

THE MAGAZINE FOR LEADING BUSINESS EXECUTIVES

CA Business Executive

SUMMER 2013

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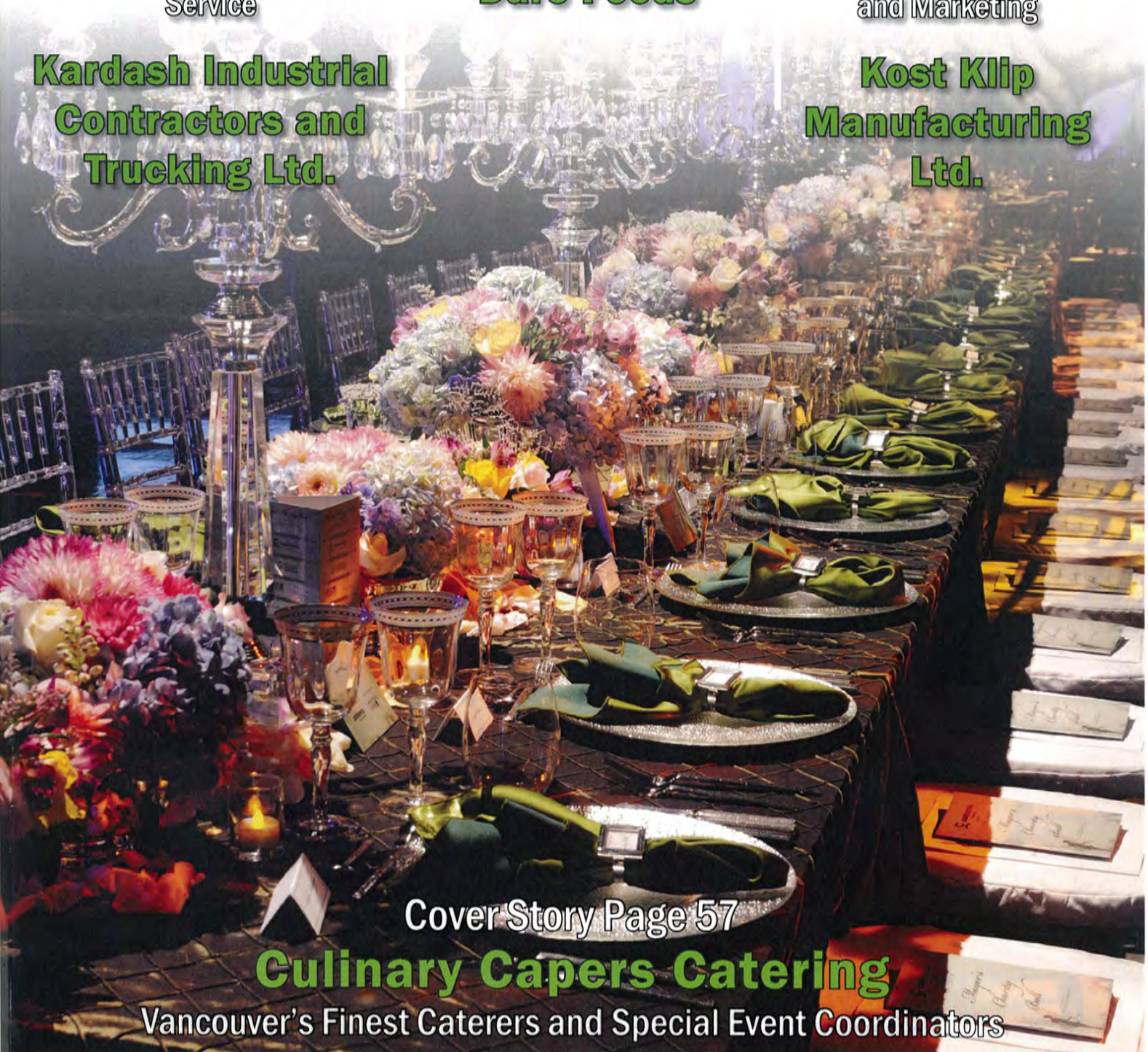
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Culinary Capers Catering

Vancouver's Finest Caterers and Special Event Coordinators

Culinary Capers Catering Vancouver's Finest Caterers and Special Event Coordinators

Produced by Christian Davis & Written by Jeanee Dudley

Debra Lykkemark founded Culinary Capers Catering (CCC) in 1986 as an avenue to explore and spread her passion for food. Working with an international team of more than 200 employees, CCC is now booming in Vancouver and Beijing, serving discerning foodies at special events, as well as in two restaurants. "I've been in the industry since age 16, working at a steakhouse and a Kentucky Fried Chicken," Debra says, adding with a chuckle, "I was supposed to go to business school, but I couldn't handle the paperwork."

Debra thrives on positive energy. "I am upbeat," she explains. "I'm also good at delegating to others; I surround myself with good people." Debra's unmistakable drive has helped her push through a series of culinary endeavors, starting with a coffee shop she opened with two close friends.

"We began focusing on catering due to the higher margin," Debra explains. "I bought the original partners out and found another larger kitchen in a nightclub. Soon, my husband Michael [Harries] joined the operation to help with marketing. We quickly became the market leader in corporate drop-off catering. Michael found a catering company in receivership and we purchased it to break into a more upscale market."

A big break for CCC came in the form of the 1996 NHL All-

Star Gala. Debra recalls the event as a challenge, but also as the catalyst that helped spark the future success of the business. Following the event, the team found growth again accelerated, as CCC outgrew another kitchen. With an expanding range of resources and capabilities, the team moved to take on an even larger challenge. In 2006 CCC bid on the Olympic Winter Games business in Italy, and won. The CCC team then gained catering contracts for the Beijing Summer Olympics and Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver.

International Flavor

While working in Beijing, Debra says, "I fell in love with China. I partnered with another executive chef who could handle day-to-day operations, and now we do events on the Great Wall, in temples, palaces and other amazing venues. We also opened SWITCH!, our restaurant in the heart of District 798." Debra is proud to note that SWITCH! is still in operation, but has changed format and location since opening. Furthermore, CCC's overseas operations continue to grow.

"I go to China three or so times a year to look at new types of business we can work into," says Debra. "We are now doing school catering in Beijing in an ex-pat community with children from all over the world. We serve around 2,400 children per day there. It is the school's cafeteria, but we take over the kitchens for the job."



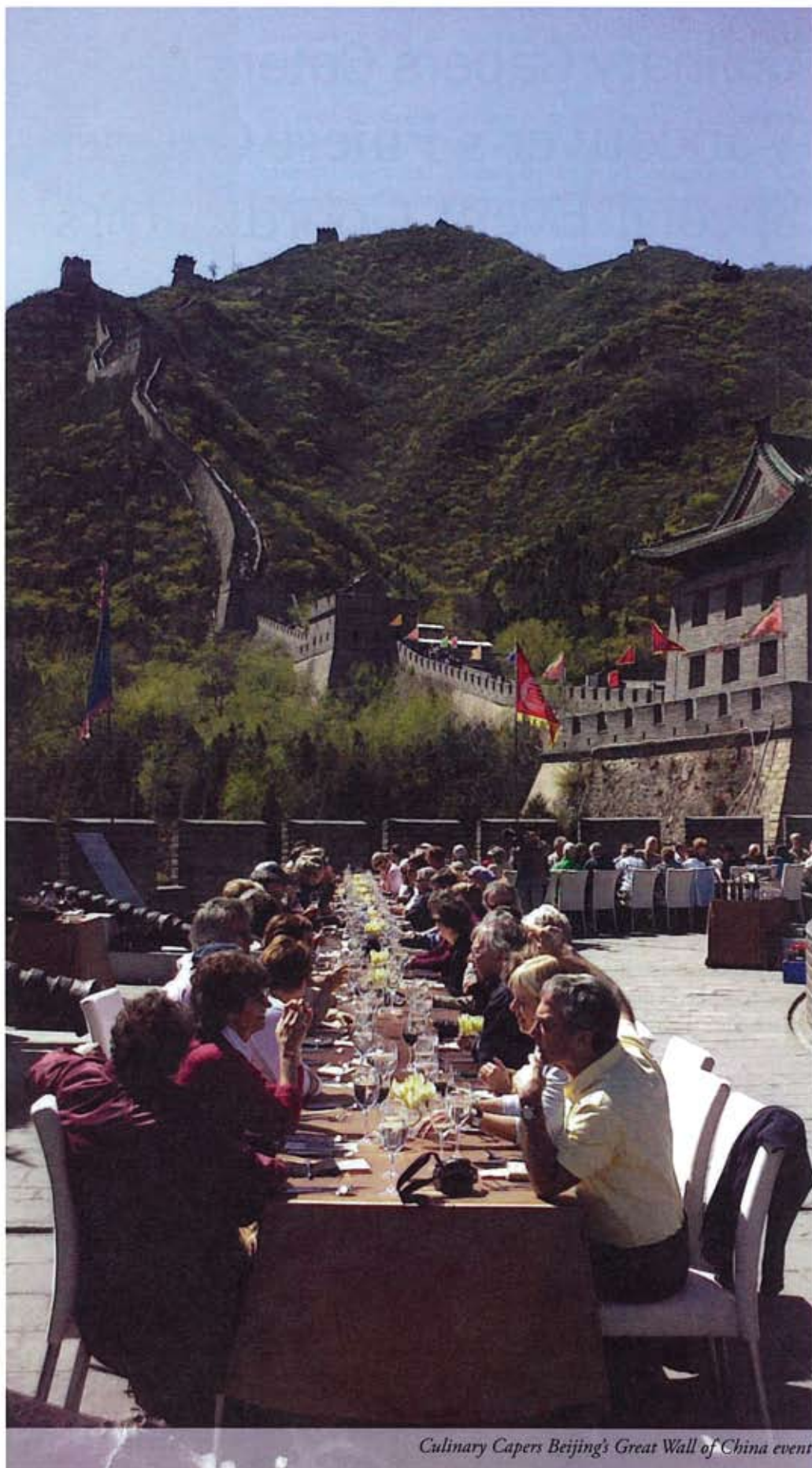
*Debra Lykkemark CEO and Billy Kawaja, president
of Culinary Capers Beijing*

The team also provides drop-off catering for several smaller schools, each with fewer than 200 students. In order to meet this demand, CCC constructed a large commissary kitchen in 2012 to make soups, bread and meals, all of which arrive hot at the schools. Despite all of CCC's success, Debra and the team continue to branch out, always searching for new customers.

However, Debra and the team at CCC's hard work has not gone unnoticed, as the business recently won a contract with Dulwich College in Beijing to serve 1,500 students. The team is currently bidding an even larger school with 2,400 students, but, Debra says, "We haven't got that contract yet."

Leading Practices

Recognizing that with sustained growth comes competition, health and safety play a major role in CCC's continued international success. "We built a state-of-the-art kitchen to the highest health standards in the world for the operation in Beijing," Debra explains. "We are very pleased with it; it is beautiful. Food safety is a huge issue in China, so having this kitchen, which has tiles from the ceiling to the floor with stainless steel troughs in the floor, means we can spray the whole thing down with a high-powered hose and wash it out through the trough. The system for washing vegetables is great, with a huge machine for the veggies to go in and get a careful tumble-wash. The cleanliness of raw products in North America is better. For international menus, we do a lot of salads and raw vegetable



Culinary Capers Beijing's Great Wall of China event



Margaret Chisholm, executive chef and Debra Lykkemark, CEO of Culinary Capers Catering and Special Events. Photo by John C. Watson

which is an important quality in a successful catering business. Despite some economic bumps, CCC is still growing steadily, and continues to pursue new adventures in gastronomy.

"It's hard to say if we are the best in the world, but that is our goal," Debra notes. "We are well-respected by the catering community. We frequently speak at the international conference, and did three seminars this year. We keep striving to get better and better. You cannot ever stop. If you stop, someone else will catch up or overtake you. We keep evolving and looking for new ideas and new ways to improve." Debra's positive outlook and policy of constant evolution continues to promote healthy growth for Culinary Capers Catering, a truly unique international operation.

For more information about Culinary Capers Catering, please visit: www.culinarycapers.com. •

products. In China, they cook at high temperatures that kill off bacteria. Local officials are very concerned with product handling and foodborne illness that could come from eating raw products. We have quite an extensive training for food handling and safety so people realize how important that is. Our Austrian executive chef even sets a timer every 15 minutes for hand-washing."

Aside from the new kitchen facilities, CCC is pursuing other diverse initiatives. "I went to our staff and asked for business ideas that we haven't looked into doing," Debra elaborates. "My executive sous chef in Vancouver has been using salmon skins that would be compost and making treats for dogs. His trial dog does very well in competition; the treats help with agility and improve the dog's skin and coat. He is running faster and jumping higher. We are trying to get down to zero waste and using the salmon skins to make the product helps us with our goal. We went to our suppliers for salmon and asked for any skins they do not need from wild, sustainable, local British Columbia salmon. We have been making it and marketing it as XOXO Pet Treats on xoxopettreats.com for dogs, and we may do some packaging for cats. The product is also fine for human consumption; our sushi chef enjoys it with his beer."

Debra and her team take a devoted, yet imaginative approach to food,



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