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# Wholesome Meetings

**“WHEN I STARTED IN THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS,** everything came out of a can.”

Steve Schuster, this issue’s People Profile subject (page 64), is talking about food in a literal sense, but I can’t help but find bigger meaning in his words (a side effect of majoring in English). Replace “restaurant business” with “meetings/events industry,” and the statement casts a wider net, one that illustrates an industry-wide shift from garden-variety functions to customized experiences.

People have evolved with the ever-changing meetings/events industry, making it richer than ever before (and even more nutritional; turn to page 22 for evidence). Planners constantly explore new trends and look for innovative solutions in an effort to avoid canned experiences. The small business owners we spotlight in our first feature (page 38) understand the importance of this strategy. The exact reasons they set out on their own may vary, but one thing is constant: They wanted something different.

Hotels, too, have moved from homogeneous structures to individual spaces, as demonstrated in our Venue Report on page 28. Gone are the days when a clean room that locked was all that a guest required. It’s the entire experience that people crave, and there is certainly an abundant selection of accommodations to be had. Even horizons are broadening; the Hotel Landing is the first hotel on Lake Minnetonka in over 50 years.

Schuster goes on to say the food industry moved to fresh-frozen, then ultimately to fresh. “That’s so important to work with from the standpoint of the nutritional values and taste and texture.” If you could take a bite out of Minnesota’s meetings and events industry today, I’d bet it would be full of flavor, texture and nutrients—not what you’d get from a can.

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