

[ALUMNEWS]

Bringing A Party To Life

Leslie Arcesi '90 knew at least three things coming out of William and Mary: she liked people, politics, and she needed to get a job when she graduated. What she didn't know was that one day she'd run her own business.

After graduation, Arcesi found herself at a management consulting job with Kay Jewelers. However, a few years later, with a master's from Ohio State in marketing and logistics, Arcesi was Scott paper towels' new brand manager.

"The company was amazing. We were out in the middle of nowhere Wisconsin, but still had lots of fun," says Arcesi.

While in Wisconsin, Arcesi was the "planner." Every other weekend or so she would host or plan a get-together with colleagues and friends. For one of her birthdays, she and her group of friends rented a Winnebago and took a road trip.

"It was sort of like back in college where we had to make a lot of our own fun," says Arcesi.

Arcesi's love for marketing grew and she soon switched jobs and started working with Guinness and Bass. While working with beer was fun, Arcesi eventually became slightly "bored" with it. Luckily, she was offered the job of Hispanic marketing for Jose Cuervo in North America. It was an exciting opportunity and Arcesi was ready for the challenge.

There was just one problem. Arcesi didn't speak Spanish and all the marketing materials needed to be in Spanish. However, the company didn't see an obstacle at all.

"I was sent to Mexico City to learn Spanish. I did an intensive course and was fluent in three weeks," says Arcesi. "Being in Mexico I learned about everything: the culture, food, and people."

For years, Arcesi lived and breathed Spanish marketing. "I was traveling a lot and almost never home," she says.

The company was also moving fast. They had decided it was time to relocate their marketing department to New York City from Connecticut.

"I loved my job, but I didn't want to move," says Arcesi. "So I interviewed for some other jobs and even got some offers. But nothing really got me excited."

She decided she could combine her passion for party planning

with her knowledge about consumer needs, and in April 2005, launched Budding Gourmet in Fairfield, Conn.

"Every time I planned a party, people said I should do this for a living. So I'd been thinking about [opening my own business] for awhile, but I didn't want to be an event planner," says Arcesi. She adds distinctly: "I wanted to be a party planner."

When Arcesi used to plan parties, she felt like she was always running around to get everything she needs to throw a party. Instead, she wanted to create something that was a one-stop shop for all your party needs, "to make entertaining easy."

Budding Gourmet offers customers ideas and materials for throwing any type of party for anywhere from a small group of friends to about one hundred people. She limits the projects she takes on to under 100 people because it's less pressure and smaller events aren't as consuming.

"I do however little or however much my clients would like me to do. I am here to take the pressure off the hosts," says Arcesi. "I usually don't do weddings because there's too much pressure when you do a wedding ... people don't dream their whole life of their backyard barbecue."



Leslie Arcesi '90 has taken her public relations and marketing skills to her very own business. Budding Gourmet allows Arcesi to plan parties of all sorts for her clients without added stress.

Arcesi's premiere party was a birthday celebration for her niece at an outdoor pool that was surrounded by an inflatable bubble for the winter. Despite a few of the cupcakes not making it to the party and the bubble deflating, Arcesi was quick on her feet and everyone still had a wonderful time.

"You plan everything, but there's always room for something to go wrong. Now I always have a backup plan in case things don't work out. You can't get flustered, I am getting paid to be calm," says Arcesi.

To date, Arcesi has planned more than 69 events and, as of Oct. 26, 2006, had seven more events booked for the remainder of what has been a very successful first year.

"I feel really lucky that I get to do what I love," says Arcesi. "The store is doing well and my job is too much fun to be 'real' work. One of my happiest moments was when a customer told me, 'this store makes me want to throw a party.'"

— Priyanka Tandon '07