



How You're Overspending and Underwowing With Your Dining Experience

By Susan Saldibar

One thing you'll rarely find at an elegant gathering are potato chips, right?

But picture this: a colorful array of freshly prepared chips – potato, sweet potato, carrot and beet – all cascading gracefully down in the center of a large table. (Nobody can see the milk crate acting as a riser, hidden beneath layers of linen tablecloths.) Positioned at its base are bowls of dips with intriguing names like "curry mango" and "truffle". Ingenious! Who comes up with ideas like that?

The "who", in this instance, is the creative team from Strategic Dining Services. They're big believers in the idea that you can spend "peanuts" for innovative food ideas for events and get a million dollar look. ([Strategic Dining Services](#) is a Senior Housing Forum partner.)

Lobster and filets will lighten your wallet. But they won't guarantee a "wow" factor.

I caught up recently with David Koelling, President of Strategic Dining Services and RonnDa Peters, VP of Marketing and Sales. I asked them why the knee jerk reaction to a senior living event always seems to be to resort to serving filet and lobster. According to RonnDa and David, it is an expensive symptom of a lack of creativity. "People will say, 'Oh this event has to be so special!' So, they open their wallets and blow their budget to buy filet and lobster tails," RonnDa says. "Little do they know that it's the presentation of the food that's going to get them the 'wow' factor. And, for the most part they can use items they already have around the community – they just use their creativity to create the displays," she adds.