



Clockwise from opposite, far left: Performers under a clear tent; colorful, whimsical table decor; a Bubble Performance that took place in the fountain; SITK's signature waffles, served with buttermilk fried chicken; a towering cake for the guest of honor, the "Ring Master of the Night"; pommes frites.

## Cirque Du 70

**SOMEONE'S IN THE KITCHEN**  
Tarzana, Calif. ●●● sitk.com

The pros at Someone's in the Kitchen (SITK) in Tarzana, Calif., didn't let rain spoil the fun for a 70-year-old entrepreneur's Cirque du Soleil-themed birthday party.

The event took place in July 2015 "when the weather is perfect in Southern California," notes Cheryl Fish, vice president of SITK Design Services. Yet the forecast the day before the event predicted what "seemed impossible," Fish says: torrential downpours.

After an emergency call to the rental company manager, "all of the plans changed," says Fish. "Tents were ordered; new lighting, chandeliers and rain gutters were installed. The entertainers could no longer perform in the infinity pool, so their performances had to be re-vamped [they performed in a fountain instead], and then a meeting with our clients took place regarding the rental budget that had increased tremendously."

The 100 guests invited to this "Greatest Show on Earth," as described on the invitations, were

greeted at the door by cirque characters, who continued to entertain guests during the cocktail reception, where drinks were served in the Umbrella Bedazzling Bar on a covered patio, with colorful umbrellas hanging upside-down from the ceiling. Bright, bold linens and whimsical décor adorned the tables, while multi-colored draping hung from columns and the tent as guests dined "Under the Big Top," with appetizers—passed by staff members dressed in cirque attire—including duck soft tacos, crispy wild mushroom ravioli, pear and brie phyllo, Brazilian coconut shrimp, mini lobster corn dogs, pommes frites and pulled brisket sliders.

The dinner menu included a gourmet pizza station, with pizzas served straight out of the oven; a mashed potato bar, accompanied by cheddar, gorgonzola and mozzarella cheeses, bacon bits, chives, sour cream, sautéed mushrooms, butter balls, brown sugar and cinnamon toppings; a carving station, with beef tenderloin served with a vine-ripened heirloom tomato salad and a wild baby spring salad; and the Southern Comfort station, featuring SITK's famous buttermilk fried chicken and waffles.

As part of the festivities, a band performed from a tented proscenium, and an event artist painted the colorful scene before the guests' eyes. "The show must go on...and it did," says Fish about the rainy-day party in sunny California. "No one ever knew that the event was not going to take place without tenting."

# Alfresco

Fresh air, sunshine, moonlight—and, yes, even some rain—helped set the stage for these outdoor affairs

BY SARA PEREZ WEBBER

# Events





Clockwise from opposite, far left: Hand-lettered signage; English Garden-style centerpieces; rhubarb-infused prosecco; the historic red barn, fronted by a patio with pergola; bar menu; the lawn in front of the historic farmhouse, where the ceremony took place.

## Farm-Fresh Wedding

**ZINGERMAN'S CORNMAN FARMS**  
Dexter, Mich. ●●● [cornmanfarms.com](http://cornmanfarms.com)

Freshly picked bounty and rustic décor highlighted a wedding last May at Zingerman's Cornman Farms outside Ann Arbor, Mich., a property set on 42 acres of farmland with two beautifully restored venues—an 1834 farmhouse and 1837 red barn—in addition to a tent pavilion. The ceremony took place on the property's front grove, with the white farmhouse as the backdrop, and then transitioned into cocktails on the pergola, dinner inside the white peak pole tent pavilion and dancing in the upper level of the restored barn.

About 160 guests were welcomed to the event with a glass of rhubarb-infused prosecco, made from rhubarb grown in the garden of Executive Chef and Owner Kieron Hales's mother, which the farm now grows on property. "Our beverage manager incorporates fresh herbs from our gardens into our drink menus," says Hales. "We think farm-to-bar is just as important as farm-to-table."

Zingerman's Catering & Events created a menu that included seasonal vegetables from Cornman Farms as well as neighboring farms, picked the day before the wedding, such as asparagus, shallots, radishes, carrots, leeks and baby beets. A first-course summer salad featured local greens and strawberries, as well as goat cheese from Zingerman's Creamery, which uses local goat's milk. In-season produce and herbs that guests will be able to enjoy for

Cornman Farms' upcoming wedding season include kale, spinach, corn, tomatoes, mint, lavender, thyme, basil, rhubarb and several other varieties.

The wedding's soft, romantic décor by Jen House Design included hand-lettered signage welcoming and directing guests; greens hanging from the farmhouse balcony; Edison bulbs and market lights illuminating the dinner tent; and blush centerpieces and bouquets dotted with bright colors and lush greens. "The overall look translated into an English Garden feel with a touch of whimsy," says House.

Cornman Farms hosts a variety of events, from weddings to private dinners to corporate retreats. "We have definitely noticed a growing interest in farm-style events, though we really try to measure our success not on the number of events we host but the quality of each one," says Hales. "Our goal is to give each guest the best level of customer service we possibly can from the moment they walk through our doors."





*Clockwise from opposite left: Sustainable flower arrangements from a local farm; salad with local fruit and produce; the tented backyard; sweet bourbon-glazed pork belly and vegetable skewers; bar with a fruit-infused beverage; Combs tending to the smoker; huckleberry and strawberry cobbler topped with honey oat financier.*

mixed berries with farm-sourced lavender mascarpone mousse and crispy baguette; sweet bourbon-glazed pork belly and vegetable skewers; BLT slider with Cajun bacon, heirloom tomato, pea shoots and garlic herb aioli on brioche; and baby mesclun greens with peach, blueberry, spiced cashews, oat crumbles, sweet mint vinaigrette and local Camelot Valley Chèvre.

Entrees included roasted beets with pork belly and Dawg Gone Bees honey (all locally sourced); creamy aged cheddar and truffle mac 'n' cheese; fire-roasted duck with cranberry bacon glaze; and Asian grilled flank steak with

shiitake mushrooms, with the duck, beef and bacon all from local purveyors. For dessert, guests enjoyed brownie kabobs with strawberry and toasted marshmallows, as well as huckleberry and strawberry cobbler with lavender crème fraîche and honey oat financier served in Mason jars.

Even the wood in Combs' smoker was local, all sourced from York, Pa. "Everybody was very interactive and intrigued by the smoker, asking 'What kinda wood ya using?'" says Combs. "I told them a mix of apple, black cherry, oak, pear, hickory and sassafras. With hors d'oeuvres being passed and the buffet, I became friends with everybody very quickly."

The simple décor featured fresh-cut sustainable flower arrangements from Root Cut Flower Farm in Carlisle, Pa., as well as tree logs and a canoe filled with ice-cold, non-alcoholic beverages. "It was cool to have the most intimate part [of our wedding] shared with the closest family we have, and then celebrate later with everyone we know and love, even our two English Bulldogs," says the bride, Nora Mahoney. "The entire day was fun and breezy." ●

## Rustic Backyard Bash

**MOUNTAIN LAUREL CATERING & EVENTS**  
Camp Hill, Pa. ●●● [mountainlaurelcatering.com](http://mountainlaurelcatering.com)

A couple who wed in a candlelit cave at Indian Echo Caverns in Hummelstown, Pa., with just a few dozen guests attending then chose to celebrate their unusual nuptials with a casual backyard feast by Mountain Laurel Catering & Events in September 2015.

Pat Combs, chef and owner of Mountain Laurel, created an elegant menu for the 150-plus guests perfect for late summer, including many ingredients sourced locally. Fruits and greens from Paulus Orchards in Dillsburg, Pa., featured prominently in the passed hors d'oeuvres and salad—Paulus Orchard peach gazpacho with maple crème fraîche; roasted red apple hummus phyllo cups with caramelized onions;

