**Alumni Event Catering**

**How to Find the Right Caterer
from Elegala.com**Food and beverage, which often take up more than half your budget, are big decisions. A lot of details must come together to treat your guests to something extraordinary. 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**. **Consider your guests:** Before building the catering menu of your dreams and taste buds, remember your guests. Don’t forget about allergies, vegetarians, or kosher meals. Even if you are adventurous when it comes to exotic food and drink, remember that not everyone else will be. Even in an attempt to be original, try to include some standards on the menu that will satisfy all palates.

**4**. **Be original:** That said, don’t be afraid to break out of the five-course beef-or-chicken mold. Planning your menu should be fun! Try to take your guests on a culinary journey. All the while, think quality, not quantity. Concentrate on variety and presentation over an elaborate abundance of food.

**5. 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?

**6.** **Mind your budget:** You should count on spending as much as 50 percent of your total budget on catering, more than any other element. So be sure to be sensible and meticulous during your selection process. If you aren’t willing to sacrifice veal for meatloaf, cut down on the number of courses you serve so you won’t break the bank. ***Know the range above/below your count for which the caterer will bill/serve.***

**7. 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.

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| **The Hors D'oeuvres How -To**  |

**How Much to Serve:**

 **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

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| **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.

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| **Tables & Linens**   |

**Table Seating**

* Round tables seat 8-10 people (depending on venue)
* Rectangle tables seat 10 people (four to a side and two at each end)

**Linens**

* Linens are provided by your caterer for meals (please confirm with your caterer)
* Confirm the shape and number of tables needed for each event with your caterer before the event, so they have an accurate linen count.
* No linens are provided for any other events or for the class tent.
* You can also purchase them by the box through any party or bulk store.

**Beverages**

**Planning Tips:**

1. Calculate the number of hours of the event X number of guests X 2 drinks per hour.

**EXAMPLE: 3 hours of an event X 100 guests X 2 drinks per hour = 600\* SERVINGS**

*\*This is an overestimate that will give you plenty to choose from and unopened/un-chilled wine and liquor can be returned to the NH liquor store. Check with your local liquor store on their policy regarding returns.*

2. Split that number into the types of drinks your group enjoys for example: **¼ COCKTAILS, ¼ BEER, ½ WINE**

**Important Tips:**

* A full bar typically stocks vodka, gin, scotch, rum, bourbon, and vermouth.
* Plan on more wine for dinner events and more liquor/beer for reception events
* Wine: 1 x 750ml bottle = 5 servings 1 case = 60 servings
* Beer: The younger the crowd the more kegs you will need.