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# University at Buffalo

## Entry details

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|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Entry Name:                                      | 2025 Alumni Achievement Awards Reception               |
| Institution Name:                                | University at Buffalo                                  |
| Entry Completed By ( <i>name and position</i> ): | Raymond Kohl; Director of Marketing and Communications |

Three Pillars Catering is built on a foundation of quality, service, and experience. We pride ourselves on delivering exceptional cuisine, thoughtful presentation, and seamless hospitality. Our team is committed to creating memorable moments through fresh ingredients, professional service, and attention to every detail.

An annual tradition, this program is presented by the UB Alumni Association to recognize outstanding alumni who demonstrate success in their careers, support the university and give back to their communities. The reception sought to turn recognition into an experience – creating a memorable moment through delicious cuisine and displays, that reflects the significance of the accomplishment.

### Essay:

Designed by Executive Chef Amelia Ruiz, CEC, the menu thoughtfully reflected the pride and prestige of the University at Buffalo community while remaining warm and welcoming. The four main food stations, along with the dessert station, were elevated contemporary selections. Each station consisted of four main selections that were intentionally crafted to deliver contrast and balance through color, texture, flavor, and temperature.

Vibrant seasonal root vegetables and local microgreens added visual energy to their display, while crisp elements like the tostada paired with a charred corn puree and seared scallop, created dynamic bites. Temperature contrast also played a key role – chilled components, like the shrimp cocktail, provided refreshment and clarity, while warm

selections, including the smoked gouda mac and cheese, offered depth and comfort. The international delights station resonated strongly with guests - bold spices, vibrant colors, and diverse cooking techniques created an engaging sensory experience.

Dietary-inclusive offerings, built into the menu from the start, ensured equal culinary creativity across all options. Each station offered selections that were either vegetarian, vegan, or made without gluten.

The culinary team utilizes a HACCP system that strictly monitors every point of the food service process. Each team member holds ServSafe™ and AllerTrainU™ certifications.

#### Introduction:

The Three Pillars Catering team met extensively with the UB Alumni Association to gain a deep understanding of the event's purpose, audience, and tone. Once the overall message of creativity and innovation, coupled with pride and tradition was established, the team set out to build cohesive concepts that aligned culinary design with visual presentation. Throughout the development, the team incorporated logistics alongside creativity. Knowing the program for the evening allowed the team to conceptualize the placement of food stations, bar areas, and seating to support both flow and atmosphere.

#### Essay:

As UB alumni gathered into the Center for the Arts (CFA) for this event, they were not only greeted with familiar colors of the past, but with fresh and authentic food and beverage stations. Just like those individuals being recognized for their involvement in their communities, the reception highlighted many local foods and beverages from UB's surrounding community. This approach inspired creative stations that felt both elevated and meaningful – whether it was the local root vegetables, artisanal cheeses, local brewery selections or desserts made in-house through the UB Bakery.

Incorporating vegetables from nearby farms, along with beers and ciders from Southern Tier and Hamburg breweries, and local artisan cheeses from Yancy's Fancy, helped create a menu that truly celebrated our local food community.

The concept of being community-minded was a major theme for the evening and incorporating local selections not only aided in reinforcing transparency and sustainability efforts, it created a more memorable, grounded, and impactful experience – one that celebrated both the occasion and the community hosting the event.

#### Introduction:

As one of the University at Buffalo's premier cultural hubs, the CFA carries a sense of institutional pride and sophistication that elevates any event hosted there. The dramatic lobby space, with its high ceilings and expansive glass, provided the catering team with a blank canvas to think beyond the standard reception setup. Because it is a performing arts venue, there is already an embedded spirit of innovation and artistic expression in the building. The food and beverage activations were positioned strategically to become part of the visual storytelling while still maintaining smooth guest flow.

#### Essay:

Incorporating UB blue throughout the Alumni Achievement Awards Reception was a powerful way to celebrate pride and tradition while creating a bold, unified aesthetic. From vibrant floral arrangements accented with white blooms to blue linens, uplighting, and custom signage, the color instantly connected guests to the spirit and legacy of the University at Buffalo. Thoughtful details such as themed centerpieces, textured fabrics, and complementary serving displays sparked connection and engagement, ensuring that every visual element supported the concept and enhanced the guest experience. The anchor on the Fish Market station became quite the conversational piece as the evening progressed.

The catering team, cognizant of the program for the event, incorporated multiple serving points at each food station to significantly enhance overall event execution by improving flow, reducing wait times, and increasing guest

satisfaction. By allowing guests to approach from different sides, congestion was minimized, and lines move more efficiently, keeping energy high and the experience seamless. Multiple access points also enabled staff to replenish items quickly and maintain presentation standards without interrupting service. Guests were also pleasantly surprised with the addition of charcuterie cups that were served during the presentation in the theater.

Introduction:

The UB Alumni Achievement Awards is a signature celebration honoring distinguished graduates who have demonstrated exceptional professional success, leadership, and service. The event brings together alumni, university leadership, faculty, and community members to recognize individuals whose accomplishments reflect the values and impact of the University at Buffalo. Three Pillars Catering was honored to work with Division of University Advancement and the Center for the Arts venue management team on such a tremendous event. Overall, the event demonstrated exceptional collaboration among culinary, service, and event teams, delivering a reception that honored achievement while embodying the spirit and excellence of UB.

Essay:

Sustainability is a core priority at the University at Buffalo, reflecting a deep commitment to environmental responsibility and long-term stewardship. Across campus dining and catered events, there is a strong focus on reducing waste and minimizing the use of single-use items whenever possible. This reception was no different, as all food and beverages were served using China, silverware, and glassware. In addition, no single-use plastics nor individual packaged items were used. All food waste (pre- and post-consumer) along with the charcuterie cups (served in bamboo boats) were composted through Natural Upcycling.

The Three Pillar Catering staff received numerous compliments during the event from guests in attendance, but the most valued one came from the client in a post-recap email:

"Thanks again – it was WONDERFUL!!! Best food you’ve ever done for us – we received TONS of compliments on it."

Krystal Testa (she/her)  
Director of Alumni Events  
Division of University Advancement  
University at Buffalo

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PDF

UB Alumni Achi... 3.7 MiB



UB Alumni Achi... 786 KiB



UB Alumni Achi... 696 KiB



UB Alumni Achi... 974 KiB



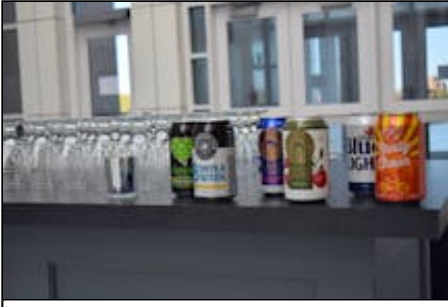
Event - UB Alu... 4.1 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 1.4 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 4.3 MiB



UB Alumni Achi... 673 KiB



UBAlumniAchie... 732 KiB



Event - UB Alu... 4.0 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 4.2 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 3.7 MiB





Event - UB Alu... 4.4 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 3.4 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 4.3 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 4.5 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 4.3 MiB



Event - UB Alu... 4.7 MiB