

BEST BUFFET PRESENTATION & MENU

"BREAKFAST CUPCAKE BUFFET" at **"IN THE SPIRIT OF APPRECIATION" EVENT**

100-WORD OVERVIEW

Kennedy Wilson Properties comes to us each year to cater a holiday appreciation breakfast in their attractive lobby for all the tenants they manage. The event typically totals out at around 800 people and every year we are challenged to devise something new. This past year they requested something fun for their "hip" audience. Given the ongoing and seemingly, never-ending cupcake craze, we conceived a hybrid approach of combining everyone's favorite breakfast standards in cupcake form. To take it yet to another level, we had a specially constructed six-foot vertical mirror and Lucite wall made to present the selection.

1000 WORD NARRATIVE

Kennedy Wilson Properties is a repeat client with whom we've maintained a great relationship for seven years. A young, hip audience that appreciates fun food and who embrace whimsical presentation as well as friendly service typically leases their properties so this audience became our call to action for the approach. It's always a good idea to bestow a name to such an event so we titled it, "In the Spirit of Appreciation" as this is truly what it was all about from the perspective of the client.

In general, it's normally quite tough to create something truly different based on traditional western breakfast foods. Breakfast tends to be a very personal thing; either it's never eaten, some don't care for eggs, some feel it's overly-carbo loaded, some prefer something light over something heavy while others love a "big breakfast," etc. Likewise, all the usual suspects (cured pork products, eggs and cheeses to muffins, bagels and waffles) still remain pretty much what they are no matter the iteration. We knew we could do a "strata" or savory bread puddings, but how many of those are already listed on Pinterest and Yummly? Been there, done that. We could do a creative take on individual breakfast soufflés as soufflés aren't typically served for breakfast, but not for 800 people. In considering the spin we were looking for, we wanted to accomplish three things: 1) Deliver something fun; 2) Be independent of the need for flatware or even disposable plates; and 3) Capture the comfort foods that so many of us learn to love growing up. After reviewing our existing repertoire of items, it was an



unequivocal decision – cupcakes – but for breakfast? That wouldn't fly...at least, not cupcakes in the traditional sense.

In contemplating what breakfast foods we'd marry with the idea, it was understandably apparent that eggs weren't going to fit into this picture. And we weren't going to use ingredients that are commonly included in omelets either. Who would want a "Denver Omelet Cupcake" or a spinach and onion cupcake? Scratch all that. The natural marriage would clearly be traditional, sweet breakfast food, but going down the cereal road was too obvious. It doesn't take much imagination to top a cupcake with cereal. Besides, we thought most guests would look at that and say, "Oh, a cupcake with cereal. How novel," and then walk over to the yogurt bar. Whatever our actual approach, it had to be cohesive, make sense and stand on its own. Basically, we were looking for a V-8 moment where people would immediately exclaim, "Wow! Never would have thought of that but I get it and it's so clever!"

Pancakes. French toast. Donuts. But how does one marry any of those with a cupcake? It's a bit silly to place a cupcake on a pancake and French toast, or serve a donut alongside a cupcake. We could flavor the cupcakes with things like maple syrup and cinnamon, but then we'd simply have a maple or cinnamon flavored cupcake, not exactly ingenious.

First up, the pancake cupcake. Most people enjoy blueberry pancakes and blueberry muffins so that was easy. And what kind of icing or topping would be a natural fit? We thought of cream cheese frosting. By topping off the cupcake with a miniature pancake and more fresh blueberries, we had our answer. Second up, the French toast cupcake. Now that we had an approach, we started off the same way, but this time, included maple syrup in an American-style buttercream. And since part of the appeal of French toast is the sticky maple syrup, we drizzled some over the top along with a miniature piece of actual French toast. Next up, the donut cupcake. At this point, it was an easy decision, a donut just big enough to fit on top of the cupcake. If the donut were served on the side, it would be two separate breakfast foods, but married together with a bit of coffee flavored frosting – since coffee and donuts are a natural fit – would be perfect and adorable. Lastly, oatmeal; yes, oatmeal. Could we pretty much make an oatmeal cupcake with some of the sweet toppings that people commonly enjoy? Of all four cupcakes, this was probably the easiest to achieve. At the end of the day, we created the ideal progeny of childhood bliss and all held in the palm of one's hand.

Now that we knew what would be the centerpiece of the buffet, we wanted to go the extra mile and present these unusual treats in a very unusual way. Laying out dozens of cupcakes on a table on upscale or even on amusing trays would still prove pedestrian. There's only so many ways cupcakes can be arranged on any surface. But what if that surface had height? And what if that height was a contraption that not only held dozens of cupcakes, but did so in a way that would allow ALL of them to be distinct? Even more so, what if that presentation was so impressive in and of itself that taken in its entirety, the cupcakes and the mode of presentation was matchless and impactful?

Lucite. We tend to use quite a bit of Lucite in our presentations, whether it be clear or colored and as a more economical and feasible material than glass, we needed to conceive a presentation that would accomplish what we intended. Well, sometimes, smaller, tighter presentations of food appeal to the eye more than overly large presentations because one's eye is focused. On the flip side, sometimes larger presentations are required if, for no other reason, than the amount of guests. Our solution was yet again found in childhood – cubbyholes. They're small and contain a limited amount of whatever but stacked together, can accommodate an entire classroom of kids. Leaning upon our supplier, we indicated what we felt would be the solution and indeed it was. The result was comprised of multiple stacks of clear Lucite cubbyholes all bound together to make a "wall." Within each cubbyhole we displayed four cupcakes. This presentation not only delivered an astonishing visual impact and acted as the centerpiece for the buffet, but allowed easy and quick access for guests to take what they wanted and then move away from the station. It worked perfectly.





FRENCH TOAST CUPCAKES

Yields: 12 cupcakes

Streusel

½ cup brown sugar, packed
1 Tbsp. sugar
½ cup all purpose flour
½ tsp. cinnamon
¼ tsp. salt
5 Tbsp. cold unsalted butter, cut into chunks

Cupcake

3 cups all purpose flour
1 Tbsp. baking powder
2 tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. salt

2 cups granulated sugar
1 cup unsalted butter, softened but still cool
½ cup full fat sour cream
½ cup maple syrup
4 large eggs at room temperature
1 Tbsp. pure vanilla extract

Maple Buttercream

1 cup unsalted butter, softened
3 cups powdered sugar, sifted
1½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
½ tsp. salt
⅓ cup maple syrup
2 Tbsp. heavy cream

For Streusel

In a large bowl, whisk together all the dry ingredients. Mix in the cold butter by hand, squeezing it into the flour blend until a pasty but not sticky texture is reached. If you're not using the streusel right away, cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

For Cupcakes

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and position rack in middle. Line a muffin pan with foil cupcake liners and set aside.
2. In a bowl whisk together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Set aside.
3. In the large bowl of a standing mixer with the paddle attachment, beat together the sugar and butter on moderate speed until light and fully and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. In the interim, whisk together the sour cream, maple syrup, eggs and vanilla.
4. Beginning with the flour mixture, alternately add the flour and liquid mixture to the creamed base in two equal additions each. Be sure to blend each addition well until adding the next. Remove any remaining flour by stirring the mixture by hand with a large rubber spatula.
5. Using an ice cream scoop, divide the batter evenly between the muffin molds then divide the streusel evenly atop the cupcakes. Transfer to oven and bake for 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool.

For Buttercream

In the large bowl of a standing mixer with the paddle attachment, beat the butter until creamy. On low speed, beat the sugar into the butter until incorporated then increase to high and beat until very light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add the vanilla, salt, maple syrup and heavy cream and beat in slowly.

FRENCH TOAST

Yield: 7 cups

1 loaf of good quality white bread or brioche	½ cup dark brown sugar
4 cups heavy cream	½ tsp. cinnamon
12 large eggs	½ tsp. nutmeg
1 Tbsp. brandy	Unsalted butter for frying
3 Tbsp. Triple Sec	

Method

1. Remove crust from loaf then cut bread into small, ½" thick rectangles.
2. In a bowl, whisk together the remaining ingredients except for the butter.
3. Place bread rectangles into a hotel pan or other shallow container and cover with the custard mixture.
4. Allow to sit until saturated. Alternately, slices of bread can be dipped into the custard mixture one at a time.
5. Pour over the bread slices until completely covered. Make sure to turn the bread so that it is saturated with the mixture. Ideally, this should be done the day before then refrigerated, covered, overnight.
6. To cook, melt enough butter in a large, non-stick skillet over moderate heat to lightly coat the bottom. Lay a few bread slices into the hot butter, taking care not to overly crowd the pan. Fry on one side until nicely browned, then flip and repeat. The second side typically takes a shorter amount of time to cook and brown.



BLUEBERRY PANCAKE CUPCAKES

Yields: 24 cupcakes

Cupcake

3 ⅓ cup all purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
½ tsp. baking powder
1 Tbsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. salt
1½ cups granulated sugar
1 cup butter, softened
1 cup full fat sour cream
⅓ cup whole milk
3 large eggs
2 large egg whites
1 Tbsp. pure vanilla extract
1½ cups fresh or frozen blueberries

Maple Buttercream

½ cup unsalted butter, softened
8 oz. cream cheese
4 cups powdered sugar
2 tsp. maple syrup
Whole milk, as needed

Garnish

Cinnamon sugar
Fresh blueberries
Mini pancakes
Lightly sweetened whipped cream

For Cupcakes

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and position rack in middle. Line a muffin pan with foil cupcake liners and set aside.
2. In a bowl whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Set aside.
3. In the large bowl of a standing mixer with the paddle attachment, beat together the sugar and butter on moderate speed until light and fully and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. In the interim, whisk together the sour cream, milk, eggs, egg whites and vanilla.
4. Beginning with the flour mixture, alternately add the flour and liquid mixture to the creamed base in two equal additions each. Be sure to blend each addition well until adding the next. Remove any remaining flour by stirring the mixture by hand with a large rubber spatula. Quickly fold in the fresh or frozen blueberries.
5. Using an ice cream scoop, divide the batter evenly between the muffin molds then transfer to oven and bake for 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool.

MAPLE BUTTERCREAM

In the large bowl of a standing mixer with the paddle attachment, beat the butter and cream cheese together until creamy. On low speed, beat the sugar into the base until incorporated. Add the maple syrup then increase to high speed and beat until very light and fully, about 5 minutes.



COFFEE & DONUTS CUPCAKE

Yields: 16 cupcakes

CUPCAKES

1½ cups all-purpose flour
⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
½ tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
¼ tsp. salt
1½ tsp. espresso powder
½ cup brewed coffee, at room temperature
½ cup whole milk
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
½ cup granulated sugar

½ cup light brown sugar
½ cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1 extra large egg

ESPRESSO BUTTER CREAM FROSTING:

1 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 ½ cups powdered sugar
1½ tsp. vanilla extract
1½ tsp. espresso powder

Chocolate glazed donuts for garnish

For Cupcakes

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and position rack in middle. Line a muffin pan with foil cupcake liners and set aside.
2. In a bowl whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Set aside.
3. In the large bowl of a standing mixer with the paddle attachment, beat together the sugars and butter on moderate speed until light and fully and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. Add the egg and continue to beat until emulsified.
4. In the interim, whisk the espresso powder into the brewed coffee until completely dissolved then add the milk and vanilla extract and set aside.
5. Beginning with the flour mixture, alternately add the flour and liquid mixture to the creamed base in two equal additions each. Be sure to blend each addition well until adding the next. Remove any remaining flour by stirring the mixture by hand with a large rubber spatula.
6. Using an ice cream scoop, divide the batter evenly between the muffin molds then transfer to oven and bake for 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool.



CRANBERRY OATMEAL RAISIN CUPCAKES

Yields: 12 cupcakes

CUPCAKES

1 cup whole milk	¼ cup vegetable oil
1 cup quick-cook rolled oats	½ cup dried cranberries, reconstituted in simple syrup
1 cup whole wheat flour	½ cup mix of golden and black raisins, reconstituted in simple syrup
¼ cup granulated sugar	¼ cup toasted rolled oats
1 tsp. baking soda	Crystal sugar Honey or agave syrup
½ tsp. salt	
1 large egg	

For Cupcakes

1. Preheat oven to 425°F and position rack in middle. Line a muffin pan with foil cupcake liners and set aside.
2. Using the whole milk and quick-cook rolled oats, prepare oatmeal as usual. Allow to cool slightly.
3. In a bowl whisk together the flour, sugar, baking soda and salt. Set aside.
4. In the large bowl of a standing mixer with the paddle attachment, beat together the prepared oatmeal with the egg and oil. Add the flour mixture to the base and beat on low speed for no more than 2 minutes to incorporate.
5. Using an ice cream scoop, divide the batter evenly between the muffin molds then transfer to oven and bake for 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool.
6. In the meantime, combine the cranberries, raisins, toasted oats and crystal sugar in a bowl.
7. Top each cupcake with the dried fruit mixture and drizzle lightly with honey or agave syrup.