

# SMALL BUT *Mighty*

BY SARA PEREZ WEBBER

Good things come in small packages—especially when it comes to the starters creative caterers are serving up. Packed with flavor and thoughtfully presented, these appetizers and small bites give catering companies the chance to show off their culinary philosophies, one beautiful bite at a time.

Packing tons of flavor in perfectly presented packages, caterers are revving up the creativity in their appetizers and small bites



*Bites & Bashes in Los Angeles recently served jajangmyun, a Korean noodle dish, in mini to-go boxes during a wedding cocktail hour.*



## Bites & Bashes

**Los Angeles**  
bitesandbashes.com

For a recent wedding, Executive Chef Julie Coser was asked to recreate a client's favorite childhood dish to serve during the cocktail hour—jjajangmyun (pictured above), a Korean noodle dish that's also one of Chef Julie's favorite comfort foods. Bites & Bashes served up the dish—black bean knife-cut noodles with black bean sauce, vegetables, topped with house-pickled daikon and edible flowers from the Coser family farm—in mini to-go boxes.

"Everyone loved it and asked for more!" says Jennifer Yun, catering and events manager. "It's always so fun to introduce guests to personalized dishes like this. Hopefully when the couple thinks of this dish, they'll be able to tie it to both their childhood and their special wedding day."

Chef Julie has transformed her own favorite childhood dish, which her mother used to make for her, into Bites & Bashes' signature glass noodle to-go boxes (pictured right). The customer favorite can serve as a vegan passed or stationed hors d'oeuvres option.

"We have noticed the trend to break free from traditional wedding cuisine, so clients have definitely requested and implemented their favorite childhood dishes more often! And we're all for it," says Yun. "Weddings are intimate and personal, and the food should be the same."



## Footers Catering

**Denver**  
footerscatering.com

Clients and guests of Footers Catering particularly enjoy appetizers that reflect its home state of Colorado and recall favorite comfort foods.

"Our couples love to feature nods to Colorado cuisine, especially destination weddings," says Colbèrt Callen, director of sales and marketing. The Rock River Ranch Mini Bison Slider (pictured below) "hits all the right notes by featuring multiple Colorado products in one item, and just being gosh-darn adorable." Served on a petite steakhouse brown bread bun, the bison slider features goat cheese from Colorado's Haystack Creamery, arugula and red onion chutney.

"Unique twists on comfort classic items continue to be popular in our market," says Callen, pointing to Footers' Sugar Donut Pork Belly Bite (pictured right), with White Marble Farms pork belly atop a slice of green apple and a cinnamon sugar donut hole, with black pepper syrup. "Playful and fun hors d'oeuvres have taken the lead over petite and elegant items in recent years."





## Chowgirls Catering

Minneapolis  
chowgirls.net

Chowgirls has been working to create exciting appetizers for those with dietary restrictions, "particularly vegan appetizers that can be delivered, and creative vegan dips and spreads to comprise grazing board selections for those who don't partake in our standard offerings," says Meghan Larsen, sales and hospitality director.

Tempting options include the Ottolenghi Green Gazpacho Shot (pictured below), inspired by London's famed Ottolenghi restaurant, a creamy green gazpacho with cucumber, spinach, walnuts, basil and other surprises; and the Edamame Orange Crisp (pictured left)—puréed edamame with subtle sesame tones atop a crispy, sweet orange chip.



## Puff 'n Stuff Catering

Orlando and Tampa, Florida  
puffnstuff.com

"When we think about appetizers, our philosophy centers around the idea of a teaser course or a small, delicious composition of a larger experience that can be sampled or shared," says Executive Chef Sean Holden. "A specific trend that we have been gravitating toward is personalized handheld fare, so guests can mingle freely while enjoying delicious cuisine."

For a client who loves Grey Goose vodka, for example, Puff 'n Stuff created the Grey Goose Vodka Lobster Martini (pictured above), with Maine lobster, olives and vodka dressing on a bed of locally sourced watercress and pea tendrils, served in a coupe glass. "This salad may have been small in portion, but it was big in flavor!" says Holden.

With clients increasingly requesting individually packaged items, the Puff 'n Stuff team works to "find clever ways to display our food in a spectacular way," says Holden. An appetizer at a corporate event, for example—Soba Noodle Bowl Salad with Ahi Tuna (pictured left)—was served in a clear Chinese takeout container "to give the item a unique colorful and Asian flair."



“We like to offer artfully designed plates that can be placed on the table almost as part of the design.”  
—Robin Selden

## Marcia Selden Catering

Stamford, Connecticut  
marciaselden.com

“We like to offer artfully designed plates that can be placed on the table almost as part of the design,” says Robin Selden, managing partner and executive chef. “People eat with their eyes, so at most of our dinners and weddings we begin with a beautiful bite in the way of an amuse bouche to whet their palates and get them excited for what’s to come. We always try to offer something that will complement the appetizer course in some way.”

Robin’s favorite starter on the Marcia Selden menu is Boursin Panna Cotta with Sunchoke and Roasted Garlic Soup (pictured left). “The presentation is beautiful and includes garlic chips, shaved fennel, crushed roasted garlic meringue and micro greens” she says. “The panna cotta arrives to the table with the before-mentioned garnishes, and then the soup is poured tableside. It’s really a fan favorite.”

Another first-course fave among guests is the Smoked Salmon Carpaccio, served with caviar, egg white and yolks, capers, chives, toast points and a small bundle of greens tossed lightly with a fresh lemon vinaigrette (pictured below).



## Eatertainment

Toronto  
eatertainment.com

The most popular items on Eatertainment’s menu “are absolutely delicious but are also plated and presented in unique ways that entice senses well before the first bite,” says Victoria Gibson, Eatertainment’s social media manager. “We have always been proud of our innovative strategies when it comes to presentation, and it’s wonderful to see the interest reflected back to us.”

One of Eatertainment’s standout appetizers is the Sous Vide Scallop Canapé (pictured below), a scallop served on a green pea blini with celery yuzu salsa and fennel pollen. “From the melt-in-your-mouth scallop, to the perfectly crusted with a pillowy center green pea blini, this bite-sized canapé is a burst of flavor,” says Gibson.

Clients also love the gluten-free Carrot Panna Cotta Salad (pictured left), with baby red lettuce, spiced orange reduction, gouda and sweet potato chips. “It’s a combination of flavors that are familiar but reimagined to entice every sense,” says Gibson.





## Deborah Miller Catering & Events

New York City  
deborahmillercatering.com

When Deborah Miller Catering rebranded during the COVID-19 pandemic—a top-to-bottom repositioning that included a new executive team, menu, website, marketing strategy, business plan and more—the company emphasized small plates.

The idea was to “design dishes meant to create a shared dining experience by giving people the opportunity to dine like food critics and sample more of our menu,” says Justin LaCoursiere, Deborah Miller Catering’s marketing director. “Small plates give the utmost customization and diversification to a menu, combining culinary creativity and trendy ingredients for the ultimate social dining experience.”

The small plates menu reflects four main concepts, notes LaCoursiere:



### 1. Instagram-Worthy Plating

(example pictured above: Coconut Shrimp and Citrus Stone Fruit): “More plates of food means more opportunities for guests to snap photos and share said photos on social media,” says LaCoursiere. “The goal is to make dishes that are visually appealing, artisanal and super delicious!”

### 2. Diverse Menu Options

(example pictured right: Mini Lobster Rolls): Deborah Miller Catering’s goal is to reflect “the culinary diversity clients crave,” says LaCoursiere. “Commitment issues? Not a problem. Small plates allow for varying flavors, textures, tastes and styles.”

### 3. Tapas Catering

(example pictured above: Devils on Horseback): “Appetizers are where culinary experts can be more innovative with chosen ingredients, cooking style and presentation,” says LaCoursiere. “Let loose and show people your creative side; encourage guests to mix, match, nibble and socialize. After all, the dining experience is better when enjoyed with others.”



### 4. Trendy ‘New York’ Catering

(example pictured above: Garden Salad and Lemon Verbena Vinaigrette): “Our small plates are local, organic, seasonal and sustainable,” says LaCoursiere. “Pro tip: When designing small plates, stay hyper-focused on building sharable dishes that are as trendy and sustainable as possible.” ●



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