

## A Different Kind of Serve at the U.S. Open

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### *UPPER WEST SIDER, STAFFS THE FAMOUS TENNIS TOURNAMENT*

By Angela Barbuti

James Della Pace is serving at the U.S. Open, but he is not a tennis player. President of Amerivents Event Staffing, his company staffs the USTA with over 1,000 employees at the tournament's concessions and suites.

This can seem like a daunting task. However, to Della Pace, an Upper West Side resident, whose company also staffs such events as the Kentucky Derby and the Food and Wine Festival, it's not only a job, but a part of his life.



"We are thoroughly involved in the whole process and really get to know the people, the guests, and how the event operates from all angles," he said.

Over a month before the event, interviews were set up with over 2,000 candidates. "It's 90 percent about attitude," he explained. "They are working 12 hours days and have to keep smiling," he says. Although many résumés flood Amerivents' inbox, most hires come from referrals. Being a Queens native himself, Della Pace staffs the Open, which is held in Flushing Meadows, in collaboration with Queens Borough President Helen Marshall. "There is a great sense of pride that comes with providing locals in the community work for these few weeks. By recruiting from the surrounding neighborhoods, we are helping the community by giving people the opportunity to be involved in one of the biggest sporting events in our country," he stated.

Before a career in the service industry, Della Pace was a stockbroker who wanted a change. Having been a bartender, he answered an ad for Spirit Cruises he saw in the New York Times. "I stayed in hospitality ever since," he said.

Recently Amerivents took on another venture in the form of organic catering. When Stonyfield Yogurt became a sponsor of the U.S. Open two years ago, Della Pace met their Chairman Gary Hirshberg. In April, the two teamed up to create Chelsea's Table Catering By Amerivents.

"Our mission is to get the word out on healthy foods in a fast-food environment," Della Pace said. The new partnership is dedicated to educating people about organic, yet tasty options at catering events. Most tend to associate catered events with frozen, processed, and overall unhealthy food choices. However, because of the recent strides made in the availability of organic food, Della Pace noticed a change in the minds of eaters.

Upper West Side Chef David Seigal of the Tangled Vine, who was also involved with the Open, helped collaborate on the company's catering menu. "We chose dishes that were not only healthy and natural, but ones that the catering world are used to," Della Pace said.

Their first client was none other than Michelle Obama. "That was exciting," Della Pace said, of her presidential fundraiser which was held at Chelsea Piers in late March. But Della Pace stresses the fact that there are events that can be planned to fit a smaller budget as well. He is seeing a decrease in the cost of organic options because of the recent high demand for these products. "The farms are getting supported and the pricing is coming more in line with our regular food," Della Pace stated.

This summer, Amerivents also had a political event on their plate and served at the CNN Grill during the Republican National Convention in Tampa Bay. Union Square Hospitality handled the food aspect of the convention, and they staffed it. Della Pace said, "Amerivents staffed the DNC four years ago, therefore staffing the RNC this year was a natural for us. It is exciting for Amerivents to be a part of both political events over the last few years to show our support not only for one political party or another, but rather for these large conventions where people are encouraged to speak their political views and support their party."