the "100 Most Inspiring People" in the wedding industry by The Knot. Robin was also named to the BizBash 500, celebrating the top 500 event professionals in 2020 in the U.S., and was named as one of the 10 Industry Innovators for 2022 by BizBash.

Selden is on the President's Council of the International Caterers Association and won their coveted Chef of the Year award. She's a past Innovative Chef of the Year and a current Ambassador Chef for the Greenwich Wine & Food Festival. Comfortable on stage, she emceeds the Art of Catering Food at the Catersource Conference, where she also judges the cooking and cocktail competitions. Robin received The Richard Carbotti Award in July 2021 at the Special Event/Catersource conference, awarded annually to industry leaders who demonstrate Richard's spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy.

She sits on three not-for-profit boards, including The American Cancer Society, and on the advisory board of two national magazines. Robin is a board ambassador for the Make-A-Wish Foundation and helped to establish the first Women's Wellness event for the American Cancer Society: Women Leading the Way to Wellness. For the last seven years Robin and Jeffrey have taught a catering class at Cornell University's School of Hospitality in the fall as well as a special events class at the Boston University School of Hospitality in the spring.

She resides in Stamford, Connecticut, with her husband Michael, twins Max and Maggie, and her Goldendoodle "canine kids" Ozzie and Bo. For more information, visit marciaselden.com.