



EXPLOSIVE ICE CARVING

TRENDS AND HOW TO ENGAGE THEM.

TEXT BY PAUL GERMAIN - MASTER ICE CARVER USA



In the past decade, the culinary industry has experienced an explosion in the demand for innovative, skilfully carved ice sculptures. What used to be an item that simply added interest to a buffet table is now a symbol of a chef's creativity and expertise, a sought after promotional medium, and a highly profitable entertainment venue.

However, most chefs have expressed a sense of ambivalence and uneasiness when it comes to depending on artistic skills such as realistic drawing and three-dimensional imaging that are needed for designing truly masterful ice sculptures. And, unfortunately, specialized programs for teaching chefs the skills that are necessary to meet the demand have been limited. Thus, few carvers outside of the booming commercial ice carving industry have ever had the chance to learn the plethora of specialized techniques and skills that have been developed in the past 20 years. In addition, safety issues associated with handling large blocks of ice and dangerous tools have caused concern. Because of this, the culinary industry has largely yielded the domain of ice carving to the commercial ice carving industry.

AUTOMATION OF ICE CARVING

To increase its growth and profitability, the commercial ice carving industry has developed methods for safely mass-producing popular ice sculpture designs through the use of CNC routers, lathes, and other advances. Some of these high-tech computer aided carving machines cost from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per system. They must be programmed for each design, but once programmed, the machines are capable of producing uniform sculptures and engraved logos. Some say that sculptures produced in this way are lacking in the three-dimensional

qualities expected by more discriminating clients; however, this can often be largely overcome with relatively minor additional carving by hand. The benefits provided by automation are obvious. For example, with just a phone call or email, chefs can easily order consistently carved ice sculptures for traditionally themed food displays.

THE DECLINE AND SUBSEQUENT RISE OF THE ARTIST WITHIN

As with most types of automation, the CNC and other systems have somewhat diminished the traditional reputation of being a "true artist". Thus, the benefits of mass production have caused a significant opposite reaction by causing highly motivated chefs to want to showcase what they can do as artists in their own right. To do so, chefs must be provided the quality of instruction that makes it possible to safely master the medium, not just order items from a catalogue. Unfortunately, while many culinary schools offer a class/session in ice carving, the classes typically provide very little knowledge or experience, if at all, in the advanced techniques and artistic skills that have made ice carving become so popular throughout the world.

ADVANCED PRIVATE ICE CARVING TRAINING

To meet the need for artistically advanced instruction, the Academy of Ice Carving and Design (AICD) was established to serve the international community over a decade ago. Acclaimed as the world's premier ice carving school, AICD specializes in providing hands-on, private instruction for chefs, culinary instructors, and career ice carvers in individually customized programs of total immersion. Private instruction offers the ideal atmosphere and one-to-one guidance needed to overcome lifelong barriers related to drawing and three-dimensional imagery. AICD's most popular three-day program, the Chef Ice Artist Program, integrates a day of highly concentrated drawing and design instruction within its program of comprehensive ice carving instruction.

ICE CARVING CERTIFICATION AND ACCREDITATION

Some of the most accomplished chefs and college culinary instructors have travelled to AICD from different continents to learn the skills of professional ice carvers while also becoming certified through its intensive instructional programs. AICD also provides curriculum guidance and accreditation for schools desiring to establish reputable programs of ice carving instruction. For example, AICD is currently in the process of providing ice carving training, certification, and accreditation for the Pittsburgh Job Corps, which helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. Job Corps is the largest education and career technical training program of its kind in the country - with 124 centers administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration.



FROM CRAFTSMAN TO ARTIST

Billy Redd, a well-known executive chef, college culinary instructor, and TV personality, completed several levels of instruction, including AICD's 5 Star Master Ice Carver Program. The first level of this advanced program provides instruction in carving a realistic human portrait. The chef's project was to carve a 40 inch tall realistic bust in honor of master chef Joseph Amendola, the beloved culinary instructor (and ice carving book author) at the Culinary Institute of America who had recently passed away. When the sculpture was completed (in just one weekend), AICD transported it to Las Vegas to put it on display at the American Culinary Federation's National Convention. Master chefs from around the world instantly recognized the sculpture, many of whose hearts were warmed as they remembered their dear friend. After successfully carving the sculpture, the noted student said he no longer considered himself just a craftsman. Now, he has earned the confidence needed to call himself an artist.

TREND SETTING ICE CARVING AND EXTREME FOOD ARTISTRY

Trend setting chefs are naturally drawn to the extreme food artistry that is made possible by integrating innovative ice carving techniques with highly artistic fruit and vegetable carving skills such as Thai style carving. Internationally televised competitions have already begun to challenge chefs to push the limits of their creativity as they gain experience in these fascinating arts. This fusion of expertise is providing the opportunity for the world's chefs to experience the creative explosion that is so important for maintaining an edge in today's highly competitive culinary realms.

Paul Germain

President, Master Teacher, Master Ice Carver
Academy of Ice Carving and Design
Fresno, California, U.S.A.
www.academyoficecarving.com
Phone: 1-559-222-2192



The leading mail-order company in international hotel and restaurant supply for more than 20 years!



Be inspired by the latest trends and visit our online shop:
www.vega-export.com/int

- more than 40,000 items always in stock
- low prices
- fast delivery

www.vega-export.com/int

VEGA Export Division GmbH & Co. KG
Hettlinger Str. 9, 86637 Wertingen, Germany
☎ 0049 8272 807-688