

Around the World in 3 Cocktails

Friday, September 26th, 2008



Last Friday, I went to Italy, Russia, India and Greece.

Uh-huh.

And I didn't even have to ride the dreaded monorail at JFK.

Instead, I attended Nadia Digilov's launch party for Celebrating in Style, a company dedicated to providing authentic, multicultural experiences. The company does this in two ways. First, through their event planning sector, Celebration Chique and secondly, through their unique gift baskets that engage all of the recipient's five senses. I'll explain.

First, let's analyze the concept of 'the gift basket' for a moment. It's sort of a cop-out gesture – something you get a co-worker or someone you don't know well enough to shop at Williams-Sonoma for. It's a step up from plain bouquet of flowers, yet a step down from an actual gift. The gift basket's something a hotel manager gives you for dominating the establishment's rewards program. Pretty much the most impersonal form of flattery you could receive.

If you're like me, a gift basket's written off as an impractical 'nice thought' which I rummage through in search of dark chocolate. After salvaging anything liquid or cocoa, I discard the rest before the fruit goes bad and the shredded stuffing infiltrates every corner of my house.



Hence why Nadia decided to transform the gift basket from blah to breathtaking artwork. She decided that each basket should represent the experience of another country – you can send someone Venice, Moscow or the Taj Mahal. Included in a Venetian basket aren't just Italian eatables, but masks, Italian slippers, a CD with the music of a masked ball and scented candles for the occasion. You're literally sending someone a little corner of the world, and let's face it, the mask is going to provide hours of giddy entertainment and you'll probably use the slippers for life.





Essentially, you're hand delivering someone the mood of an exotic location along with gifts they might actually use. I thought this was light years more inventive than your standard bottle of wine, apples and if you're lucky, cheese.

The event baskets were displayed alongside fancy finger food and delicacies from each country. Perks included black car service to the event, an open bar with girl-appreciated drinks like Bellinis, and of course every Manhattaner's covert addiction – the goody-filled gift bag.



Just when everyone thought things couldn't get more extravagant, the lights dimmed and we witnessed a spectacle of dance with performers from each of the different countries. In between acts, a mega-projection of Google Earth (one of my most recent obsessions) zoomed out and in to pinpoint the next location in the show. In was like a field trip to the Omni theatre during cocktail hour.



A cultural around the world tour before 8pm on a weeknight without the help of my DVR or the travel channel? Again, please!

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