

Catering tips and hints



At the Urban Deli we offer a variety of catering options. They can range from standard “off the menu” caterings for various gatherings, such as boardrooms or open houses to name two, or we can tailor to your individual needs for weddings, anniversaries, graduations, or intimate social gatherings with friends. We’re easily adaptable and can help you design a memorable occasion.

Regardless of the type of function or the style, there are a few not-so-obvious points to consider when planning a catered event. They can help you achieve a successful catered occasion that meets, even exceeds, your expectations.

We have nine items to keep in mind:

- 1. Manage Expectations*
- 2. Know Your Guests*
- 3. Know Your Guest Preferences*
- 4. Provide Menu Choices*
- 5. Incorporate Seasonal and Fresh Items*
- 6. Select a Menu that Fits the Event Schedule*
- 7. Anticipate Special Needs*
- 8. Allow for a Comfortable Room Setup*
- 9. Create Ethnic or Regional Menus*

To learn more, read on ...

Tips and Hints for a Catered Event

1. Manage Expectations

First and foremost – manage your expectations surrounding the value you get from your budget. When determining your budget, try to break it down to cost-per-person and have a realistic expectation.

2. Know Your Guests

In other words, know their “profile.” What is the profile of the guest being invited to your event? As an example, for many business functions the phrase “rubber chicken circuit” is a common description – and it doesn’t refer to something good. Rather, it means standard, rubbery chicken served and that is very unappetizing.

To help avoid having this kind of description applied to your event, consider these points:

- The professional level of your guest.
- The frequency your guest attends similar events.
- The location where guests reside.
- The ethnic background of your guests.

3. Know Your Guest Preferences

Understanding the profiles of your guests allows the event planner to begin considering what menu options to offer. The following will help you better plan to meet their needs:

- Older groups of attendees may prefer a milder menu.
- Attendees concerned about health may prefer more seafood and vegetables options.
- Younger or middle-aged attendees may prefer spicier, more adventurous meals.

The idea here is to consider what your guests will enjoy the most based on the type of event you are planning.

4. Provide Menu Choices

Anyone planning an event should offer several choices so that *all* guests will be pleased with what's available. Some general guidelines:

- Offer at least two choices of entrees.
- Offer three or more salad dressing options.
- Serve all condiments on the side.
- Offer two dessert options: one very indulgent, one healthy.

5. *Incorporate Seasonal and Fresh Items*

When selecting the menu, the time of year should play a large factor in determining food and beverage. Take into consideration which items are in season for spring or winter menus.

Another important factor is to consider the region or location of the event and popular food items from the area. Incorporate fresh seafood or regionally grown produce, for example.

6. *Select a Menu that Fits the Event Schedule*

Sometimes the clock will be the greatest guide to determining the menu for an event. Some examples:

Box lunches: best if you have 30 minutes or are on the go.

Plated meals: usually require at least 1.5 hours.

Buffets: may be finished in about 1 hour.

Cocktail receptions: require a minimum of 1 hour before dinner.

Working breakfasts or lunches: should incorporate menu items that can hold up for longer periods of time than others.

7. *Anticipate Special Needs*

Before any event, it is critical for an event planner to find out if any of the guests have a special need so that the catering manager can address those needs *prior to the event*. Considerations include:

- Food allergies
- Religious requirements
- Dietary restrictions

8. *Allow for a Comfortable Room Setup*

Choose an appropriate room layout, one that supports your event objectives. For example, if you're serving a meal, the tables will be filled with used dishes and glassware, in addition to binders, notepads and pens. This is why it's important to choose the best room setup, and allow space for people to move. Examples:

- Boardroom setup should be for a maximum of 15 guests.
- U-shape and rectangle table layout to promote discussion.
- Classroom style is great for a presentation.
- Banquet style promotes small group discussions.

Regardless of the setup, allow for people to spread out.

- **Tip:** Setup for 8 on a 10 person banquet table.

9. *Create Ethnic or Regional Menus*

Planning events that have ethnic-specific themes can be fun. This allows the event planner and Caterer to work together to bring region-specific and international foods into your event, and will definitely please guests. Common ethnic catering includes the following:

- Asian/Chinese/Japanese
- French
- German
- Greek
- Italian
- Mexican
- Middle Eastern

10. *Consider the Final Presentation of Food and Beverage*

We eat with our eyes and our nose before tasting it. Whether it's served plated or buffet, a catered meal should be visually colorful and fragrant. Therefore, the presentation of food should make your guests *want* to eat it.

This means linens and decorations that complement the theme of the meal. If it doesn't look good and smell good, your event may not turn out the way you are hoping.

