

Julie Burke

# Teambuilding . . . with Cooking!

**G**rounded in the universal human experience of “breaking bread together,” Culinary Teambuilding is an exciting new concept in corporate-event activities that raises the bar by using cooking as a vehicle for collaboration.

It requires none of the athletic prowess required in other teambuilding programs that put pressure on group members to overcome a physical challenge and it provides an opportunity for everyone in a group to contribute, regardless of their culinary skills.

We believe food is the gateway to the soul and that cooking is an expression of the way we operate in the world. Your personality shows its true colours when the hollandaise breaks or the brandy snaps burn!

Culinary Teambuilding identifies the right fit for the client’s objective. The simple recipe for a spectacular custom-designed event is basing the program on the number of participants, the time of day, and the preferred location.

At an event in Whistler, BC, 35 guests sautéed and baked their gourmet dinner on a culinary circuit. The group cracked BC Crab, rolled sweet dough, and sautéed pink

mushrooms! Using regional ingredients is the preferred route and buying *organic* enhances the flavour profile.

While some recipes are devised to be daunting, others are meant to be unique in presentation and taste. For example, the goddess Asian Durian

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fruit—expensive and luxurious—has a bad rap; it smells like blue cheese. Our team works with groups in the proper way of cutting the fruit—and eating it.

Successful teamcooking requires gentle guidance and a lot of humour from the chefs when handling blowtorches, mandolins, knives, and bubbling sugar. The chefs and the culinary facilitator monitor and blend with the activities to ensure that food preparation and cooking will be completed on schedule. The staff are teambuilding, too, managing their own sets of challenges.



Photo Credit: www.wildmanphotography.com



“Too Many Cooks” program in Vancouver, BC, for a Corporate Event

When working with larger numbers of participants, teambuilding activities can be designed to integrate seamlessly with nonculinary activities. For example, we recently partnered with an equestrian centre to produce and execute an event in Arizona for 100 clients. There were 11 station activities—5 of them were culinary. Grub included a spit of lamb, chili, ginger cake, tamales, cornbread, slaw, and more. Some nonculinary stations included chair massage, a cattle drive, and quick draws.

Culinary Teambuilding suits all types of corporations, conferences, and individuals. The process is fearless but the stakes are high (no pun intended). Males love basting, marinating, and BBQing; women tend to work more effectively with pastry, cutting, and stirring.

There are many reasons why teamcooking should be on everyone's "to do" list.

- Fun!
- Motivational/Inspirational
- Competitive

Excellent for . . .

- Integrating new teams
- Working outside the cube
- Group bonding
- Enhancing communication
- Maximizing creative talents
- Facilitating fractured teams

Food connects with people, places, and potent feelings that we normally don't encounter when we stick to tried-and-true travel routines. Food creates a bond that is fundamental.

Group-cooking activity takes eating to another level. The results are delicious because you cooked it! Your group will celebrate their efforts together over a gourmet meal in a spectacular setting. ▲

From 1979 to 1997, **Julie Burke** owned **Everything Done Right**, a high profile catering business in Vancouver, BC. Under that brand, she manufactured formulas for over 20 lines of condiments in stores nationally.

Some of her citations include the 40 Under 40 Entrepreneurial Award; Intrawest's award for International Event Professional of the Year; and the Special Event Industry Award for the Best Corporate Teambuilding Event in Canada 2006.

Julie currently owns Tall Order, a unique culinary teambuilding company.

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*"Chef Jeopardy" program in Nice, France, for Texas Instruments*