

DGN²

Catering and Venue Details

How to Find the Right Caterer from Elegala.com

Find a caterer that suits your needs, style and budget by following these steps. Even if your venue has an exclusive caterer you may still find some useful ideas here.

1. Do your research. Plan ahead, and aim to start meeting with caterers about 8 weeks in advance. Imagine your ideal gathering in terms of hors d'oeuvres, service, alcohol and any other food requirements, then select a potential caterer who will meet your vision.

2. Meet and greet. Once you have narrowed down the list, set up interviews to determine the right choice for you. Try to schedule a tasting as part of the interview. Your final decision should be based on taste, presentation and creativity, cost and the willingness of the caterer to suit your needs. Remember, the caterer should accommodate your vision, so choose someone who is open to your ideas.

3. Ask the right questions. During your consultation, ask the caterer to compose an outline highlighting the cost per person, menu selections, service options and any additional fees that could be incurred. Come prepared with a list of questions you need answered, including:

- How long have you been in the business?
- Do you specialize in a particular type of food and service?
- Are you familiar with the reception site?
- What is your average price range? Is it an all-inclusive, flat rate or is the cost determined by the type of food and service?
- Do you provide rental equipment, such as linens and dinnerware? Ask to see samples.
- What is the ratio of wait-staff to guests? (1 server for every 8-10 guests is recommended)
- Where will the food be prepared? Will it be fresh or frozen ingredients?
- Are you available that date and time? Do you have any other events scheduled for the same day or time? (If so, having a similar menu will help to cut down on cost).
- Could I get a list of references of your previous clients?

4. Sign on the dotted line. Before signing a contract, read the terms carefully to verify the agreed upon details. Be prepared to submit a 50% non-refundable deposit at the time of the signing, and make sure the contract includes the final balance amount and due date as well as the cancellation and refund policy. The contract should also include the caterer's contact information, the reception date, time, duration and location (including the exact name of the room, if necessary). Other details that should be outlined on the contract are the meal plan, type of service and staff provided, and rental specifics.

The Hors d'oeuvres How-To

How Much Should Be Served?

For a two-hour party:

10–12 bites/person

20 bites/person if the hors d'oeuvres replace dinner

When hors d'oeuvres are served before a meal:

5–7 bites/person when served before a light meal

3–4 bites/person when served before a full dinner meal

For an hors d'oeuvres-only party:

For 25 guests plan for 5–6 kinds of hors d'oeuvres

For more than 50 guests, plan for 10 or more kinds of hors d'oeuvres

Approximate amounts for 100 people:

Cheeses: 4 lbs, thinly sliced or cubed

Meats: 7-8 lbs, thinly sliced

Veggies and dip: 7-8 lbs of veggies, 4 cups dip

Fruit chunks: 9-10 lbs

Shrimp: 3 lbs

Crackers and breads: 6 crackers/person

Pickles, olives: 3 lbs

Chips and dips: 5-6 lbs of chips, 6 cups dip

Helpful Hints

People eat more during the first 90 minutes. After two hours, consumption picks up again, especially if hors d'oeuvres replace dinner.

Young people eat more than an older crowd, and guests eat more at casual parties than formal functions.

If hors d'oeuvres take the place of dinner, include some substantial foods that can be served like hors d'oeuvres (for example, a carving station).

Provide a variety of foods to please everyone. That means something for the vegetarian as well as the meat eater. Having both hot and cold foods also help to keep everyone nibbling happily.

If hors d'oeuvres take the place of dinner, also include several bites of sweets per person.