Delusions of Grandeur?

Custom-created Culinary Concoctions for One's Own Memorial Events

A variety of presentation options can be discovered if the possibilities for your own commemorative affair are explored. But you may question what we're contemplating here. Are we planning for a funereal gathering or a birthday party?

One might need to alter one's pre-conceived image of a memorial reception and regard it as more of a life celebration event. Still, some of the notions that would entail personal energy and hands-on efforts could, at first glance, seem unrealistic, given the somber occasion. Your family members would likely agree with that perception.

Suppose you told them ahead of time that you had a vision for this event, one that would entreat their group participation as chefs, bakers, or culinary artists. What if you requested that they create a centerpiece for the affair, maybe a gingerbread house fashioned after your own home, complete with a replica of your garden, birdbath, gazebo, and umbrella tree in the yard surrounding it? And don't forget its oceanfront location. What if for the meal you wanted blue gelatin salads embedded with underwater life (gummy fish) and embellished with swimmers along with their paraphernalia on the surface? What if you

wanted the repast to be a repeat of your home-cooked Thanksgiving dinners? What if you wanted to highlight your Italian heritage by providing guests with necklaces created by stringing different varieties of pasta? Your dear family members might issue a predictable response:

Have you lost your noodle, cookie? You may be a cracker jack of a planner, but you're actin' sort of flaky and your egg-headed notions are mighty scrambled and unsavory. This pie-in-the-sky whimsy you're marinating seems kind of fishy; are you tryin' to "pull our legs"?

In case you really relish the idea, here's a condensed version of our attitude toward it: We don't mean to be hardboiled about this or to duck our responsibilities, but, honey, when that day comes... when you talk like a hog and say, "Oh, my achin' bacon," then your eyes become glazed and you roll over and fritter away, we won't need to be peelin' any onions to make us do a whole of cryin'. We'll all be grittin' our teeth and beatin' our breasts, tryin' to stuff our raw feelings and clam up long enough to fudge composure after losing our sweet sugar babe. Our only foray into the pantry will be to open a box of shrouded wheat. The only popovers we'll make will be to the local funeral home and the only waffling to be done will be in their billing department. Don't expect us to broil over a hot stove for the sake of slingin' hash or creamin' brule.

What makes you think we'll wanna' be jammin' in somebody's kitchen, all juiced up and ready to slice and dice instead of headin' for the nearest greasy spoon? We may be cuttin' the cheese, but we won't be whippin' and dippin'!

Just be a lamb and save us some dough, muffin, so we can beef up the pot without havin' to stir anything up. Here's an idea that would be "a piece of cake": When we're done closin' the lid on your oyster shell and gettin' you settled in the ground, it sure would hit the spot to sandwich in a stop at the waterin' hole in town. We could egg on the gang and "spice things up," 'cause they'll need to let their slushy tears evaporate and offset how crabby they'll be feelin'. A stiff round of spirits would be the order of the day. Scotch would do it for some, but we'd also pass the bier, uh, beer. Everyone would be able to loaf around, ham it up, and act punchy while they get sauced toasting your memory. Now, that's a plan!

Granted, this type of reaction would be understandable if you were contemplating a food-studded social event to take place during the initial days following your death. But given the trend toward memorial gatherings within extended time frames, it's quite possible that your folks would be getting together to celebrate your life once they were beyond their immediate period of grief. In fact, among some religions and cultures,

mourners traditionally reconvene at specified times. They do this as a follow-up to the early death observances in order to rekindle life tributes and nurture their own recoveries from the losses.

Under such circumstances, a spirit of community could gel as a result of assembling to prepare food for a delayed commemoration. Although certain preparations would be more time consuming and labor intensive than other swift and efficient measures, with enough time available, recovering mourners might welcome an opportunity to join together for personal interaction while concocting edibles symbolic of your life.

Excerpt from the recreational pre-planning book,
Pondering Leaves: Composing and Conveying Your Life Story's Epilogue
(no longer available)

*****

Mary Ellen Markant

Signature Sunsets

ponderingleaves@gmail.com