



GIVE YOUR PATRONS A CONCESSIONS EXPERIENCE THAT'S AS UNIQUE AS YOUR REGIONAL THEATER

Discover how Sweet Hospitality Group helps Williamstown Theatre Festival provide an elevated, customized, and memorable concessions experience that highlights local vendors and maximizes sales



"Sweet Hospitality Group is thoughtful, creative, and intentional about creating the best experience for our theater. In an age where everyone wants the shortest distance between two points, Sweet Hospitality Group always creates a custom experience that meets our specific needs. I trust them, and that trust is a direct result of their loyalty, their commitment to the craft of hospitality, and the fact that they're all just good people. They may be based in New York City, but they're a great partner who really connects with our regional theater."

JENNY GERSTEN

**FORMER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL**

CHALLENGES

CASTING CALL FOR A NEW CONCESSIONAIRE

When Berkshires-based Williamstown Theatre Festival reached out to Sweet Hospitality Group in 2018, they were in need of a new concessionaire.

The local restaurant they'd been using to provide their concessions was closing its doors, and they did not have the bandwidth to manage their concessions in-house.

But for such a renowned experience like Williamstown Theatre Festival — a Tony Award-recognized resident summer

theater that's been a cornerstone of the theater industry for over 70 years — not just any concessions company would do.

“Concessions are such an important piece of the theater-going experience,” said Antonello Di Benedetto, Williamstown Theatre Festival's Assistant Managing Director. “When it's done well, **concessions really elevate a guest's experience and help to create a memorable event.** I knew we needed an amazing partner to help us deliver on that.”



WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL BAR MENU			
SPECIALTY COCKTAILS All cocktails feature local ingredients unless otherwise indicated.			
WTF MIXES \$8.99 for Glass Mules, Top of Henry Line, Thompson Spruce, Blueberry			
SUMMER SANGRIA \$8.99 Buckle up! Buckle up! Buckle up! Local Cider Spritz with			
BERKSHIRE BUZZ \$8.99 Regional Breweries, New England Craft Beers, Maple Spritz, 1/2 Liter			
1/2 SPROTZ Premium, 888 Crafted Tea, All-natural, All-natural, Bold Spritz, Softie			
REFRESHMENTS All alcoholic beverages are served before 11:00 PM.			
LIQUOR	\$14	WINE	\$12
DOUBLE	\$24	DOUBLE	\$20
SPECIALTY COCKTAIL	\$15	BEER	\$11
DOUBLE	\$25	SODA	\$7
BOTTLED WATER	\$4	CANDY & SNACKS	\$4-\$6

SOLUTION

A FULL-SERVICE CONCESSIONAIRE WITH BIG-TIME EXPERIENCE AND A LOCAL FOCUS

Fortunately, Antonello knew the perfect company to call.

“I’ve known Sweet Hospitality Group for over 20 years,” Antonello said.

“When I worked at Manhattan Theatre Club in 2004, Sweet Hospitality Group was the concessionaire for the Biltmore Theatre (now the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre) and they also catered any donor events we did.

“When I moved to the La Jolla Playhouse in 2011, I used them whenever there was an opportunity for catering, and

then when I moved to Second Stage Theater in 2014 I brought them on to do all of our in-house donor events.

“What I love about Sweet Hospitality Group is that they do such a magical job and always have surprise touches. They’re really easy to work with and they will create with you — they’re the type of company who always says ‘yes’. So, when I started at Williamstown and we had the need for a new concessions vendor, I immediately reached out to see if they could help us.”

Antonello wasn’t the only one at Williamstown Theatre Festival who knew Sweet Hospitality Group well.

Jenny Gersten, Williamstown’s Former Artistic Director, first experienced



them way back in 1986 — the year Sweet Hospitality Group was founded — when they took over concessions for their first client, Lincoln Center.

“I remember being a teenager in the Beaumont lobby and seeing Sweet Hospitality Group running concessions,” Jenny said. **“They instantly transformed and elevated the entire experience** and made concessions more in line with the high-end experience of being at the Lincoln Center.

“Julie [Rose] saw an opportunity in the concessions space, which is a very difficult space to break into, and was radical enough to say to Lincoln Center that she thought Sweet Hospitality Group could do it better than how they were doing it. Julie disrupted theater concessions before disruption was even an idea.”

So, when Sweet Hospitality Group first came into Williamstown, the Festival knew they were working with seasoned pros.

They also knew one other thing: they wanted a **concessions experience that was uniquely Williamstown** and not one you’d see on Broadway.

“Because we’re a small town of only 7,500 people with mom-and-pop shops that do the majority of their business in the summer, incorporating local goods was very important to me,” Antonello said. “I didn’t want Sweet Hospitality Group to import the same stuff that you would see on Broadway or off-Broadway — **I wanted them to use local purveyors.**”

Thankfully, Sweet Hospitality Group’s biggest strength is creating unique experiences that are highly



customized to the theater they're working with, so forming partnerships with local food and drinks vendors was one of their top priorities.

After being introduced to local businesses that Antonello thought would be a good fit, Sweet Hospitality Group handled everything else — including managing the amount of product being created and delivered as well as negotiating pricing so that all parties were making profit.

In addition to using local vendors wherever possible, Sweet Hospitality Group also creates custom touches so that **concessions are an extension of the show.**

“Sweet Hospitality Group reads the scripts and creates concessions that are specific to each show, like their specialty cocktails,” Antonello said. “Everyone loves them and it makes the event memorable. They’re so creative, and never use a cookie-cutter approach.”

Both Antonello and Jenny said Sweet Hospitality Group’s unique ability to create such customized and memorable experiences comes down to one key factor: **the top-quality people they have on their staff.**

Because the vast majority of the Sweet Hospitality team are current, former, or aspiring performing arts professionals, they know how to engage a crowd and create an event that’s hard to forget.

“Williamstown Theatre Festival is a place where people come early to see their friends, make new friends, and just be a part of the atmosphere,” Antonello said. “Sweet Hospitality Group does a great job of fostering that community feeling and creating a fun environment. Everyone



on their staff is charming and makes a point to connect with and remember our patrons, which we really appreciate.”

Jenny said the Sweet Hospitality Group staff also integrates easily with their team, and provides a level of consistency that is hard to come by in seasonal theater.

“Williamstown is a live-work environment with a summer camp vibe, and our Sweet Hospitality bartenders instantly become family — both to our staff

and even to some of the artists that are performing here,” Jenny said.

“What I love most about their staff is that they’re dependable. The thing about summer theater is you start over every year, and you never quite know the quality of the staff you’re hiring because it’s seasonal. But with Sweet Hospitality Group, **I never have to worry.** Their staff is organized and well-prepared, and they’re always great people.”



RESULTS

A STRATEGIC SALES PARTNER WHO ALWAYS SAYS ‘YES’ TO DRIVING REVENUE

One of the biggest benefits of having a concessionaire with close to four decades of experience in theater-specific concessions is the sales expertise they bring along with them.

That sales knowledge has worked out nicely for Williamstown, especially the 30% increase in concession sales they saw in their first year after bringing Sweet Hospitality Group on

Yet by far **their biggest win has been having a strategic sales partner** who has truly partnered with them as they’ve

navigated several operational twists and turns, COVID being only one of them.

“In the last few years we’ve had several economic hurdles, but Sweet Hospitality Group has stuck with us,” Jenny said. “It’s been such an expression of loyalty and love, which is essentially the foundation of the company that Julie has created with Sweet Hospitality Group. She supports her clients and always approaches every challenge with a determination to not let it deter us.”

One such challenge involved figuring out a way to bring drinks inside the 500-seat theater they use at Williams College.

“In 2023, we needed to focus on long-term solution planning, so instead of



having a normal season, Jenny decided to do something very different and have intimate readings and cabarets,” Antonello said. “She wanted people to be able to drink during the show but Williams College doesn’t allow drinks in their 500-seat theater because the seats have upholstery.

“So because we were already having a different type of season we decided to do something different with our theater, and built the theater directly on the stage of the MainStage. We had the casts of the various shows and the audience all up on the stage together, as well as the concessions.

“The great thing about Sweet Hospitality Group is they totally went with it, and they are always game for absolutely anything. We wanted to capitalize on our bar sales, and they stepped forward to help us do that. They are always the people who say ‘yes’ and actively help us find solutions.”

Antonello said that choosing to work with Sweet Hospitality Group

is ultimately a great decision for any regional theater — especially those that want to provide the highest quality experience for their patrons.

“I approach concessions the same way I would a catered event,” Antonello said. “From the moment someone steps through the door and into the lobby, I want to make sure they have an amazing experience.

“That’s exactly why I wanted to bring in Sweet Hospitality Group, because you couldn’t ask for a better partner to help you do that. They may be based in New York City but it never feels that way, because they’re always right here with us and available when we need them. The love and care they bring to everything they do is amazing.”





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