



## AN INTERVIEW WITH KAREN LERNER AND RACHAEL VOLZ OF A FARE EXTRAORDINAIRE MAKING WEDDINGS EASY-BREEZY

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KAREN LERNER'S EVENT AND CULINARY PRODUCTION FIRM CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY WITH A NEW CO-OWNER – RACHAEL VOLZ – AND MORE EXTRAORDINARY WEDDINGS.

### WHY SHOULD COUPLES HIRE AN EVENT PLANNER FOR THEIR WEDDING? CAN'T THEY HANDLE THE ORGANIZING THEMSELVES?

**KL:** It requires a high level of organization and I think most brides and grooms, and families, have ideas, but as far as keeping it all together...

**RV:** They don't know about resources and vendors. Also, planning a wedding is probably one of the most exciting, special things that you'll do with the person you love. You really should spend that time enjoying it and loving that time with your family and friends and not stressing over the details. So if you can afford to get a wedding planner, it's probably money well spent.

### WHERE DO YOU GET INSPIRATION FOR WEDDINGS?

**KL:** We get ideas from our travels and get inspiration from our clients, because they're very resourceful. They might bring an image or an idea and we take it from there.

**RV:** I think the key to planning a really creative, excellent party is listening to the company or individual and making a dream come true, bringing their vision to life. Traveling is important, too. I was just in Thailand and the quality of the food and the chefs there is incredible! We always bring back great ideas.

### WHAT'S TRENDY NOW?

**RV:** Trends are always changing, every three months, just like fashion. People don't want to be stuck at a table the whole night. They want small plates, action stations; they love to see an oyster shucker shucking oysters or a sushi chef making custom sushi rolls. Food is usually a large part of your budget, so anything we can do to make it pseudo-entertainment gives Houstonians bang for their buck! Also, we like to use international ingredients. Lemongrass, curry, ginger...

**KL:** ...cardamom...

**RV:** You could take a basic dish that everyone recognizes and add any of those ingredients and give it the A Fare Extraordinaire twist!

### IS HOUSTON PRETTY OPEN-MINDED WHEN IT COMES TO WEDDING FOOD?

**KL:** We have amazing food here and we don't get as much credit on the global scene as we should, but I think our audience can also take some steps forward.

**RV:** I loved Scott Tycer's (now defunct) Textile, for example, where you got six to eight small, intricately prepared dishes. But so

many Houstonians feel they want to get more ... everything's big in Texas.

### HOW DO YOU COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER?

**KL:** I spend a lot of time cultivating longstanding client relationships and developing new ones. I also spend a lot of time on culinary development and research – which is the heart of our company. Culinary creativity is one of our hallmarks. I also spend a lot of time on financial oversight and moving the company forward.

**RV:** I spend a lot of my time on sales and strategizing. I think about the big picture – which is branding, marketing opportunities, securing and building relationships with key individuals within our city. I also still oversee the details of our parties that are happening every day and every weekend.

### FAVORITE WEDDING SONG

**RV:** *Green Eyes* by Coldplay

**KL:** *Love Story* by Taylor Swift

### BEST FLOWERS FOR BRIDE'S BOUQUET

**RV:** Pink peonies

**KL:** Lily of the valley

### TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL WEDDING

Relax and let the experts do their jobs. Cherish the moment.

### FAVORITE WEDDING FOOD ITEM?

**RV:** Smoked or cured meat and fish – smoked salmon and trout, beef Carpaccio, salads and great bread... it's like an upscale antipasto station and goes really well with wine.

**KL:** Our lamb chops are showstoppers. We wrap them with banana leaves and raffia and they're a real treat.