

## See a Brand's Thanksgiving Luncheon Amid 900,000 Cranberries

By JIM SHI | November 23, 2015

NEW YORK As Ocean Spray turns 85 years old, the company sought to re-examine the tradition of Thanksgiving as it's been and look forward to the future and review how the cranberry, as a holiday-associated fruit, can evolve into a new concept. Seeking to make a splash as the holiday nears, the juice brand hosted an immersive luncheon on November 3 in the middle of Rockefeller Center that delivered maximal impact and brand promotion.



"It's about taking a new look at the holiday and asking ourselves, 'How do we take something that's a part of so many people's lives and create a new experience with it?'" said Ty Kuppig, whose New York- and Boston-based Tyger Productions produced the event in partnership with Ocean Spray's ad agency Arnold Worldwide and PR firm Weber Shandwick. The objective of the bog was to create a new experience for tourists and local New Yorkers alike, according to Kuppig. The project was his first time working with Ocean Spray. "The bog has been there for a number of years as an annual activation, but this year the initiative was to really push the 'then and now' message."

The activation came at an important juncture. A recent Yahoo Food survey declared that millennials simply "aren't into cranberry sauce" anymore. "Thirty-three percent of millennials say they can't

stand the stuff, and half say they've nixed it from the menu altogether this year," the survey reported.

For a number of years, Ocean Spray has garnered public attention in the Rockefeller Center plaza by erecting a large 60-foot-long cranberry bog that has acted as a temporary backdrop for local morning shows. This year, by incorporating a pre-Thanksgiving meal in the bog, Ocean Spray was able to partner with celebrity chef Curtis Stone, who evaluated how the cranberry could be utilized as a base for a refreshed menu and new dimension.

"This was not only a menu sampling, but giving guests the actual Thanksgiving experience of being in a cranberry bog," said Kuppig. "So there were many layers—literally—in the project." An 11-hour overnight load in by Kuppig and his team of 12, fully dressed in waders, was finished in time for a morning taping of the Today show.

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The event gathered together a group of food-oriented bloggers and editors who, alongside Ocean Spray executives and its crop farmers, were served both a traditional and modern Thanksgiving meal prepared by chef Stone in cooperation with Great Performances. Until they arrived at the luncheon, guests were unaware they would physically be dining inside a bog filled with 900,000 cranberries and 21,000 gallons of water.

The venue itself was a custom-designed rubber membrane with bases that were leveled in the bog against the slope of the site and built by Magnetic. Custom-designed planter boxes made by Tyger Productions masked the weighted bases for the two pergolas which were stabilized with more than 300 hand-placed bricks (because no large equipment could be moved in the bog for fear of tearing the rubber liner).

Modern and traditional tables were positioned to create one long communal dining table that was more than 30 feet long in the bog.

For the traditional section, Kuppig took inspiration from Norman Rockwell and a classic sense of Thanksgiving. "Everyone sitting around a communal table filled with antique-inspired pieces related to at least one element of each diners' Thanksgiving memories," said Kuppig. "There is this visceral and emotional connection." That meant rattan charger plates, mixed traditional pattern china, classic flatware, antique silver napkin rings, etched vintage glassware, and vintage silver candelabras and chandelier.

Juxtaposed against that was the modern tablescape, which sought to inspire guests to say, "I want to do that this Thanksgiving..." The more "slick" side featured square chargers and china with Lucite napkin rings and clear chairs paired with custom-made cranberry topiaries as centerpieces and a contemporary crystal sphere chandelier that hung overhead. The Ghost chairs, for example, had the illusion of disappearing into the water, allowing the focus to remain on the cranberry.

Among the challenges Kuppig's team faced: working on a site that had less than 12 hours to allow for load in; a site slightly sloped; large pergolas that needed to be leveled; and, of course, working in water. "We were working against the current, quite literally," Kuppig joked.

In the event of precipitation, Kuppig devised an outdoor mesh canopy placed over the pergolas to shield guests that also allowed him to sidestep traditional tenting regulations.

Flanking the luncheon were two public activations: an Ocean Spray green-screen experience where guests could put themselves in a simulated bog and Thanksgiving dinner scenarios as well as an Ocean Spray booth where staffers handed out new cranberry-theme food and beverage offerings, morning taping of the Today show.

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