

Minneapolis-based D'Amico Catering's holiday offerings will include Plum, Caramelized Onion, Goat Cheese, Micro Basil Tartlets; and (opposite) a charcuterie plate featuring Manchego, whipped ricotta, prosciutto, Genoa salami, beech mushrooms, pistachios and fresh herbs.

Festive Foods

BY SARA PEREZ WEBBER

As we head toward the busy end-of-year season, caterers share highlights from their holiday menus

'Tis the season to get those holiday menus ready! If you're still working on the details, get inspired by the highlights shared by the caterers profiled here. But don't wait too long—according to CFE's sources, clients are booking early and are eager to celebrate the season!

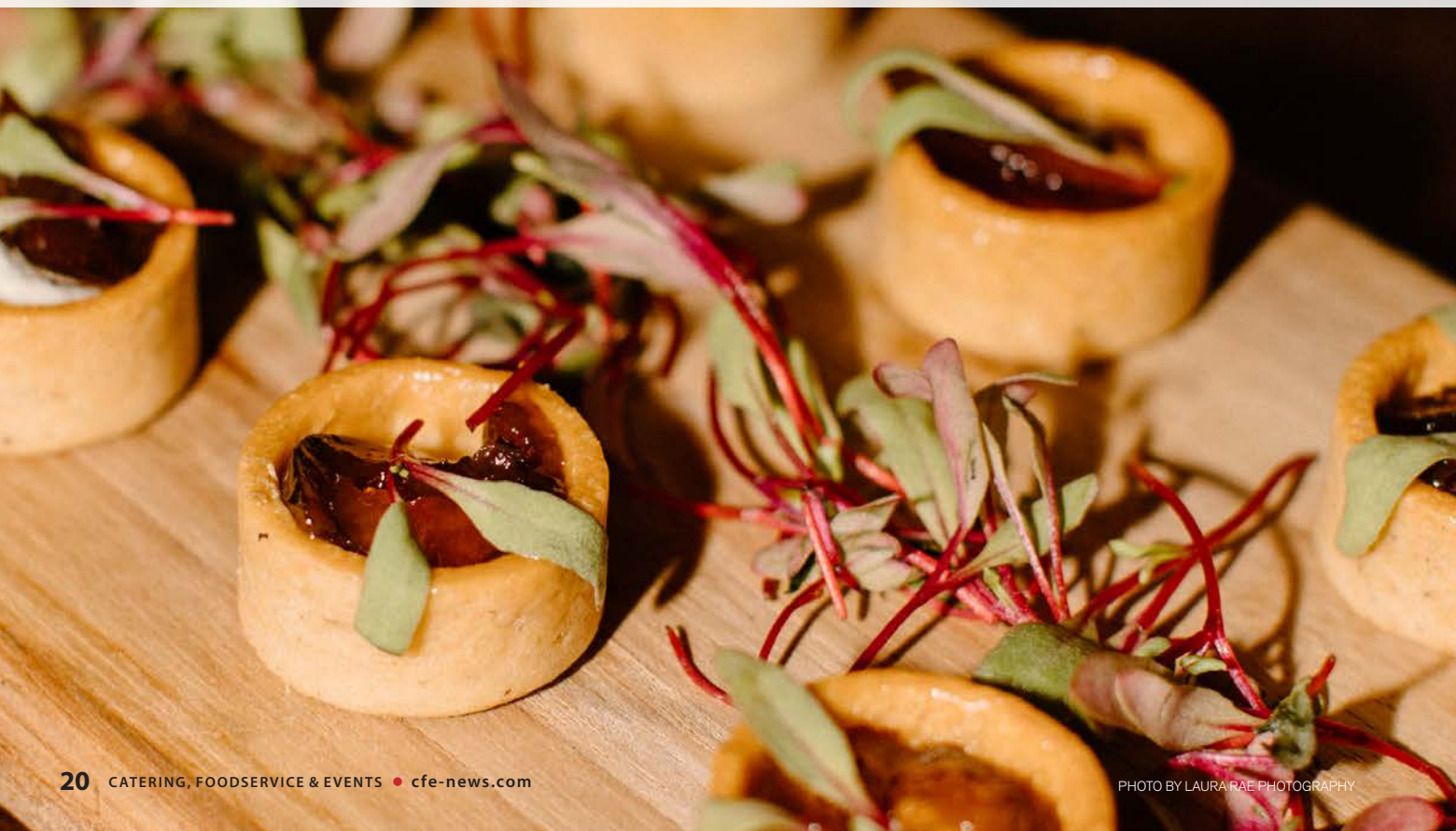


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D'Amico Catering

damicocatering.com



Minneapolis-based D'Amico Catering is "seeing a large uptick in clients reaching out to plan their holiday celebrations well in advance," says Christie Altendorf, director of marketing and senior event planner. "We are delighted to see social clients ready to welcome guests back into their homes, and excited to hear that corporate clients value the opportunity to gather and celebrate now more than they ever had."

For its holiday menus, D'Amico aims to "combine comfort-inducing ingredients with a rich aesthetic to ensure every celebration feels cozy and cheerful," says Altendorf. "Cooler temperatures give us the opportunity to feature warm winter flavors that satisfy both the palate and the holiday spirit."

D'Amico's holiday menu highlights include:

- Bite-sized hors d'oeuvres such as a **Beet and Apple Tartare with Mulled Wine Reduction, Foie Gras with Pickled Cherries on Brioche**, and a rich **Pork Belly with Maple Bourbon Glaze and Butternut Squash Puree**.

- A preset **charcuterie plate appetizer** created by Chef Max Mobraten featuring a variety of cheeses, cured meat, nuts, beech mushrooms, fresh herbs and honey. The plate, singing with fall flavors, acts as "both sustenance and part of the table design as guests settle in," says Altendorf.

- **Wild Rice Salad with Pomegranate Seeds, Pickled Onions, Roasted Squash, Pecans and a Maple Mustard Dressing**, featuring wild rice grown in northern Minnesota and harvested in the early fall.

- An **interactive fondue station**, inspired by the Alps and created by Executive Chef Geoff Lamden-Stout, with a bubbling pot of warm, wine-infused cheeses and dipping options such as baby potatoes, cornichons, toasted cubes of bread and local sausages. "Guests are

invited to skewer and dip as many items as they'd like while chatting with Chef on the history of fondue and how the perfect pot of cheese is achieved," says Altendorf.

- **Sakura Wagyu Flat Iron Steak**, designed as a small plate by Executive Chef Lamden-Stout to easily accent any holiday menu, which is sliced at a chef-attended station, placed atop Yukon Gold mashed potatoes infused with crème fraîche, and sauced with a luscious green peppercorn sauce.

- A **Truffle Trolley**, helmed by a chef, who rolls it up to guests and offers them a small plate created just for them. "This dish is comprised of house-made whipped ricotta, fresh figs, prosciutto and local honey," says Altendorf. "The plate can stand on its own easily, but to take it to the next level, our chef offers the guest the option of white or black truffles carefully shaved on top of it. Roaming truffles—you can't get more festive than that!"

To end Thanksgiving events on a sweet note, D'Amico's Executive Pastry Chef Leah Henderson is offering **four pie options**: Bourbon Pecan, Apple Brown Butter Streusel, Chocolate French Silk and Classic Pumpkin. Henderson has also created a **miniature dessert spread** for holiday events that includes Dark Chocolate Dipped Caramel Macchiato Profiteroles, White Chocolate Ginger Financiers, Raspberry Cheesecake Trifle, Salted Caramel Peanut Macarons, Fresh Fruit Tartlets with Gold Leaf, Swiss Meringue Marshmallow Kisses, Malted Butterscotch Pot de Crème, Pistachio Marzipan Brownies, Orange Citron Meringue Tartlets and Dark Chocolate Mint Truffle Lollis.



D'Amico Catering's holiday highlights include (clockwise from top) a **Truffle Trolley**, with white truffles freshly shaved over house-made ricotta, fresh figs, prosciutto and honey; pies including **Apple Brown Butter Streusel**, **French Silk**, **Bourbon Pecan** and **Classic Pumpkin**; **Pork Belly with Bourbon Maple Glaze and Butternut Squash Puree**; **Beet and Apple Tartare with Mulled Wine Reduction**; and **Minnesota Wild Rice Salad with Pomegranate Seeds, Pickled Red Onions, Roasted Squash, Pecans and Maple Mustard Vinaigrette**.



Abigail Kirsch

abigailkirsch.com

Among the traditional ingredients on New York-based Abigail Kirsch's holiday menus—such as maple, cranberry and pumpkin—two stand out for Executive Chef Peter Mamadjanian. “There are so many flavors that are synonymous with the holiday season, but two of my favorites are cinnamon and sage,” says Mamadjanian. “They are warm spices that evoke a cozy, nostalgic feel, and they seamlessly pair up with the flavor profiles of seasonal ingredients in a way that is subtle but noticeable.”

Abigail Kirsch's holiday menu highlights include:

- **Maple Squash Crudo**, a gluten-free and vegan starter with candied cranberry, endive and pumpkin seed dust.
- **Harvest Vegetable Empanadas** with spiced cranberry jam.
- **Root Vegetable Burrata**, featuring smoked pumpkin hummus, blistered grapes, raisin nut crostini and cider gastrique.
- **Bourbon Mustard Beef Short Rib**, with pan-seared spaetzle, cauliflower, wild mushrooms, peas, horseradish and soft herbs.

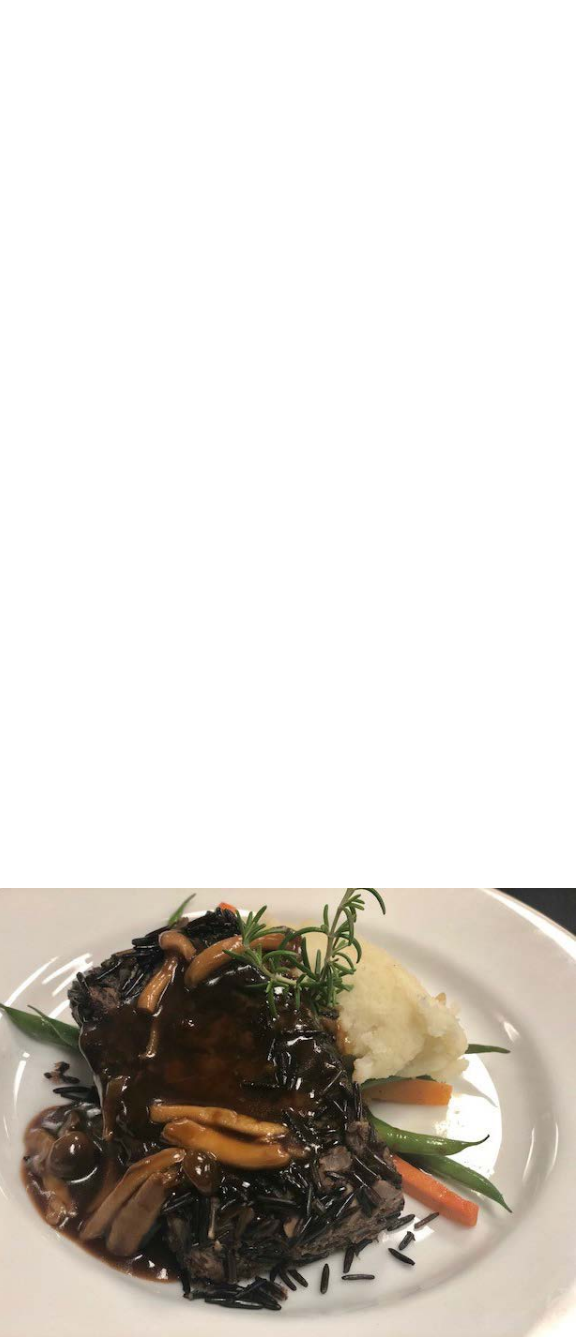
A popular holiday station offered by the caterer is the “**Take the Chill Off Cart**.” Guests can pair decadent hot cocoa and warm caramel cranberry cider with bite-sized caramel apples and warm cinnamon-sugar donut holes.

Desserts adding festive notes to Abigail Kirsch's holiday menus include **Spiced Apple Crostata**, with savory short crust, dried cranberry cinnamon streusel, vanilla whipped panna cotta and cranberry caramel; and **Pineapple Carrot Cake Brûlée**, with cream cheese buttercream, grilled pineapple salsa, passion panna cotta and ginger coral tuile.



Abigail Kirsch's holiday menus will include (clockwise from top) Pineapple Carrot Cake Brûlée; Harvest Vegetable Empanadas; the Take the Chill Off dessert station, served with hot cocoa and warm caramel cranberry cider; Root Vegetable Burrata; and Bourbon Mustard Beef Short Rib.





Creations in Cuisine Catering

creationsincuisinecatering.com

The holiday menu for Phoenix-based Creations in Cuisine "is designed to bring both comfort and elegance to our clients' seasonal celebrations," says Jen Laister, business development specialist. "We project another busy holiday season." As of late August, the caterer had already sold out the first two weekends in December.

Creations in Cuisine's holiday menu highlights include:

- Hand-passed appetizers, such as **Mini Beef Wellingtons** with mushroom foie gras topped with bearnaise; and—for gluten-free and vegetarian guests—**Polenta with Spinach & Roasted Red Peppers**.
- Stationary appetizer "showstoppers," like **Personalized Tins of Short Rib** topped with mashed potatoes.

- Classic and premium entrees, including **Herb-Roasted Turkey Breast**, and **Salt & Herb-Crusted Prime Rib**.
- Gluten-free and vegetarian entrees, such as **Wild Rice Mushroom Meatloaf** with seasonal vegetables.

Also popular during the holiday season are Creations in Cuisine's **carving stations** and **custom seafood towers**. "It's the perfect time to meet our guests personally and provide a little culinary showmanship," says Laister. "The slice of a chef's knife through a succulent prime rib or turkey breast, or a beautifully crafted seafood display of prawns, oysters on the half shell, Dungeness crab and lobster tail are sure to impress the guests."

For holiday dinner and lunch buffets, guest favorites include brown sugar-glazed ham, herb-roasted turkey, prosciutto-wrapped pork tenderloin, and salads of roasted cauliflower and sweet potato; and such side dishes as bourbon cheddar au gratin potatoes, buttery mashed potatoes and giblet gravy, and Italian mac and cheese with focaccia breadcrumbs.



Holiday highlights served up by Creations in Cuisine include (clockwise from above) Personalized Tins of Short Rib; Salt & Herb Crusted Prime Rib of Beef, served at a carving station; Italian Mac and Cheese; Wild Rice Meatloaf; and Mini Beef Wellingtons.



Windows Catering

catering.com

Washington, D.C.-based Windows Catering is gearing up for a full slate of holiday events. "Our holiday season is already shaping up to be a record year again," said Andrew Gerstel, CEO, in early September. "It appears that a lot of our existing clients, and several new, large customers, are planning further in advance for their holiday entertaining. This includes both our corporate as well as social clientele."

Windows' holiday menu hors d'oeuvre highlights include:

- **Gruyere and Crab Palmiers:** Maryland lump crab meat and Gruyere cheese wrapped in a flaky golden puff pastry.
- **Snowflake Shrimp:** Florida Gulf shrimp toasted in coconut with a tamarind chutney.
- **Sour Cherry Pork Tenderloin** with sour cherry compote on a rosemary crostini.

For holiday entrees, Windows' Culinary Centerpieces include:

- **Rack of Lamb with Dijon Brioche Crust** with haricot verts, baby carrots, wild mushrooms and miniature pear-shaped potato croquettes, lamb jus and mustard sauce.
- **Harvest Chicken Roulade:** Breast of chicken stuffed with corn bread, apples and pecans, roasted and sliced into medallions on a bed of braised Napa cabbage with layered potato diamonds, butternut squash batons, dried fruit chutney and pan gravy.
- **Apple Cider Braised Chicken** with bacon, shallots, root vegetables and garlic-roasted Brussels sprouts.

For sweet endings, Windows' holiday dessert options include the Dark Chocolate and Hazelnut Pinecone Dome, a flourless chocolate cake with hazelnut crisp, orange crème brûlée, chocolate pearls and semi-sweet ganache glaze; Chocolate Peppermint Tart, with a rich chocolate shell and mint-infused panna cotta filling, decorated with crimsons, currants, berries and mint; a Macaron Croquembouche; Decadent Buche de Noel, with chocolate genoise filled with rich Belgian chocolate cream, topped with chocolate bark and garnished with espresso macarons; and a Chocolate Charcuterie Board, with assorted filled macarons, chocolate truffles, meringues, rocky road bars and dark chocolate-covered strawberries. ●



Gingerbread Showstoppers

For the past 10 years, Washington, D.C.-based Windows Catering has created four or five extravagant gingerbread houses for a VIP client's annual holiday celebration. Each masterpiece—which takes about 200 hours to build in-house—is a replica of a military base chapel or a well-known Washington building or monument. The houses are painstakingly decorated by the company's pastry department, led by Executive Pastry Chef Gina Espinoza.

The client, a nonprofit organization, supports all military branches. After the party's over, Windows delivers the gingerbread houses to USO offices or Veterans Affairs facilities. "We're very proud to partner with this organization to bring some holiday cheer to the military community," says Windows CEO Andrew Gerstel. "They are definitely conversation-starters when guests see them for the first time."

Windows Catering's extravagant gingerbread houses have included replicas of such landmarks as (top to bottom) the White House, the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon.

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