

feature * catering the olympics



Above: A team of 22 students and three chef instructors from Sullivan University's National Center for Hospitality Studies in Louisville, KY, accompanied Catering by Framboise to Beijing.

Below: Debra Lykkemark, president and CEO of Culinary Capers Catering (in red suit) with the Culinary Capers Beijing team and Vancouver Community College culinary and hospitality students.



Bound *for* Beijing

Two catering companies travel to the other side of the world to feed thousands during the Olympic Games

by Suzy Feine



extensively for this moment: Frank Puleo of Catering by Framboise in Staten Island, NY, and Debra Lykkemark of Culinary Capers Catering in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Lykkemark was appointed as the official caterer for the British Columbia Canada Pavilion, and Puleo was selected by the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) to oversee two projects: the High Performance Training Center and USA House.

From August 8 to August 24, 2008, all eyes were on the Beijing National Stadium in Beijing, People's Republic of China, for the commencement of the XXIX Olympiad. Athletes who trained for years for this moment competed in the hopes of winning a gold medal for their country. And, much like the athletes, two caterers also prepared

This year marks the fifth time Puleo catered for the Olympics; his first experience was the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, followed by the 2002 Winter Games in Salt Lake City, the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens and the 2006 Winter Games in Turin, Italy.

For Puleo, being selected as an official caterer for the Olympics began as simply being in the right place at the right time. "Back in 1993, we catered an event for a local not-for-profit organization in New York City," he says. "It was one of those events where so many things were out of our control, and naturally, everything that was out of our control went wrong. Someone at the party came up to me and said, 'You guys were great. I hope you'll consider coming down to Atlanta and helping us with the catering for the 1996 Olympics.'" ❄️



Situated near the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square in Beijing, the 21,000-square-foot British Columbia Canada Pavilion greets visitors with a dramatic view of 13 stunning wooden arcs, representing Canada's 10 provinces and three territories.

Two weeks later, Puleo received a call from the person who complimented him at the party, and that person turned out to be the chairman of the hospitality committee for the Atlanta Organizing Committee for the Olympics (ACOG).

Similarly, Lykkemark's catering company has previous experience catering for the Olympics. "We catered for the government in Torino during the Winter Olympics," she says. "They were very pleased with what we had done for them in 2006, so that probably had some influence on their decision to hire us for Beijing."



PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

Lykkemark, who took along six people from Culinary Capers, also took 24 culinary students and four instructors from the Vancouver Community

College (VCC). "The VCC students and teachers went through an interview and selection process," she says. "During the interview, Culinary Capers was looking for a good fit with our corporate values as well as a sense of adventure."

Puleo, along with his business partner, Frank Lombardi, who acted as the executive chef overseeing the food aspect of Beijing, took along a team of 22 students and three chef instructors from Sullivan University's National Center for Hospitality Studies in Louisville, KY, plus a team of individuals from Catering by Framboise. "We took a total of 84 people with us, including front-of-the-house and back-of-the-house staff," says Puleo. "The logistics of transporting 84 people to a foreign country to work was a task in itself with passports, special visas and housing."

Prior to their journey to Beijing, the team at Catering by Framboise catered the Hall of Fame in Chicago, an event where former Olympians are inducted into an honor role of medal winners from past Olympics, which takes place just before the teams leave for the Olympics. "The food presented during the Hall of Fame was a prelude to the food served in Beijing, so those who did not attend the Olympics got to see a sample of what was presented there," says Puleo.



ON LOCATION IN CHINA

Puleo's team split their time between two projects. The first was the High Performance Training Center (HPTC), located just off the Third Ring Road in Beijing and a short distance from the Olympic Green where the major stadiums were located. "There were actually four restaurants as part of this complex and we used each for different purposes including a manager's lounge, an internet café and a recovery bar for post-workout refreshments," says Puleo. At the HPTC, athletes, trainers, managers and USOC staff dined, which comprised nearly 2,400 people.

The second project for Puleo's team was USA House, a hospitality house for Team USA corporate sponsors and their guests. Also located on the Third Ring Road, USA House entertained the major sponsors, including Anheuser-Busch, Johnson & Johnson, Coca-Cola, United Airlines and Hilton International. Additionally, a large group from the bid city, "Chicago 2016," was entertained at

USA House in the hopes of promoting Chicago for the 2016 Olympics.

Lykkemark's team provided meals at the British Columbia Canada Pavilion, located in the Beijing Exhibition Centre directly across from Tiananmen Square. "Our clients were mostly Canadian businesses and government events," says Lykkemark. "The purpose of the Pavilion was to promote trade and business relationships with China and to promote tourism in Canada."



THE ATHLETE'S CUISINE

Great care went into planning the cuisine for the Olympic athletes. "These young men and women worked their entire lives to get to this point," says Puleo. "The last thing they want before their competition is to change their diets. Our goal was to produce exactly the same food they have been eating for the past few years of training: high protein and/or high carbohydrate, low fat and low sugar meals. Organic farmers raised specific products for us in China, so we were assured of getting exactly what we wanted." For the meals served at the HPTC, Puleo followed very strict guidelines from the foodservice managers of the various USOC training centers. All of the food items served at the HPTC had clearly marked signage listing grams of fat, calories and grams of protein.

For USA House, Puleo produced foods that reflected the bounty and diversity of foods in America. "We had days when specific areas of the country were highlighted, and days when specific styles of eating were ❄️



Culinary Capers:

SABLEFISH CAKE WITH WILD RICE PICKLED MUSHROOM RELISH

Makes 12

FOR THE FISH CAKE:

- 5 oz. sablefish, skinless, trimmed
- 1 tbsp. basil, cut into thin strips
- 2 tbsp. mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. shallots, finely diced
- 1 tsp./1 tbsp. panko bread crumbs

FOR THE RELISH:

- 3 tbsp. wild rice, cooked
- 1 tbsp. sweet red or yellow bell peppers, brunoise
- 1 tsp. shallot, brunoise
- 1 tsp. chives, finely sliced
- 1 tsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp. vegetable oil
- 3 tbsp. Chanterelle mushrooms, chopped and cooked

Salt and pepper to taste

Cut the sablefish into a small dice. Combine with remaining ingredients except 1 tbsp. of panko bread crumbs. Form into 12 little cakes. Gently roll in 1 tbsp. of panko bread crumbs. Sauté until golden brown on both sides in clarified butter; keep warm.

For the relish, combine the vinegar, oil, shallots and sautéed mushrooms in a nonreactive bowl. Add the cooked wild rice, peppers and chives; season with salt and pepper.

Top each sablefish cake with a small amount of relish. Serve immediately.

highlighted,” he says. “So one day we served Jambalaya and Shrimp Creole, and another day we served a New England Clambake. For lunch each day, we had huge barbecue grills set up on the outdoor decks for a picnic feel, in addition to the buffets setup indoors. USA House became a haven for American food in Beijing.”

At the 21,000-square-foot British Columbia Canada Pavilion, Lykkemark served west coast Canadian cuisine with an Asian influence to up to 450 guests daily. Students from the VCC worked under chef de cuisine, Jonathan Chovancek, who created two signature dishes to serve: Sablefish Cake with Wild Rice Pickled Mushroom Relish and Maple Chili Salt Roasted Pork on a Wonton Crisp with Orange Aioli and Pea Shoot Slaw. “It was extremely difficult bringing products from Canada due to strict importing regulations on China’s end,” says Lykkemark. “But we were able to ship over Sablefish, scallops and tuna from British Columbia. We were also able to bring in Vancouver Island Chanterelle mushrooms, regional honey, Quebec maple syrup and organic Alberta pork, plus Whistler Brewing beer and Okanagan wine. All other ingredients were sourced locally in Beijing.”

All of this may seem like a logistical nightmare to some, but to those who accepted the challenge, it turned out to be the chance of a lifetime for a catering company. “The benefits have been immense,” says Lykkemark. “All the media attention gives the company an international profile, which not only brings in new clients and opportunities, but also makes Culinary Capers an exciting place to work.” 



Catering by Framboise:

BASIC TUNA TARTAR

3 lbs.	Ahi Tuna steak (super fresh)
1/2 cup	olive oil
3 tbsp.	sesame oil
4	limes, zest grated
1 cup	freshly squeezed lime juice
2 1/2 tsp.	wasabi powder
3 tbsp.	soy sauce
2 tbsp.	hot red pepper sauce
2 tbsp.	kosher salt
1 1/2 tbsp.	freshly ground black pepper
1 1/4 cups	minced scallions, white and green parts (12 scallions)
3 1/4 tbsp.	fresh jalapeno pepper, seeds removed, minced
5	ripe avocados (optional)
1 1/2 tbsp.	black or wasabi sesame seeds, optional

Cut the tuna into 1/4-inch dice and place in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, combine the olive oil, lime zest, lime juice, wasabi, soy sauce, hot red pepper sauce, salt and pepper. Pour over the tuna, add the scallions and jalapeno, and mix well. Cut the avocados in half, remove the seed, and peel. Cut the avocados into 1/4-inch dice. Carefully mix the avocado into the tuna mixture. Add the toasted sesame seeds, if using, and season to taste. Serve in Chinese spoons atop prepared seaweed salad.