



wZBGJEEEn

University of Miami

Entry details

Entry Name:	University of Miami Centennial Celebration
Institution Name:	University of Miami
Entry Completed By (<i>name and position</i>):	Cree Samuels / Marketing Manager

Innovation was woven into every course. Signature UM orange and green mocktails called the Century Sunrise and 100 & Guava were crafted specifically for the Centennial, pairing tropical flavors with a striking visual nod to school spirit.

Chef-driven favorites such as Jerk Chicken Mac & Cheese and the Cuban Frita burger reflected the Caribbean and Cuban influences on Miami while elevating familiar comfort foods into craveable, premium offerings. Each event connected attendees through food, community and the rich culture of Miami, proving that the centennial story could be told deliciously, one bite at a time.

Essay:

The menu drew inspiration from the diverse and thriving cultures that define both the school and the city. Mediterranean bowls, Cuban fritas and birria street tacos packed a punch with global flavors.

The campus was transformed into an immersive hospitality environment, including a Volunteer Leadership Lounge that featured branded desserts, signature mocktails and elevated service.

Across the series, we delivered four core menu concepts for the President's Celebration (Hurricane Smash, Cane Shack, Miami Vibe Poke and Sebastian's Bodega Bites), three themed concepts at the Canes Lounge during Homecoming and an expanded 23-item street-festival menu at the Centennial Carnival.

The menus showcased Miami's medley of textures, colors, flavors and temperatures. Guests moved from sizzling jerk chicken and slow-braised specialties to crisp salads and refreshing fruit-forward options. Preparation methods were equally inclusive, including grilling, sautéing, roasting and braising, ensuring a dynamic sensory experience at every station.

With several allergy- and dietary-friendly options integrated into the core menu, the Centennial Celebration became a memorable experience for students, staff and visitors across all palates.

Introduction:

In celebration of the University of Miami's centennial year, the Centennial Culinary Program operated 13 distinct food and beverage stations featuring 23 unique menu items, from signature mac-and-cheese bowls and street tacos to hot dog wagons, sweet carts, luxe popcorn and Kosher offerings. Ten chefs led culinary execution on site, supported by a larger front-of-house team that managed crowd flow, line management and rapid service to more than 12,000 guests.

Live music, performances and food stations spread across campus to create a sense of discovery and momentum, encouraging guests to explore, taste and celebrate together.

Essay:

By layering the centennial theme into every touchpoint, the program transformed dining into a vehicle for storytelling and community building. The culinary team created signature mocktails that reflect the university's colors and Miami's tropical profile, served in branded, sugar-rimmed glassware with custom garnishes like dehydrated citrus wheels.

Menus were written as narratives, highlighting the Miami inspiration behind every dish and allowing guests to experience the story of the city as they explored each station. Digital menu boards and tabletop cards also carried the centennial logo and visual identity, ensuring consistency from venue to venue.

The goal was to unify the university's diverse audiences, students, alumni, faculty and donors through culinary storytelling. Student energy was embraced through festival-inspired street food, grab-and-go options and an interactive candy bar, where guests could customize flavors and textures.

The President's Celebration elevated the experience with refined passed hors d'oeuvres, composed plates and a glamorous dessert reception that complemented the more casual, student-focused stations.

As sophomore accounting major Alejandro Hernandez reflected, "It's important to have traditions like these. It's so easy to get lost in college, but having events like the Centennial that bring us together, where we're all here to celebrate the same thing, is rare."

Introduction:

Through thoughtful menus, immersive design and hospitality-driven service, the Centennial series allowed guests to not just celebrate 100 years of Hurricane pride, but to taste it, share it and carry it forward into the century to come. Our record-breaking fundraising campaign ensured that the University of Miami will continue to lead in the classroom, on the field and in the communities that have always been at the heart of what it means to be a Hurricane.

Essay:

The President's Celebration featured an interactive art gallery where each featured piece was paired with a complementary menu item representing a different corner of Miami's energetic culture, from Little Havana-inspired

bites to coastal, citrus-driven small plates. This fusion of visual art and culinary design deepened the thematic experience and elevated the event beyond a traditional reception.

The presentation strategy focused on creating visually striking, highly shareable moments without sacrificing operational efficiency. Culinary stations were designed with layered height, color contrast and branded logos, so guests could immediately understand the theme and offerings of each area.

Platters were upgraded to modern white and slate serveware, while risers, wooden boards and tropical greenery added depth and dimension to the displays. Natural elements like palm fronds, monstera leaves and woven baskets were integrated directly into the station setups, echoing Miami’s identity and tying the visuals back to the centennial brand.

Food was thoughtfully portioned and plated to encourage exploration: mini mac-and-cheese cups topped with jerk chicken, tacos arranged on multi-tiered racks lined with banana leaves and petite desserts displayed on towers. This approach ensured that guests could sample a variety of items quickly, keeping lines moving while enjoying the visual and culinary experience.

Introduction:

The true “wow” factor of the University of Miami Centennial Culinary Experience derived from its ability to transform the familiar into the unforgettable. An everyday dining space became a VIP Volunteer Leadership Lounge, and a campus driveway circle became a festival-style food village.

Essay:

The Centennial Celebration concluded with a night of live music and fireworks, drawing thousands of students to exclusive, campus-wide festivities. Carnival rides from twirling teacups, massive slides, swing rides and Skee-Ball brought endless fun directly to students. Additional activities like caricature drawings, Catholic Mass and Shabbat services ensured that every student had the chance to fit in.

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