

# Perfect!



ISLANDER PHOTOS BY EARL BRECHLIN

## Banquet manager choreographs perfection night after night

Joseph Faleiro has been the banquet manager for Bar Harbor Resorts, which includes the Bar Harbor Club, Harborside Hotel and the Regency Hotel among other establishments, for more than 23 years.

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A seven-course dinner for 350 with dancing afterward? Not a problem.

An outdoor wedding reception for 450, under a tent, with gourmet cuisine and the finest champagne?

Absolutely. A private birthday party for poet Maya Angelou, hosted by Oprah Winfrey where more than 300 high-profile guests will enjoy musical performances by Quincy Jones and Patti LaBelle?

He's on it. And, oh, do you happen to have a fresh pot of decaf?

Coming right up. For Joseph Faleiro, the long-time banquet manager at the Bar Harbor Club and Bar Harbor Regency Hotel, fulfilling food and beverage requests and pulling off events ranging from grand parties to run-of-the-mill corporate awards dinners are all in a day's work. Like the conductor of an orchestra, he directs each performance, choreographing dozens of wait staff, scheduling food deliveries, checking on the barkeeps, and patrolling the dining room in his perfectly pressed jacket with tie, ready at a moment's notice to satisfy any request.

"One thing about this job is that you get to meet a lot of interesting people," says the calm and unflappable native of Brazil during a break between events at the Bar Harbor Club recently.

Over the years Mr. Faleiro has worked in some of the swankiest hotels in the United States such as the Breakers in Palm Beach. He began as a barback, keeping bartenders supplied with ice, fruit, and glasses, and worked his way up to management. He found his way to Bar Harbor 23 years ago when Ocean Properties opened the Regency in 1987. He's been in Maine every summer season since, spend-

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ing winters wherever the company needs him — from Key West, to Palm Beach to Salt Lake City where he helped plan and pull off several major banquets associated with the Olympics there in 2002.

Between seasons, both in spring and fall, he has a chance to spend several weeks with family in Brazil or to travel to far-off places like Europe and Asia. Still, the natural beauty and friendly communities of Mount Desert Island keep luring him back. "This is an amazing island," he says. "I love Bar Harbor."

But even though he may be able to sneak away for an occasional bike ride or swim, most of the time it's work, work, work.

"The key to everything is that it takes a lot of planning," he says. Usually he meets with the folks who want to schedule an event several months, and sometimes more than a year, in advance. Depending on the number of people, and the desired menu and beverage items, the cost of putting on a banquet can range from \$50 a plate to several hundred dollars. One recent wedding reception at the club, which featured just over 100 guests and "the best of everything," ended up costing about \$800 a plate.

"When you are putting a plan together you need to be ready for anything," he says. "It all goes flawless if you are prepared. If you are not you could have a disaster."

The key to avoiding disaster, according to Mr. Faleiro, is a closeknit staff. At the Bar Harbor Club he works closely with club manager Deb Jordan, and Patrick Sartin, executive sous chef, as well

as scores of others. "It's not all about one person. It depends on the team," Mr. Faleiro says. "There are so many nice places for people to pick from. The quality of the food and the service has to be there."

Listening to what the customer wants and getting a sense of the atmosphere they want for their event is key. "It's never the same," he says.

During his career, Mr. Faleiro has put together functions for entertainers, such as Barry Manilow and Sting, and even hosted presidents.

This summer, Mr. Faleiro was on duty at the Bar Harbor Club when President Barack Obama, his wife Michelle, and their daughters spent a morning at the facility. "We always try to give the guests their privacy," Mr. Faleiro says. "But he was the one that came over to talk with us and take pictures," says Mr. Faleiro. "It was a great experience."

One time, in Florida, he organized a New Year's Eve party for former President Jimmy Carter and 30 members of his family. "It's always interesting to see people with their family, and as a person instead of a celebrity," he says.

One attribute of the company's banquets that Mr. Faleiro is particularly proud of is the practice of having the wait staff do "presidential service." Each course is precisely timed in advance. And, instead of having one waiter assigned to one or two tables, the staff teams up in groups of five to serve all the guests at a table at once. When there are 10 seats at each table, one server is responsi-

ble for the one and two seats at every table in the hall. Another takes care of seats three and four, another five and six, etc.

"That way everyone at a table gets served at once and no one is sitting there waiting for their food," Mr. Faleiro explains. It also prevents having the people already served politely sitting there with their food getting cold while waiting for the last people to get their dinners.

"A lot of places don't do that but we actually timed it and it takes half as long as the old-fashioned way," he adds.

An average day for Mr. Faleiro can start any time between 6 and 8 a.m., and often goes until midnight. On a recent Friday afternoon the club was hosting passengers from a visiting cruise ship for a lobster bake lunch. They handled more than 500 people from 10 large buses in less than two hours. Later that evening, a convention group was scheduled to have dinner in the main dining room. "We never stop," he says.

Over the years, Mr. Faleiro has gotten to know as friends many of the people who repeatedly host events at the club. He is particularly fond of the representatives of the area's nonprofit organizations such as Friends of Acadia, The Maine Sea Coast Mission, MDI Hospital and the YMCA and others. "All of these people are wonderful to work with. They make our job so much easier," he says.

Until the end of the month Mr. Faleiro and his team will continue to put together parties and banquets for groups of every size and description. "It's never the same from night to night," he says. "It's like putting on a different production. I want to make sure we have met all of our guests' needs. We all know what steps have to happen. Fortunately I think we consistently meet or exceed peoples' expectations."

