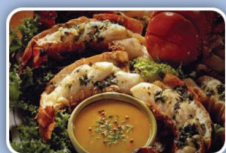
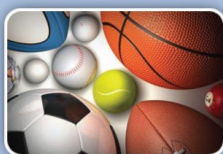


You Can't Win If You Don't Enter



by *Carolyn Wilman*
"The Contest Queen"

foreword by *Sandy Gulliver*
former editor of *SweepSheet*®

A M E R I C A N E D I T I O N

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You Can't Win If You Don't Enter

How To Win Cash, Cars, Trips & More!

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The Name It & Claim It Game

In Contact With Other Realms

Confessions of an 83-Year-Old Sage

A Man Called Friday

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How to Win Giveaways on Social Media

RoboForm 101

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DEDICATION

For all those who helped me make
my dreams come true:

**Mom, Dad, Laura, Ryan, Len, Piri,
and especially Craig and Nicole.**

Thank you for helping me become a *winner!*

In memoriam:

Lynn Marie Banks Goutbeck

co-author of Winning Ways

March 10, 1952 - April 28, 2005

TESTIMONIALS

The Contest Queen Has Taught Others How to Win Over \$1 Million in Prizes!

Wendy Won a House

“I just wanted to follow-up on my email to you. You may remember I qualified on the radio with two local radio stations for a chance to win a house. 700 contestants, over approximately four months qualified for a chance to turn a key to see if it opened the front door. On May 8th, we attended the Gala Party, where upon entry you deposited your ballot with the assigned number into a drum. Throughout the evening there were thirty numbers selected. Mine came up in the second to last group of five. All thirty of us came to stage where thirty actual keys were in a fish bowl. You would pick a key from the bowl and try to open the door. Twenty-one people before me were unsuccessful. I chose the key that opened the door to a \$250,000.00 home.

Two days prior to this event you sent me the link to Helene Hadsell, I listened ... I SELECTED, PROJECTED, EXPECTED and COLLECTED. Is it a coincidence? This is my biggest win so far. Like the words in Elton Johns' song SOMEONE SAVED MY LIFE TONIGHT. I am on disability and with my husband out of work, we just had signed the papers to re-mortgage our current home to pay off debts. We were able to cancel the re-mortgage because of this wonderful event, and that is my story. THANK YOU!”

—Wendy in Barrie, ON

Full Story: <https://bit.ly/SPECaHouse>

Delaney Won a Ferrari

“I want to thank Carolyn Wilman (or @ContestQueen on Twitter) as she has a great website, Contest Queen.

TESTIMONIALS

It's sort of because of her that I started entering sweeps as well as blog giveaways because she has won quite a few and she has tips on bettering your odds. Well, dang if she wasn't right!"

—*Delaney in Wichita, K*

Full Story: <http://bit.ly/WinaFerrari>

Nicole Won a Car

"I was reading your newsletter on Monday, May 7th and I took note and wrote down on a sticky your saying "I am Lucky, I am a Winner, I am a Grand Prize Magnet". I placed it beside my computer to bring luck. I also got your book for a Christmas gift.

Around 6:30 p.m. that night, I got THE call and it was Angela from Treehouse TV. I was so excited since I was a potential winner of the grand prize - A Pontiac Montana SV6 loaded with toys! So amazing it's a \$30,000 prize!! I wanted to put the phone down and start screaming but my husband kept on trying to calm me down.

I am going to Pontiac Mills in Oshawa this Saturday and they are going to do a presentation at 11:00 a.m. with Dora and Sponge Bob present for this event. Thanks Carolyn!"

—*Nicole in Chelmsford, ON*

Carolyn is a Winner!

"I attended the seminar and it was simply amazing. I had no idea how much information one could learn. You really do need an entire day to go through so many aspects including how winning contests can liven up your life and take you on many new adventures! I learned so much about the tools one can use today.

TESTIMONIALS

There is a community of "contestors" who are enthusiastic and always having fun. The seminar was only 2 weeks ago and today I won my 1st contest!"

—*Carolyn in Ottawa, ON*

Sandra & Michael won a Trip to Outer Space

"We won \$80,000! Yes, that's not a typo. We won the grand prize from the Proctor and Gamble Gillette Hitch a Ride to Outer Space Contest. We had the choice of a flight to outer space including the 3-4 days of training in Virginia to be weightless for 3-4 minutes or the cash. We took the cash!!

We scrambled to get the forms signed and sent (including a medical). A couple months later we got the cheque in the mail. WOW! We paid down our mortgage, bought a car and are having our bathroom renovated as we speak.

Thanks for all your help. I bought your book and have done pretty much everything you wrote about. I entered my name and my husband in the "single" contests and his name came up. I enter contests daily and your book has helped me organize things so well. I share my knowledge with anyone who wants to know. Being a stay at home mom and loving the Internet, it's the best hobby out there - totally free and totally fun, don't you think? It's like Christmas every time I win. Who knows what will be next?!"

—*Sandra & Michael in Thorndale, ON*

FOREWORD

I love getting packages in the mail, and I always have. I grew up on a farm in Minnesota, and weeks could go by without seeing another human being outside of our family. The mailman was our link to the outside world. The best part of any day was to look out the window and see a brown paper package (yes...tied up with string) hanging from the mailbox. There were nine of us kids, and we all would race out to the box at the end of our driveway, hoping the contents of the package would be for us. It could have been anything; a trinket ordered from the back of a cereal box to clothing ordered from Sears. Whatever it was, our day was brighter for it.

50 years have passed, and a package stuffed inside the mailbox still brings the same thrill. Now, just as then, I do what I can to generate a continual stream of mail, and a padded envelope causes just as much excitement as a flat FedEx envelope containing an affidavit for a larger prize.

I entered my first sweepstakes at age 14 while leafing through a copy of one of my teen magazines. They were giving away a trip to have a date with Bobby Vinton. In 1962, he was quite the heartthrob, and I was sure I would win that date. I did not win it, but my desire for entering sweepstakes was not entirely squelched as a result of that early loss. I may have put entering sweepstakes on the back burner for several years, but the desire never stayed buried, and once adulthood settled in, I started

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entering everything I could get my hands on. I thought I was the only one with such steadfastness until a sample copy of the Contest Newsletter came in the mail. Their readers were winning the very same sweeps I was entering, so while I knew I had company in my hobby, I also knew “someone really does win those things.” There was no stopping me after that, and I set my mind to winning with even more passion. And win I did, with a string of four cars, 40 plus trips, TVs of every size and shape, and several large cash prizes of \$10,000 and more.

I believe my success is a result of not relying too much on luck. I did not leave a stone unturned in my research on how drawings were conducted, the different methods of entering (and the benefits of one over the other), and just keeping abreast of the many changes in playing the different “games of chance” over the years. Whereas when I started seriously entering sweepstakes 25 years ago, my hobby is nothing like it was back then. I was successful then, and by keeping up with the changes, I am successful now.

Some of my own readers at SweepSheet® do not want to “keep up” with the changes, and their win lists show it. The bottom line is, that you get out of the hobby what you put into it. So, yes, continue to enter any sweepstakes you can where they still allow you to enter by mail, but take seriously the changes such as entering

FOREWORD

online, via text messaging, and getting game codes off of product packages to send back for second chance drawings. If you do, your mailboxes, just like mine, will continue to be stuffed with 'brown paper packages'. As for me? I am trying to win a trip to Branson, MO, to see Bobby Vinton.

Sandy Gulliver

Former Editor, SweepSheet®

www.sweepsheet.com

INTRODUCTION

*“The day you decide to do it,
is your lucky day.”*

Proverb

I *love* entering sweepstakes. I get such a thrill out of finding new ones and reading about all the different prizes that I could win; I get butterflies in my stomach. I daydream about all the various trips I could take, the cars I could drive, or what I would spend the cash on. I *love* getting notified I won a prize. I get all bubbly inside, and I grin from ear to ear for hours. ***I am passionate about sweeping.***

HOW WINNING CHANGED MY LIFE

I have good reason to feel this way. Sweeping has changed the course of my life. Winning prizes back in 1991 led to going on a trip to Barbados with my mom... and to the first date, I had with my husband.

It was early December 1990, and a popular Toronto radio station was broadcasting their morning show for a week in a large downtown department store’s window. I worked in a nearby office tower, and every day, I would stop to watch and listen. One morning, they gave away prize packs, including tickets to the Ice Capades and a gift certificate for a trendy hair salon, to the first person that could show them a photo of children in their family. I whipped open my wallet and flashed the photo of my little cousins winning the prize pack.

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My mom had been home with the flu, so when I got home, I gave her the gift certificate to the hair salon. (All you ladies will understand; I had been having my hair cut by the same hairstylist for five years—almost twenty now—and would never get my hair done anywhere else *even if I won it!*) We decided that when she felt better, we would spend the day together, going to the salon, having lunch, and Christmas shopping downtown.

The restaurant we had lunch at that day was giving away a trip to Barbados. As we left the restaurant, I realized I had forgotten to get the sweepstakes entry forms. I made Mom wait as I ran back inside. When I returned, I told her I would fill the forms out later since the restaurant was close to my office. I said, “If I win, I’ll take you, and if you win, you’ll take me!”

On December 24th, we were all at home wrapping gifts in the living room when the phone rang. Mom went into the kitchen to answer the call. I could only hear her side of the conversation. The woman identified herself and stated that my mom may have won a trip. My mom doesn’t like telemarketers and couldn’t figure out what was going on, but since it was Christmas, she decided not to hang up right away. The woman asked my mom, “Where is Barbados?” My Mom nearly said she didn’t know. Instead, she said, “In the Caribbean.” She was told she did, in fact, win the trip and the travel agency

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would contact her in January to make all the arrangements. My Mom was confused and asked, “How did I win this trip?” I heard that and screamed, “We won! We won!” The woman asked, “Didn’t you fill out a sweepstakes entry form?” My mom said, “I think one of my kids entered me,” as I jumped up and down around her.

NOTE: In Canada, we are notified we are a “potential” winner and must correctly answer a Skill Testing Question before we are declared the “official” winner. (See chapter, You’re a Winner!)

TIP: Remember to tell your friends and family when you have entered them in a sweepstakes. This way, they won’t be caught off guard when they are contacted and inadvertently disqualify themselves.

We went the following April. It was really special to spend a whole week alone with my mom—we had the best time, and we learned a lot about each other.

I always wanted to win another family trip so that my mom, my daughter, and I could go together. November 2005 we won a trip for four to London, England. It was so much fun to go on another vacation with not only my mom and daughter but my husband as well!

TIP: If you wish to take children on the trip, read the rules and check out the destination’s website to ensure

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children are allowed at the resort or hotel. It would be a shame to win a vacation for the family, only to discover that only you and your partner can go.

So that's how I won the trip to Barbados, but I know some of you are wondering about that first date with my husband. Well, remember the four tickets to the Ice Capades I said I won? I gave away one set to a girlfriend in my office. Then I started inviting friends to see who would like to go with me. I must have invited thirty people—no one wanted to go. One day, I was speaking to Craig, who at the time was a business acquaintance, and asked him to go with me. Unlike those thirty other people, *he* said yes. We had a great time. *I* thought I had made a new friend; *he* says it was our first date, and I just didn't know it. We just celebrated our 12th wedding anniversary. Would we have begun a true friendship had I not won those tickets? Who knows?

I continued to enter sweepstakes sporadically until I read an article that led me to become a “sweeper.” (*For complete definitions, see the NOTE later in this chapter.*) At the time, I had been unemployed for the longest period I have ever experienced in my professional life. One night I was lying in bed, reading the August 2001 copy of Reader's Digest, when I came across an article called “Get in the Winner's Circle! Tips from a contest junkie who's proven that the best things in life *are* free” by Barb Taylor. I read and reread that

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article, and as I did, I made a decision—from then on, I would *win* all the things I wanted in life; like a new car!

Get in the Winner's Circle!

Tips from a contest junkie who's proven that the best things in life *are* free

by Barb Taylor, from Calgary Herald

Vacations in Italy, Hawaii, and Mexico. Doing rolls in a stunt plane or being whisked off in a limousine for a night of wining, dining, and theatre. Hardly the lifestyle you'd expect for an average-income family of four living in a duplex and driving a rusty old Volvo. Certainly not the lifestyle we envisioned when I left my teaching job 12 years ago to become a stay-at-home mom.

Our magical life began in 1988 after a sleepless night spent attending to our newborn son. The following day I entered a contest sponsored by a local radio station, inviting listeners to send letters to Santa. I pleaded with Santa for one night of uninterrupted sleep. My entry was selected for a one-week trip to Lake Tahoe from radio station CJAY 92. I was hooked.

Now I enter lots of contests, anywhere from 200 to 300 a year. I find out about them while shopping for groceries, listening to the radio, browsing through magazines, and regularly perusing a contest newsletter to which I subscribe. Over the years, I've spent three to four hours a week researching new contests and filling out forms.

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But the hard work has paid off. I averaged \$10,000 in annual winnings; I've won two Dirt Devils through the Safeway Score & Win; and I've gone on a total of 14 major trips thanks to this winning hobby. My writing talents have won me a fair share of prizes as well, everything from a pair of \$1,000 earrings for a local magazine's limerick contest to a pair of lift tickets for a Calgary Herald-sponsored Ski Memories contest.

Our winnings have also included clothing, appliances, a backyard barbecue and a patio set. We rarely pay to go to a movie or theatrical production. We frequently dine on gift certificates we have won. The luxuries our income doesn't provide for, my contesting does. Even our children get in on the act and have won a bike, a skateboard and passes to local attractions.

We've watched beautiful sunsets in Maui (courtesy of the Lite 96 jet) and Oahu (thanks to KissFM), walked the Freedom Trail in Boston (Calgary Co-op supermarket and Kraft foods), and even sent my in-laws to Scotland (a cross-Canada random draw from United Distillers). Will it ever end? Not as long as I can fill out an entry for or clip a Universal Product Code, or

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UPC as it's known (the bar code on products you buy).

Most of the trips I have won fall into the middle “good-and besides it's free” category. While not all-inclusive, your major costs of airfare and accommodation are covered. You stay in above average accommodation, usually a three-star hotel. You are generally responsible for your own meals, spending money and, occasionally, airport taxes. Trips we've won in this category included a one-week trip to San José del Cabo at the tip of Mexico's Baja peninsula. We enjoyed beautiful, uncrowded beaches, drinkable water, and simple but clean accommodations.

My husband and I experienced our “dream come true” trip courtesy of a local real-estate developer. By dropping off three entry forms at a tour of show homes, we won a one-week trip to Florence, which included stopovers in Paris and London. In Florence, we stayed at the Hotel Brunelleschi in a \$650-a-night room that had floor-to-ceiling louvered windows opening onto a tiny flowered courtyard. We had a breathtaking view of the Duomo and the Campanile.

Nowadays, friends often rub my arm for luck before they head off to buy their lottery tickets.

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I can only shake my head in wonder—I've never won anything in a lottery.

So, you must be wondering, how do I do it? In the world of contesting, luck really has nothing to do with it: it all comes down to effort and persistence. For every contest I win, there are a 100 I've lost. Here are some suggestions to put the odds in your favor:

DO

Pick free contests. These are usually drawbox contests and can be found in grocery stores and other businesses. Radio and television phone-in contests also cost nothing to enter.

Also, pick the “better odds” contest: Look for contests that have a limited contesting area, offer lots of prizes, require you to “do something” (write a story, solve a puzzle), or that run for a short time span.

Enter often. If it's a “better odds” contest, I'll enter five to 20 times. Try to space your entry mailings throughout the length of the contest's running.

Collect UPCs. Remember that hand-drawn facsimiles are usually accepted in mail-in contests, and believe me, they really work.

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I've won many contests using hand-drawn facsimiles.

Subscribe to a newsletter detailing currently running contests. DON'T

Don't swipe the entry pads and then stuff the draw box. Getting greedy may get you disqualified for taking unfair advantage.

Don't try to win more than once a month on a given radio station. If you make a nuisance of yourself by trying to win every prize offered, you lower your chances of winning something you really want.

Don't waste money sending in dozens, or hundreds, of entries to a contest that gives away only one prize. This is a quick road to contest burnout.

Don't get scammed! If you've won a contest you haven't entered—beware! If you have to be earning \$40,000 a year and are required to attend a sales presentation—think twice!

Don't send money to receive a prize—ever.

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NOTE: See section, Newsletters, to find American equivalent sweepstakes newsletters you can subscribe to.

I began my sweeping hobby by surfing the web and discovering an entire community of people who enjoy entering sweepstakes. I joined a few groups, signed up for a couple of newsletters, and, through trial and error, came up with an Internet-based sweepstakes entering system that really *works*. How do I know my system works? My results, of course—I consistently win 5-15+ sweeps every month, month after month. I even had a month where I won *83 prizes!*

I am so passionate about sweeping and excited about winning, that I decided to write this book after the 100th person asked me what my secret was to winning so much. I knew I was onto something with the system I had developed over the past few years, and I wanted to share my discoveries, ideas, thoughts, and enthusiasm with others.

Then someone asked me, “Why would you give all your secrets away? Wouldn’t teaching others how to be successful sweepers decrease your odds of winning?” It was a tough question...

I was contemplating whether or not I should continue to write the book while driving to a friend’s house. On the way, I passed a church. The service announcement

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board out front said, “You Can’t Lose Helping Others Win.” That clinched it—I thought, “That message is for me! God is telling me it is OK to write the book!”

In this book, I will cover everything from how I began, the ins and outs of the five ways to enter sweepstakes, the Internet Sweeping System I have developed over years of entering (and entering and entering...), stories from fellow sweepers, and what pitfalls to avoid along with many tips and tricks to increase your odds of winning.

In the past, most books on the hobby of sweeping focused on only three methods of entering; in-person, phone-in, and mail-in. This left out the field of Internet and mobile phone contests, both of which are the newest, fastest growing, and easiest way to enter forms of sweepstakes available today. This book focuses on the Internet/online method of entering sweepstakes. When I began entering sweepstakes on a daily basis, there was no single source of sweepstake information in Canada. My goal is to make this book (and the online resources on my website—www.contestqueen.com) a hub of all the sweepstake resources available today in North America. With all this information at your fingertips, you can choose which methods of entry you want to participate in, which groups and forums you may want to join, and what types of sweepstakes you want to enter.

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I feel sweeping is one of the best, most rewarding hobbies around, and I am sure you will feel the same way after your first win. By reading this book and using the many ideas, tips, and tricks included within, you can enjoy the hobby of sweeping as much as I do.

NOTE: Occasionally, I may use the word contestor in this book. In Canada, we use the word contest interchangeably with the word sweepstakes, even though, by definition, they are different. (See section, Promotion Types.)

con•testor (kɒnˈtɛstər)

- n. 1. One who enters contests, sweepstakes, competitions, lotteries and raffles.

NOTE: You may have noticed that I have spelled the word contestor with an OR as opposed to an ER. There is a reason for this. I created the word contestor because the proper definition of a contestor is someone who is protesting or disputing something. We're trying to win cars and big-screen TVs here, not contest a will!

con•testing (kɒnˈtɛst/)

- v. 1. The act of entering contests.

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con·test (kɒn/ˈtɛst/)

- n.*
1. A struggle for superiority or victory between rivals.
 2. A competition, especially one in which entrants perform separately and are rated by judges. See Synonyms at conflict.

con·test·ed, con·test·ing,
con·tests (kən/ˈtɛst/) (kɒn/ˈtɛst/)

- v. tr.*
1. To compete or strive for.
 2. To call into question and take an active stand against; dispute or challenge:
contest a will. See Synonyms at oppose.

- v. intr.*
1. To struggle or compete; contend:
contested with other bidders for the antique.

Probably from French *conteste*, from *contester*, to dispute, from Old French, to call to witness, from Latin *contestari*: *com-*, *com-* + *testis*, *witness*; see *trei* —in Appendix I.

con·test' a·ble *adj.*

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con'tes-ta'tion (kɒn'tĕ-stā'shən) *n.*

con·test'er *n.*

con·tes·tant (kən-tĕs'tənt, kɒn'tĕs'tənt)

- n.*
1. One taking part in a contest; a competitor.
 2. One that contests or disputes something, such as an election or a will.

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sweep·staker (sweep/stāk/ər)

- n.*
1. One who enters sweepstakes, contests, competitions, lotteries, and raffles in order to win prizes.

sweeper (sweep/ər)

slang for sweepstaker

- n.*
1. One who enters sweepstakes, contests, competitions, lotteries, and raffles in order to win prizes.

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uncomfortable because a professional is an expert in a specific field and is usually well paid for their skill and knowledge. I consider contesting to be a hobby because 1) it is not my occupation, 2) I do it for pleasure, and 3) I certainly could not live off my winnings.

Profession or Hobby?

pro·fes·sion·al (prə-fěsh/ə-nəl)

- adj.
1. a. Of, relating to, engaged in, or suitable for a profession: lawyers, doctors, and other professional people.
 - b. Conforming to the standards of a profession: professional behavior.
 2. Engaging in a given activity as a source of livelihood or as a career: a professional writer.
 3. Performed by persons receiving pay: professional football.
 4. Having or showing great skill; expert: a professional repair job.
- n.
1. A person following a profession, especially a learned profession.
 2. One who earns a living in a given or implied occupation: hired a professional to decorate the house.
 3. A skilled practitioner; an expert.

hob·by (hɒb/ē)

- n. pl. **hob·bies** An activity or interest pursued outside one's regular occupation and engaged in primarily for pleasure.

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sweeping (sweep/¹)

- v. 1. The act of entering sweepstakes.

Profession or Hobby?

pro·fes·sion·al (prə-fesh/ə-nəl)

- adj.*
1. a. Of, relating to, engaged in, or suitable for a profession: lawyers, doctors, and other professional people.
 - b. Conforming to the standards of a profession: professional behavior.
 2. Engaging in a given activity as a source of livelihood or as a career: *a professional writer*.
 3. Performed by persons receiving pay: *professional football*.
 4. Having or showing great skill; expert: *a professional repair job*.
- n.*
1. A person following a profession, especially a learned profession.

INTRODUCTION

2. One who earns a living in a given or implied occupation: *hired a professional to decorate the house.*
3. A skilled practitioner; an expert.

hob·by (hɒb/ē)

n. pl.

hob·bies An activity or interest pursued outside one's regular occupation and engaged in primarily for pleasure.

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What is an enthusiastic sweeper called? I have been called a professional sweeper. The term makes me uncomfortable because a professional is an expert in a specific field and is usually well paid for their skill and knowledge. I consider sweeping to be a hobby because 1) it is not my occupation, 2) I do it for pleasure, and 3) I certainly could not live off my winnings.

There are several terms used globally to describe someone who enters sweepstakes on a regular basis. In Canada, we refer to ourselves as contestors because we

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enter contests. In the United States, you refer to yourselves as sweepers because you enter sweepstakes. (If we did that in Canada, people would think we were curlers!) In the United Kingdom and Australia, they refer to themselves as competitors because they enter competitions. As Shakespeare said, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” My favorite term to describe my hobby is *winner!*

MY WINNING STREAK

On a very cold gray day in January, I got the email that every sweeper waits for: Congratulations! Your name has been drawn for the **Grand Prize**, a trip for two to L.A. and dinner with/prepared by Bob Blumer, in **Meyer’s “The Surreal Meal” contest**, sponsored by Alliance Atlantis Broadcasting Inc. and Meyer Canada Inc. (Along with the trip to Los Angeles, I received an eight-piece set of Meyer Anolon cookware and \$500 spending money.)

TIP: You can collect frequent flyer points on the flights you have won. Each person must have their own account to maximize the free rewards on top of a win.

Craig and I arranged to take the trip in March. We arrived at the airport on Thursday morning and met our chaperone from Alliance Atlantis. (They need to ensure that their show’s hosts are protected from crazy sweepers.) It had been a slow month, and I had not won

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a single thing. We got to L.A. and discovered we had two phone messages; one from my Dad and one from my stepmother. Due to the time difference, I could not call until Friday morning. When I called, my stepmother said, “Are you sitting down?” I was expecting bad news. She then proceeded to tell me my niece won a trip for four to New York City!

At the beginning of the year, I told my stepsister I was going to start entering my niece and nephew in sweepstakes for children. I thought they would enjoy receiving a neat new toy or DVD in the mail. Little did I know their first win would be “a big one!” (I consider it my win even though I didn’t get the prize because I did the entering.) I was so happy for them since they had never been on a family vacation, and they were now going on the trip of a lifetime.

We then proceeded to have an amazing time in Los Angeles. We arrived at Bob’s home in the Hollywood Hills at 8:00 pm on Friday evening. He had called me a few weeks before the trip to discuss the menu. We agreed he would make us recipes from his upcoming cookbook *Surreal Gourmet Bites: show-stoppers and conversation starters*. Bob is also an oenophile, so each course was paired with a selection from his extensive private wine collection. He is a wonderful host. Craig and I felt as if we had gone to a friend’s home for dinner. I went out and purchased his new book when it

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was released so I could continue to enjoy his creations and share them with my family and friends.

NOTE: There are no photos of our evening with Bob in this book. It is important to read all the documents you sign with regard to a sweepstakes win. The sweepstakes prize waiver stated that all photos taken during our evening are for personal use only and cannot be published. I can publish other pictures of us taken that weekend.

We arrived home late Sunday night, tired, happy, and feeling lucky that we had such a memorable long weekend. As a sweeper, you never know how long a dry spell will last or how long a winning streak will continue. At 10:00 am Monday morning, Craig got a phone call from a local radio station. He won a two-week European holiday—a nine-country, fourteen-day bus tour. He was shocked.

We went to Europe that September. The trip was with a tour company that specialized in youth groups 18-35. It was fast-paced and had a party atmosphere. Being up late every night, getting up early every morning, and running around a new city almost daily took its toll on me by the end of the vacation. I came home with a terrible cold, having sadly discovered I wasn't 21 anymore and couldn't keep up the pace I used to. No wonder they 35! It's really tough on those of us over 35.

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TIP: If one half of the couple is under 35 and the other is over, the older person can sign a waiver stating you understand the tour is designed for “young” people.

We visited London, Amsterdam, the Rhine Valley, Munich, Innsbruck, Hofgarten, Venice, Rome, Florence, Lucerne, Paris, and then back to London. What a vacation! The two surprise bonuses of the tour were arriving in Munich on the opening day of Oktoberfest (Who knew Oktoberfest started in September?) and seeing the last 10 minutes of Pope John Paul II’s Wednesday morning sermon in Rome.

The highlight of the vacation for me was the evening trip up the Eiffel Tower. I have always wanted to go to Paris, and standing on the upper deck, hugging Craig, and looking over the lights of Paris as the tower twinkled was absolutely magical. I felt so lucky!

Our best adventure on the tour was the morning we had a \$100 breakfast. It was the second last day of the trip, and we were in Paris. After a brief tour of a perfumery, we found ourselves outside of the Opera House. We were hungry and decided to have a bite to eat, and were tired of eating small, quick breakfasts. Looking around, we noticed Le Café de la Paix, Paris’ most famous restaurant. (Embarrassingly, I did not recognize the name. Craig did recognize the name, remembering many world-famous chefs began their careers in that very café.) We entered from the street

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entrance, and I was thinking we might sit outside. Craig and I discussed our eating options with the Maitre D' and decided we would like to have the breakfast buffet.

They sat us inside in a booth opposite the hotel entrance. As we waited for our tea and coffee to arrive, we noticed several very well-dressed people come into the restaurant.

Then we went to the buffet. I have never seen a buffet like this in my life! There were breads and cheeses from all over the world, twenty different kinds of fresh fruit, four types of fresh fruit juice, and the best scrambled eggs I have ever eaten. They even had an entire section of Japanese specialties. When I came back to the table, I said to Craig, "I don't think we want to know what breakfast is going to cost us." We sat for an hour relaxing, eating, and deciding what were going to see that afternoon and soaking in the atmosphere. When the bill arrived, it was €64 (\$100). It was worth every penny!

Many people ask me when I have time to enter so many sweepstakes. I have to quote R.J. Ward from a sign we found in the Tinker Town Museum just outside Santa Fe, NM:

"I DID ALL THIS WHILE YOU WERE WATCHING TV."