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## The Super Bowl: New Forms of Excess

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Dan Marino will send a recipe via e-mail to anyone in the world. In point of fact Dan Marino will quarterback your entire menu for this coming Sunday. This can mean only one thing. This Sunday is Super Bowl Sunday in America. Dan Marino is ready to serve you, the entire world, and me.

Like everything else connected with Super Bowl XXXVII Dan Marino's new quarterbacking job has a corporate sponsor, in this case, Kraft Foods. Indeed if you head to [web.kraftfoods.com/promo/superbowl](http://web.kraftfoods.com/promo/superbowl) you can enter the world of the "Kraft Party Playbook." Here you will find Quarterback Tips for 14 appetizers, 7 main dishes, and 8 desserts, including the aforementioned Super Bowl Cake.

For those too young to remember the late lamented quarterback of the Miami Dolphins click on "Who is Dan Marino?" Oh the fickle fleeting fortune of fame! Among other things, you will learn that Dan Marino made only one Super Bowl appearance in his otherwise Super career.

So it is at this small corner of Super Bowl XXXVII hype and promotion where during this the annual American mid-winter festival honoring the memory of Thorstein Veblen who over a century ago gave us the necessary vocabulary to describe this profligate weekend. This greatest of American economists and social critics coined the essential terms: "conspicuous consumption," "conspicuous leisure," and "conspicuous waste." How good ol' Thory would have loved the Super Bowl!

Here you can see the rich and the near rich at play. Here you can indulge in the privileges of class if you have access to the excess through the tax-deductible corporate world of client entertainment and employee rewards. Power brokers and laser speed consumers are here in a feeding frenzy.

The Center of the Action is at the "NFL's Corporate Hospitality Village," a place that "enhances the experience of this remarkable sporting event." The Village has two different experiences: The Stadium Club and the Private Tent.

"For groups of two and up, wishing to be in a shared environment with a turnkey operation including catering, entertainment, décor, NFL player appearances, etc." the Stadium Club is the obvious choice. The Pregame and Postgame Menus have plenty to please both carnivores and vegans at Super Bowl XXXVII.

You enter the Stadium Club via the Boardwalk, "a manicured walkway featuring plants and flowers indigenous to California." This leads to the Sports Deck where you can "kick back and hang out" during the ABC pre-game or post-game shows or the ESPN Radio broadcasts. Here you may also "get up close and personal with NFL Players and Coaches."

If you are looking for something more, you can move on to the Player's Beach House for "live, high-energy, All-American music and entertainment," featuring The Surf City All-Stars with Dean Torrance from Jan and Dean. If this is just too much nostalgia perhaps you should stay back at the Boardwalk.

The Stadium Club Hospitality Package includes VIP parking, photo and autograph opportunities with NFL players, reserved seating for groups of ten or more, an official NFL Super Bowl XXXVII pin, a Collector's Stadium Club Ticket, a premium full bar, food stations, and VIP access to the Corporate Hospitality Village. This area will be open three hours prior to and two hours after the Game itself, and all of this for only \$500 per person. Game tickets not included.

You will of course want to have transportation to and from the game. Stretch limos run \$88 per hour and game day reservations are for a minimum of twelve hours. You will need to add on the \$150 parking fee, the 20% gratuity, and the 15% tax. That would be \$1440.60. That in turn is only \$240.10 per person if you have the six-passenger model and only \$180.08 per person if you have the eight-passenger model. As things go, this is the bargain of the week.

Other incidental expenses may come into play. A former prostitute reports that "Pimps see the Super Bowl as a moneymaking opportunity sent by God." Indeed members of the world's oldest profession have found the Super Bowl an extremely active venue. From special service in the private suites to the halftime quickie, the demand side of the economic equation is highly active. I would like to be able

to report on the specifics of services and prices but the Super Bowl web site does not provide such information.

There is very little information available about the Corporate Tents except for this tantalizing tidbit: "For those groups of 50 people or more that are seeking a private, exclusive environment in which they can customize their event and promote their corporate identity, a Private Tent experience is unsurpassed." Quickies not included.

This is where major corporations and the NFL itself entertain clients, lavish attention on politicians who can serve their interests, and deal in levels of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste that only Veblen himself could adequately describe. There may never have been more "pecuniary emulation," "predation," and the establishing of "invidious distinctions" in one place in the history of "display."

As Veblen himself would have recognized there is only one way for this Super Sunday XXXVII to end. At the two-minute warning, President Bush appears on television screens across the nation and on the stadium screen to announce the invasion of Iraq. The crowd erupts and an F-16 sweeps across the sky. As the game ends and the fireworks display begins, Brad Johnson is spotted leaving the field. He turns and looks toward the camera and the now familiar Texas voice asks the MVP that standard post-Super Bowl question.

What else could he possibly say but, "I'm going to Saddam World?"

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't need to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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