

Party time is a piece of cake



**General Manager
Mark Poole**

It is hard to believe that another year has flown past already, I know here at Highland Cuisine we are always busy but even so!

We finished off the summer show season pretty well. The numbers were there through the gates but the money wasn't being spent to the same levels as normal.

We did 14 major shows over the summer, ending at Nethybridge, just after doing Grantown Show.

All the shows we do we have been going to for years but we are looking to add to the list, particularly for a couple of weekends in July, so we can stretch it out a bit.

Major operation

Our shows range from half a dozen staff for some of the smaller ones to requiring 50 staff at the Scottish Game Fair at Scone Palace near Perth. The Black Isle show is a pretty major operation as well.

We have also been doing a lot of weddings along with corporate barbeques. The weddings had been struggling a bit last year but seem to have picked up this year and we have done about 15 with more to come.

We usually do weddings at National Trust for Scotland castles such as Fyvie, Crathes and Castle Fraser, along with other prestigious properties such as Glen Tanar on Deeside. We have even done weddings in cow sheds!

The corporate events are always good value and clients there have included Exxon



Anyone seen Alice?

Mobil and Centrica Upstream, again normally at castle locations.

The Centrica event at Glen Tanar was highly unusual for us in that it was an Alice in Wonderland theme and we had to produce a barbeque to go with it.

Mad Hatter's Tea Party

That had us scratching our heads a bit, but we came up with the idea of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. My wife Julie made hundreds of cup cakes, which she loves doing and my niece Abbey Poole, 16, drew the white rabbit and lots of other bits and pieces. We filled the teapots with dry ice, which produced a nice effect.

It was the first time we have ever been asked to come up with something like that but it turned out really well and brought a lot of very favourable comments from those attending.

We also had an oil company barbeque at Fyvie Castle on a beach party theme along with a new helicopter on display.

The corporate work seems to be okay again after last year when a lot of firms cancelled events in the wake of the worldwide financial crisis. It now seems to be creeping back.

Other corporate work for us is in Highland League football where we provide the hospitality for Inverurie Locos home matches and also handle the club's annual dinner.

For the first time this Christmas party season we had an additional format with some tribute nights, with a Blues Brother band and then an Abba night. These worked well, particularly the Abba night with more than 300 people, and they will continue in future.

Christmas parties

Another regular service we do at Christmas is parties at sheltered housing complexes and old folks' homes. We can do anything from 20 people up to 60 at these events, which have always proved very worthwhile.

These smaller events are just as important to us as the major shows and corporate events we work at and help show the range of work we can handle at Highland Cuisine.

Our major events, such as the Black Isle show, will see us serve 460 VIP lunches, catering for another 2000 public lunches



Cup cake heaven

along with our fast food catering outlets on top of that

This year for the first time saw us supply the outside catering for the Aberdeen City Council fireworks display at the Queen's Links where 15,000-people attended.

Our two units served more than 1500 people in just two hours. I was cooking in one of them and I have never seen a queue like it. Things were so hectic I thought at one stage my eyeballs were frying!

There was little time to recover – the very next evening saw us at the Inverurie fireworks display here at Thainstone for another busy night.

The year is about to end on another high note with the Thainstone Hogmany party, probably our biggest single event with 500 people attending.

And after all that there is only one thing left to do once the party poppers have been swept up – starting planning all over again for 2011!

FACT FILE

- Highland Cuisine employs 54 staff
- It provides catering services at shows and events across Scotland
- It can handle any event from 20-people to 2000
- The firm also staffs The Gallery, TC's Diner and the Barn & Bushel at the Thainstone Centre.