

# The New York Times

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 2011

## Business Day

### For All Those Who Aren't on the Royal Guest List

By STUART ELLIOTT

SINCE her invention in 1921, Betty Crocker has symbolized mainstream American kitchen values. So why then is a section of the Betty Crocker Web site devoted to celebrating the wedding of a member of the British royal family?

Yes, even mythical brand characters have become part of the marketing efforts in this country to capitalize on the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton on Friday. Recipes for versions of the bride's and groom's wedding cakes can be found at [bettycrocker.com/royalwedding](http://bettycrocker.com/royalwedding), along with ideas for "royal wedding viewing parties" and dishes like Union Jack Fruit Pizza.

"Betty Crocker has always been about bringing people ideas for making food a part of their celebrations," said Cheryl Welch, director of the Betty Crocker kitchens and food content at General Mills.

"It came up one day, 'What if Will and Kate did call us to make Betty Crocker part of their celebration?'" Ms. Welch said. "These are the things we'd show them if they'd call."

Improbable, to be sure, as Ms. Welch acknowledged. But with expectations that the royal wedding will be "a huge cultural event," she said, "we're looking for ways to join in the celebration."

In the lengthy run-up to the royal nuptials, a reaction to the initial euphoria has recently emerged, casting doubt on how interested Americans will actually be in the ceremony.

The skepticism has been fed by perceptions that the outpouring of commercialism has crossed a line because of the volume as well as the outlandishness. For instance, after Papa John's International hired a food artist to create a pizza to sell in Britain that bears a portrait of the prince and Ms. Middleton, the trade publication Advertising Age covered it in two lines: "Papa John's renders sane world speechless. There is no excuse for this sort of marketing tie-in."

Andrew Varga, chief marketing officer at Papa John's, said: "Papa John's has a platform we like to call 'Papa culture.' It injects the brand into events large and small." The £500 from the sale of the one-of-a-kind pizza will be donated to charity, he added.



Allposters.com is celebrating the royal wedding with tongue in cheek. The Papa John's commemorative pizza was too much for Advertising Age, which said, "There is no excuse for this sort of marketing tie-in."

Critics also point to trinkets like replica engagement rings, a Princess Kate Bride Doll and a collector's plate festooned with "magnificent hand-set faux jewels," as an ad proclaims.

"Yes, there's cynicism about celebrating a huge royal wedding while the world economy struggles," said Eileen O'Neill, group president for the Discovery Channel and TLC at Discovery Communications.

"But we're delighted about enjoying a moment of happiness," she added. "So many of us believe fairy tales come true."

To that end, TLC has been offering viewers 89 hours of programming with royal themes, among them "Royally Astounding: 30 Defining Days of the Monarchy," "Untold Stories of a Royal Bridesmaid" and "Wild About Harry."

"We're happy with the interest so far," Ms. O'Neill said, with several of the shows drawing more than a million viewers on first run.

The schedule for Friday is ambitious enough that it has its own logo, designating it as "William and Kate: The Royal Wedding Presented by TLC." Eight hours of coverage is to be accompanied by a live viewing party in Times Square that will use four giant screens in Duffy Square.

The event is to include a fashion

show, based on the TLC series "Say Yes to the Dress"; a performance by Colbie Caillat of a new song, "I Do"; and wedding ceremonies for three American couples.

TLC began arranging the event months ago, securing one screen from Clear Channel Spectacolor, part of Clear Channel Communications, in mid-January.

"It'll be interesting to see what kind of crowd turns out" for the ceremony, said Michael Steinberg, vice president for sales and marketing at Clear Channel Spectacolor, given that its 11 a.m. starting time in London translates to 6 a.m. in New York.

Some marketers are hedging their bets by simultaneously commemorating and sending up the wedding.

For instance, AllPosters.com is selling straightforward images of the couple-to-be and London landmarks at the same time it also offers cheeky posters that parody the World War II slogan "Keep calm and carry on" as "Keep calm Harry is still single" and "Keep calm it's only a royal wedding."

"We're always looking to come out with fun ways to engage our customer base, an interesting spin, an interesting hook," said Geoffroy Martin, chief executive of the AllPosters parent, Art.com.

"We're seeing some significant traction" in sales, he added, in the United States as well as countries like Germany, Spain, Italy and France, where, said Mr. Martin, who is French, "we chopped off the king's head."

Some radio and newspaper ads from the New York Sports Clubs chain of fitness centers — which often borrows interest from big events to draw attention to its campaigns — take a celebratory tack: "Just in case you're not marrying royalty. Join us now for royal savings."

Other ads are more cutting, declaring: "Following the royal wedding? Join now and get a life."

Bob Giardina, chief executive of the chain's parent, Town Sports International, described the dual approach as "Let's celebrate it; enough's enough." The ads were produced by C. J. Waldman of the Octopus Creative Group and an internal creative team.

The concept was inspired, Mr. Giardina said, when "my wife said, 'I'm getting up at 4 in the morning to watch this wedding,' and I didn't know it was going on."

"We're not making fun of it," he added. "We're having fun with it."

Even Betty Crocker is showing a sense of humor. Among her wedding-related recipes is one for a dish called Frozen Foolish Royal Mess.