Books and Bites

Innisfil Public Library & ideaLAB

Children

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Adults

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Intergenerational

Books and Bites

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$101-250

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Byline

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Books and Bites celebrates the best in our local literary and culinary talent. From inspiration to intrigue, sample treats at local restaurants and discover the authors in your own neighborhood. Enjoy a reading and Q&A while you savour a scrumptious dessert and coffee.

Advanced Planning

Our goal was to promote two things we love: local food and local authors.

Three staff members started planning several months in advance. We contacted restaurants to gauge their interest, then matched authors to the restaurants based on location and clientele (e.g. a gritty detective novel in a pub).

Tickets were $10, sold at the library and participating restaurants and through PayPal. Proceeds went to the restaurants to cover the cost of food. Authors were compensated through library purchases of their books. The library absorbed the cost of staff time and marketing materials.

Shortly before each event we contacted restaurants to update them on ticket sales, with the understanding that tickets were often purchased at the door. On the day of each event a staff member accompanied the author to assist with set-up, introductory remarks and signing/selling of books.

Our challenges were minor. We planned the events for a quieter time of day, but on one occasion it was busier than expected and participants had difficulty hearing. This was solved with a portable sound system. On another occasion a restaurant owner was disappointed in the turnout. Surprisingly, we found it a challenge to get publication-quality headshots of our authors.

Marketing

We marketed the events through our usual channels: website, monthly brochure, display, signage, press releases to local media and social media. We also professionally printed posters and table tents for the restaurants themselves so they could market and sell tickets from within the restaurant rather than asking interested parties to make their way to the library.

Budgeting

The costs came from staff time, book purchases and marketing materials. We purchased additional copies from each of the authors for display and promotion, and ordered posters and table talkers for our branches and participating restaurants. As a suggestion to cut costs, we might consider having the library pay the restaurant for the cost of the food and drink and retain the remaining portion of the ticket sales.

Day-of-event Activity

On the day of the event, the author and library staff member met at the restaurant 30 minutes in advance to set up the space and display/book signing area. Restaurant staff generally took drink orders as ticket holders took their seats; in some cases, there was a buffet area where tea and coffee were available for self-service.

The library staff member took and sold tickets at the door, then introduced the author. The author spoke and read for approximately 30 minutes, after which the library staff member thanked the author, spoke on upcoming Books and Bites dates, and thanked the restaurant staff as they began dessert service. During dessert, the author signed and sold books, assisted by the staff member if requested. The staff member also "worked the room," chatting with ticket holders and making sure they knew about library programs and services.

Program Execution

In 2014, the program was a resounding success. Our first author of the series has a strong local following and sold out the venue; most of the people in attendance that day purchased tickets for the rest of the series. As a result, all restaurants sold to capacity (20 to 30 tickets) and there was fantastic word of mouth. We received one valuable piece of feedback: a number of our summer residents who observe the Sabbath suggested we consider offering the program on weekdays in 2015 rather than all Saturdays. Ticket sales were slower overall in 2015, with most events drawing an average crowd of 10 participants.

Advice

Our single biggest piece of advice would be to front-load the series; schedule your best known, most popular author and restaurant pairing first, and there’s a good chance the series will sell itself. Our second piece of advice is to manage expectations. Make sure restaurants are aware that the event may not sell out, but that it’s equally likely to sell out at the door on the day of, and to manage their supply accordingly. Thirdly, keep the lines of communication open for authors, some of whom might be new to addressing crowds.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

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- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

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Audiences:

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Books, Buds and Bars: Programs for Adult Readers

Audiences:

Audience
Adults (21 and up)
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Science of Brewing: Tour and Tasting

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)