

TEMPORARY TIMES



WINTER 2009

As 2009 turns into 2010 let us take a few moments to reflect on some of the highs and lows we have experienced over the course of the year and the challenges we have successfully overcome together. The first quarter of 2009 was a worrying time for everyone as the world economy continued to decline. The recruitment industry contracted by 20% and some agencies closed their doors for good. We reduced our headcount whilst maintaining our core services. It was also vital that we retained as much of our team's valuable skill base and the critical mass essential to react quickly and professionally when orders went up again.



That boost to our business started to take effect in May with several customers experiencing uplifts in their orders resulting in more agency workers being requested. Demand for staff increased further when a key client moved production from a factory in another part of the UK to Leicester. The speed at which the tide turned was quite remarkable and the A La Carte "recruitment machine" went back into action, effectively moving up from first gear straight though to top gear in the space of 2 weeks.

Demand for temporary food production staff continued to increase steadily throughout the summer months and we were also being asked to help more frequently with searching for permanent staff. Then before we knew it September was upon us and Christmas production plans were high on the agenda. At the same time we met with several of our most important and long-standing customers. They too had restructured aspects of their businesses, reviewed prices, altered product lines and thankfully achieved some great wins with the UK's leading food retailers. They gave us the reassurances that we needed and we shook hands on an improved service level agreement which was introduced on 1st October.

From the beginning of November through to mid December our dedicated recruitment team had the challenge of a lifetime – our biggest to date. They interviewed over 1300 applicants for 600 Christmas jobs. That's more than 200 people, non-stop, each week for 6 weeks. Some of these people would only be required to work for 7 days in the massive peak before Christmas. The second challenge faced by our team was therefore to keep 600 new recruits motivated, interested and committed during the weeks before they were needed. There are not many recruitment agencies in the UK, let alone in Leicester, who could even contemplate gearing themselves up for this feat. However our 19 year reputation is strong in the jobs marketplace, applicant flow has been good and quality has been consistently high. At the time of writing this article, feedback from customers has been positive and productive.

In December we were entrusted with new business opportunities in Melton, where a team of A La Carte workers were involved in an assignment at a "ready meals" factory and another crew was making "party food". Both of these new bookings were won from a competitor. Customer reaction to these projects has been excellent and we are now keeping our fingers crossed that the work we put in during this critically busy time will result in our agency being entrusted with more opportunities during our quieter times ahead.

So what's in store for 2010? Well we know for sure that there's going to be no speedy economic recovery. For the lucky ones who stay in business, there will be more hurdles to straddle and lots of narrow hoops to jump through. Job volumes will continue to decline in 2010 and unemployment will rise. Margins will come under even more pressure and customers will be asking us to do more for less. However we've got the World Cup to look forward to and if we can just have a bit of good weather then maybe 2010 will be a better year for some people. In 2010 A La Carte will also be 20 years old, so we're going to have a reason to celebrate no matter what's in store! Thanks to every one of you for helping us to survive 2009. Between us we've helped over 3500 people into work, we've had some fun and we've done some good. We should be proud of ourselves. Well done and good luck in 2010.

STAFF APPOINTMENTS



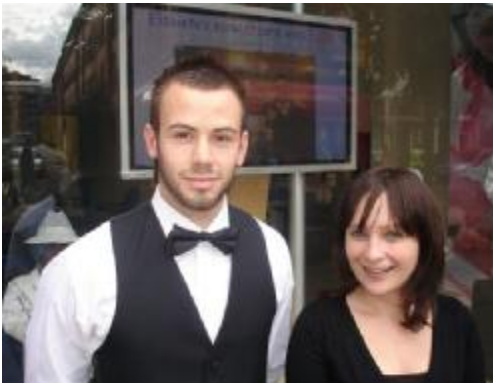
Rosemary Craven rejoins the company on 4th January after a short break. Rose will be resuming her responsibilities on the "permanent" desk, focussing on food and hospitality vacancies as well as new business development. Rose will be bringing in some new ideas gained during her sabbatical, from which hopefully our customers and candidates will gain benefit.

Sarah Smith also arrives to take up duties at the office on 18th January. Sarah is currently working at Charnwood Bakery as our On-Site Co-ordinator. Sarah has 13 years prior experience in the recruitment industry, where she has managed some very large and prestigious accounts. Sarah has also worked extensively in the field of "permanent recruitment" including admin, clerical and senior appointments. Sarah will be working closely with Rose on moving the division forward in terms of servicing existing customers as well as seeking new business opportunities.



Employee of the Month — Roll of Honour

August 2009 Martin Phillips



September 2009 Chung Mo



October 2009 Kevin Powell



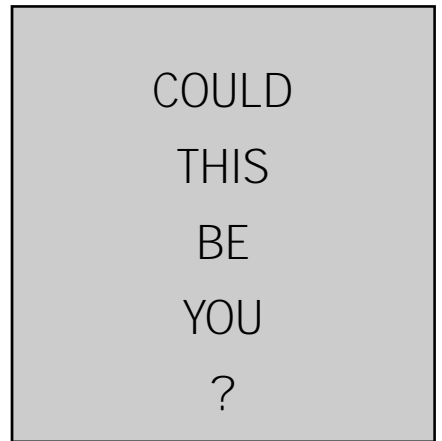
November 2009 Navin Jiwa



December 2009 Bryan Deidrick



January 2010



AGENCY WORKERS DIRECTIVE

A new EU law being introduced in October 2011 means that agency workers will be able to receive the same benefits in terms of basic pay and conditions as an equivalent permanent employee after 12 weeks on the same assignment. The Government will be making announcements in the early part of next year. For more information please contact robertv@alacarte-recruitment.co.uk

QUALITY STANDARDS

The most important rule to follow before handling food is

“WASH YOUR HANDS”

This rule applies whether you work in a food factory, a restaurant, pub, staff canteen or even at home in your kitchen.

If your hands are dirty you will contaminate the food you are handling. Some germs that are on your hands may cause food poisoning, which is a serious and sometimes fatal illness.

Germs are invisible to the naked eye. Just because your hands look clean does not mean that they are free of germs. To be sure that your hands are clean, remember to wash them frequently and, if available, also use a sanitizer



CUSTOMER SERVICE HELPLINE

If you have any queries, complaints, compliments, questions, praise etc you can pass these on to our customer services team, where a director will personally deal with any issue raised
tel: 0116 2854999 & ask for Robert



NUT FREE SITES

Kindly take note that most food factories operate a “nut free” policy. This means that you must not take any nuts or nut products onto a food factory site. This includes all food and snack items containing nuts/nut oil as well as cosmetics/hair products containing nut oil. Nuts can cause severe allergic reactions in some people — so in order to protect these vulnerable people, please play safe and leave nuts at home.



CUISINE A LA CARTE

WHAT CAN I DO WITH A FREEZER FULL OF LEFT-OVER COOKED TURKEY?

Bang-bang turkey

Ingredients

1½ cucumbers, seeded and sliced into matchsticks., 30g moong bean noodles , 2 tsp toasted sesame oil, juice 1 lemon
sprinkle soy sauce, 300g shredded cooked British turkey, 3 spring onions, shredded, 1 tbsp toasted sesame seeds

Sesame Dressing:

Large pinch Szechwan peppercorns (toasted and ground), 3 garlic cloves, 2cm ginger (in matchsticks). 4 shakes Tabasco, 3 tbsp tahini (sesame paste), 2 tbsp sesame oil, 1 tbsp Shaoxing rice wine (or dry sherry), 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar, 1 tbsp golden caster sugar, 3 tbsp turkey stock

Method

Salt the cucumbers in a teaspoon of salt for 30 minutes, rinse and drain. This firms the cucumbers and intensifies their flavour. The salt is washed away so don't worry about the sodium content. Soak the moong bean noodles in hot water for 10 minutes, drain and snip with kitchen scissors into 8cm lengths. Blanch in boiling salted for 3 minutes and refresh. Toss in sesame oil and lemon juice, add the sprinkle of soy and reserve briefly. Blitz the sauce ingredients together until smooth and reserve. To serve, place the dressed noodles on a platter. Toss the shredded turkey and cucumber together and pile on to the noodles. Pour over the dressing and scatter over the shredded spring onions and sesame seeds.



Coronation turkey

Ingredients

450g cooked British turkey breast meat, 2 tsp sunflower oil, 1 small onion (peeled and finely chopped), 1 tbsp curry powder or paste (either medium or hot according to personal taste), 1 tbsp tomato purée, 150ml orange juice or white wine and water mixed together, 2 tbsp lemon juice, 150ml fromage frais, 150ml mayonnaise, 400g can of apricots, Salt and freshly ground black pepper, 100g fresh or ready to eat dried apricots, 2 tbsp toasted flaked almonds, extra apricots and freshly chopped coriander to garnish

Method

Discard any skin and bones from the turkey and cut into small bite size pieces. Heat the oil in a pan and sauté the onion for 3 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the curry powder or paste and continue to sauté for 2 minutes. Blend the tomato purée with the orange juice or white wine, then stir into a pan with the lemon juice and simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat, strain and reserve the liquor until cool. Blend the fromage frais and mayonnaise together then stir in the cooled liquor. Drain the apricots and purée them. Next, stir them into the mayonnaise together with the cooled liquor and seasoning to taste. When well blended, stir in the turkey meat. Stone the apricots if using fresh ones, then chop them into small pieces and add to the turkey mixture and stir lightly. Sprinkle with the toasted almonds, garnish with the extra apricots and chopped coriander and serve.



SANJAY'S CONNOISSEUR CORNER

Some people enjoy a drop or two around the festive period, and like most people I enjoy a glass of fizz. M&S have come up trumps with their Cava. A really refreshing, lively dry fizz, aromatic and tangy, with flavours of apples and pears. Not too heavy so great with turkey or just enjoying on its own. On offer at the moment at £7.99 a bottle or two for £10





AUNT SALLIE'S COLUMN

FAREWELL TO

Steve Jordan retired after completing his last shift on Christmas Day. Steve has been working as a chef for A La Carte for over 8 years and has been to most catering sites. His last shift was at Netherhall Road Childrens Home where he has worked on Christmas Day for the last 4 years. Steve is a talented cook and a thoroughly nice guy, who will be sadly missed by our customers and by the team at A La Carte.

Carol Spence also hung up her apron this Christmas. Carol has worked for A La Carte for over 5 years as a Catering Assistant, the last 3 years of which being spent on assignment at Police HQ. Phil Woods, Catering Manager, and his team thinks Carol is an absolute star and are very sorry to see her go. Everyone wishes Carol all the very best in her retirement.

My wife is a terrible cook. Absolutely terrible. Last night I came home and she was in tears. "It's a disaster" she said. "The cat's eaten your dinner!" "Cheer up", I said. "I'll buy you a new one"

"I'm not feeling well" says a patient to his doctor. "Do you think it might be my diet?" "What have you been eating?" asks the doctor. "Snooker balls," replies the patient. "I have two reds for breakfast, three blues for lunch. And five browns, and a pink for dinner". I think I see what the problem is, " replies the doctor. "You're not eating enough greens"

TOP TIPS ON LOOKING AFTER YOUR SKIN IN WINTER

Use sunscreen - yes really, even on cloudy days nearly 80% of the sun's dangerous UV rays makes it to our skin

Boost your moisturizing routine - use a heavier, thicker moisturiser during the winter months -Use it more often - three or more times a day in winter

Baths and showers dry your skin. Moisturise after bathing/showering

Exercise regularly - this will increase circulation and deliver more nutrients to your skin cells by boosting collagen production

Eat oily fish which is high in omega 3 fatty acids which revitalises skin

Wear lip salve - vaseline and carmex are good both as protection and rescue

Exfoliate then moisturise weekly not forgetting lips



Thanks to everyone who donated to our "CHILDREN IN NEED" appeal in November. We raised £600 for

this noteworthy charity. As part of our fund-raising challenge we held a raffle, the prize being won by Jelena, on-site coordinator at Blueberry Foods.

LAUGH OUT LOUD

Harry is a very noisy eater. When he started drinking soup in the restaurant six couples got up and started to dance



I love cooking with wine. Sometimes I even put it in the food.

I went into McDonalds yesterday and said "I'd like some fries". The girl at the counter said "Would you like some fries with that?"

I bought some of that Pedigree Chum they keep advertising. It was terrible. In the end I had to give it to the dog

CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

Our Christmas raffle was won by Danielle Blank who nominated LOROS to be the beneficiary of the £229 we raised through ticket sales.

IN LIEU OF CHRISTMAS CARDS

Rather than sending lots of Christmas cards to customers this year we donated £200 to "The Case" restaurant where David Hartshorn, the proprietor, opens his restaurant and feeds the homeless of Leicester on Christmas Day. Well done David.

AULD LANG SYNE

Just in case some of our readers want to know the actual words to the poem often sung (or slurred) at midnight on New Years Eve, here they are:

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne!

Chorus.-For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne.
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

HAVE A REALLY HAPPY NEW YEAR

If you have a few spare minutes, why not check out the "News" , "Recipe of the Day" and "Fun and Games" sections on our website