



The Starting a Catering Business Start-Up Guide Kit

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INTRODUCTION

This ebook is dedicated to anyone who has ever dreamed of owning his or her own catering business. It is, as its name suggests a commonsense guide to learning the business from the inside out. This guide gives you two hundred pages of the most up-to-date information on catering. In the first Chapter, you'll learn about the kind of qualifications and skills a caterer should possess in order to compete in this growing business. You'll also learn that you control your destiny in the catering business through hard work, determination and a few good references from some satisfied customers.

In Chapter Two, we'll show you everything you need to know to set up your catering pantry. And, we mean everything, down to the smallest minute detail. We have left nothing to the imagination. We'll walk you through the kind of utensils you need. We'll let you know about the kind of equipment you need. We'll even give you some examples of how to make a menu that will work for you.

You'll get a big kick out of Chapter Three when you'll get a chance to decide exactly what kind of catering you want to do. Do you prefer social forms of catering like weddings and bar mitzvahs? Or would you prefer to cater corporate functions like board meetings and seminars. We'll invite you to kick back at the end of Chapter Three and learn about the different kinds of wine. Learning about wine tastes and terms is important if you're going to be a serious caterer. Clients will look to you for help and advice.

You'll learn that organizing your time is just one of the things that are very important in the catering business. Estimating food quantities, scheduling staff and hiring entertainers are just as important to any events press. As we move halfway through the guide, we'll help you to decide how to define your niche. We'll show you how to advertise your business, how to get free attention and how much to pay. Chapter Seven is dedicated to giving you everything you need to successfully run your own business. We'll learn about product and public liability in the remaining chapters.

We'll also give you a list of professional organizations that you can look up and hook up with. You can stay up to date over the latest issues involving the trade. As we wet your appetite a little further, we'll give you some no frills recipes to play around with. Finally, we'll have a little fun as you test your knowledge and start creatively thinking about the process of starting your own business. You can find the Take The Catering Challenge in Chapter 12. Come on find out everything there is to know (just about) the catering business.

CHAPTER ONE

Decisions For Starting A Catering Business

So you think you are a great cook and would make an even better caterer, huh? Well, what makes you think that? Did a relative, close friend, or acquaintances tell you so? And, what did they say to you to convince you to go into catering? Did they tell you that your peach cobbler is the best this side of the Mississippi? Or, maybe it's your chicken that keeps them coming back for more at the annual state fair. It doesn't really matter where or whom you've heard it from. What matters is that you've heard it!

All great caterers have two things in common. They are good cooks and at some point they were told that! Still, it's not out of the norm to run into a caterer who is just in it for the business. A caterer does not have to love cooking. Maybe your love is for the all mighty dollar. There's enough room for that kind of financial greed in the catering business too. There is money to be made once you learn the ropes. Great food and a great staff are all ingredients for a good catering business.

Some caterers started out because a friend of a friend of a friend needed a party catered at the last minute. Others started out by working for years in the food service and preparation industries. A lot of caterers learned the industry by working for a restaurant that has cooking and service facilities. Starting out in an established restaurant is a benefit to you because you can build your own clientele and a list of great dishes from working there.

By working in a restaurant first, you'll get the opportunity to deal with the many problems and challenges facing the industry. You'll get the opportunity to see if you have the "right stuff" to deal with those challenges. The challenges range from know about current health and sanitation requirements, understanding traditions and customs, and developing your own style. I also think it also helps to know what every job in the industry consists of from the lowest position to the highest.

You'll find that a lot of caterers started in the business on the ground floor and worked their way up. Plus, in the long run, it will help if you have had the chance to work every position in your own catering business. The purpose of this book is to help you become a successful caterer. This book will help you explore why you are interested in becoming a caterer. We'll show you the in's and out's of the catering business from the insurance man to the garbage man. We'll show you some pitfalls to avoid. And, we'll give you sound tips that will make your catering business a lip smacking success.

Caterers Qualifications And Skills

Before you can be a great caterer, you have to know what catering is all about. Catering is providing food, services and party consultation for a fee. Caterers do everything from purchasing food and cooking it to setting up decorations and cleaning up after the party. We've all come in some contact with a caterer at one point or another. Caterers usually supply food to all of our favorite functions ranging from weddings to cocktail parties.

We'll be the first to admit that there is so much more that you need to know before you become a caterer. The key to success is actually having a kettle full of knowledge. You'll need to know how to produce great tasting food first and foremost because that is what people are looking for. You'll also have to know how to present the food so that it looks good enough to eat. Smells good too. Finally, and just as important, you'll need to know how to sell your business.

There are many routes to take to break into the catering business. One route is to study the art of culinary at a college or university. Some of these programs last a year. There are other programs that offer courses on a part-time basis. Other programs can take you through a four-year institution leading to a BA degree. Some of the leading culinary schools are located throughout the United States. They offer a wide range of tasty choices. Take a look to see if any of these institutions are anywhere near you. Culinary school may be a great place for you to start. You can get a certificate in Culinary Arts in most of these schools in 12 to 15 months.

Culinary Schools

Texas Culinary Academy
11400 Burnet Rd. Suite 2100
Austin, TX 78758
(512) 339-2665

The Cooking And Hospitality Institute
361 W. Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60610
(877) 828-7772

Art Institutes International
15 S. 9th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402-3137
(800) 777-3643

Atlantic Culinary Academy
61 Rutland St.
Dover, New Hampshire 03820
(877) 628-1222

LeCordon Blue @ Brown Institute
1440 Northland Drive
Mendota Heights, MN
(651) 905-3400

California Culinary Academy
625 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 91402

(800) 229-2433

Western Culinary Institute
1201 South West 12th Avenue #100
Portland, Oregon 97201
(800) 666-0312

International Culinary Academy
107 6th Street
Fulton Building
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(800) 447-8324

A training program is another way to go to break into the field. You can learn everything there is to know about the service industry before branching off on your own in business. Or, you can go straight to work and maneuver your way up through the ranks that way. In addition to having great business and culinary skills, you should also have what we call “coping skills.” Catering believe it or not is no summer picnic in the park. It can be a very high stress environment. You will have to deal with the client who is stressed out about the event. You are dealing with your staff that is stressed out about the event. And, you are dealing with the outsource group who are stressed out about the event. They are all stressed out for different reasons. Nevertheless, they are all stressed out.

We believe having good old common sense is a lot better in catering than having a lot of book sense. The best thing about catering is that it is a big profit business. You’ll see the money that you invest come back to you double and triple the rate. Some experts believe you can make as much as six figures in your five years. But, it’s not easy.

A caterer can expect to see a ten to fifteen percent return on the dollar starting out the first year. It’s important to remember the profit margins in catering operations are directly related to how well the staff is managed. Most caterers double their income the first year because referrals are important keys to success. However, you could see yourself struggling through your first year of business. Nevertheless, the money is out there to be made for a caterer who is not just good, but great.

One thing is for sure, you’ll need a lot of good food, marketing, and luck to make that much money, but still there is a lot of opportunity out there. After all, we do love to eat, don’t we? As you’ll learn throughout this book, your success is directly related to your doing a great job from the start and the word of mouth that follows you through client recommendations. We’ll talk about the importance of marketing, advertising and promotions a little later in Chapter Eight.

A day in the catering business can be as boring as doing paperwork and counting supplies all day. Or, it can be as hectic as 10-12 hours a day slaving in a hot kitchen. No

day will ever be the same. That's why it is a good idea to look at whether you have the flexibility and the tenacity that is needed to make it in the catering business.

As we'll tell you repeatedly throughout the book, you'll need to know how to do more than cook when you're a caterer. You'll need good math and accounting skills. You'll also need good public relations skills and you'll need the physical strength to work on your feet all day. Here's a quick non-scientific test to give yourself to determine if you're ready to cater.

- 1) Do you have a basic knowledge of the service industry?
- 2) Do you understand business accounting?
- 3) Do you know how to prepare and maintain hot food so that the flavor remains the same?
- 4) Can you prepare a cooking and food products budget?
- 5) Are you a people person?
- 6) Can you think on your toes to rectify problems before a situation gets out of control?
- 7) Do you understand social etiquette and protocol?
- 8) Do you understand dietary restrictions that are based on medical and religious reasons?
- 9) Do you have the physical ability to work up to 10 to 15 hours a day if needed?
- 10) If you don't know any of these things personally, are you willing to ask for help from knowledgeable experts?

You are ready for the catering business if you answered yes to more than half of these questions. The last question is really important. You are definitely a step ahead if you answered yes to the last question. It's good in this business to know, what you don't know. You're also on your way to success if you're willing to open up and ask for help when you need it. A lot of businesses fail because of ignorance and guess work. There's a good chance that we didn't scare you out of the kitchen if you're still reading this. Now that you've had a chance to do some self-evaluation, we'll continue on a journey that is really exciting.

Here's a list of other qualifications that you should have in order to make it in the catering business.

Social Skills:

1. You can advise your clients on customs associated with events
2. You know appropriate social and business etiquette
3. You are sensitive, yet outgoing and entertaining.
4. You need some knowledge of cooking or know where to get it.

Staffing:

1. You have enough staff members for the event.
2. You can encourage and motivate your staff.
3. You can manage your staff.
4. You can handle high stress situations.

Business Affairs

1. You understand bookkeeping.
2. You can figure out profit margins.
3. You know how to estimate business costs.
4. You can estimate the number of staff needed to complete an event.

Complying With City Ordinances

The one thing you want to remember about dealing with your local city and the ordinances that are in place are simply. Stay clean. You don't want to piss the city inspectors off because it can haunt you for a long time. City ordinances are basically in place to protect the public from health concerns such as low quality food and food poisoning. If you look at the bright side of things ordinances are in place to protect you too. If you "stay clean" then chances are you will not have to worry about your clients getting sick or someone filing a lawsuit against you because they got sick.

Yeah, so treat city ordinances and the inspectors that enforce them like they're your best friends. Hopefully, you'll never live long enough to think otherwise. The first thing to do is to call your local city and find out as much as you can about the ordinances that govern catering. You may get lucky and the city has a published pamphlet or manual on it and they can mail it out. Or you may have to run by your local city hall to pick the pamphlet or manual up. The city may have someone on staff that can talk to you personally. However, we believe it's a great idea to hire an attorney who specializes in the city to help you sort through all the rules and regulations. Hiring a legal beagle is not a 100% necessary. A very intelligent person can just as easily go through the laws and comply with them. We have confidence in you!

Working With Your Local Health Department

Your local health department is another agency that you don't want to "piss off." Place your hands on top of the computer and repeat after me, "The health department is my other best friend." The health department has rules in place as well that you'll want to pay close attention to. These doctors and other health experts have spent years studying and researching bacteria and viruses as well as other diseases.

If you follow their guidelines for cleanliness and cooking, then you'll stay in their graces as well. We'd bet our last dollar that you should be able to call up this agency and receive brochures or pamphlets via snail mail on issues that affect your catering business. In today's high tech environment, the health department could also be online giving you the most up to date information on your communities concerns. Check it out by giving them a call. Public safety is at the heart of the public health department business.

You can expect the local and state boards of health to make surprise inspections from time to time. They will go through your facility with a fine toothcomb checking to make sure your food comes from approved sources. Your meats must be USDA approved. In addition, they're looking at how your food is stored.

Here are some other things that you must have in order to pass the health department safety inspections in most states.

Hot and Cold water must be pressurized for cooking, but more importantly for cleaning. Pots, pans, utensils and hands, use hot water to clean them. Plumbing must be properly installed and employees should have easy access to the toilet facilities. Does it go without saying that there should be a door on the toilet and the sink should be in good working order?

As our grandmother use to say, you should be able to eat off of a kitchen floor. Thank god she never served food that way, but that was her belief. And, I believe the belief of many inspectors. Everything from the floors to the walls to the ceilings should be clean. Your employees should be restricted in access to food if they have an infectious disease. On the subject of animals, both big and small, the idea is really not to have any around. You must exterminate if needed, and present evidence that you have exterminated. There should be no signs of rodents or insects. Ugh. Imagine the thought if you had to eat food with these many legged creatures running around. Makes your stomach quiver, huh.

Here's some bad news for animal lovers both big and small. They should not be brought into the kitchen because of all the hair that they shed. Guard dogs are the exception to the rule according to the health inspectors. Check out your local agency. The rules where you live could be different. In addition to your local health department, The National Restaurant Association is also a good source of information. It's a good idea to at least try to get one certification in food sanitation, although it is not mandatory in most states. The NRA has one such program. It's called the Applied Food Service Sanitation course. You can find out more by contacting the organization in Washington,

D.C. Like I said a few paragraphs ago, it only serves you to protect your catering environment.

On-Premises Catering Vs. Off-Premises Catering

Becoming your own boss has its privileges. For instance, you get to choose the people you work with. You choose what clients you cater to. And, you get to decide what kind of catering business you want to offer.

There are two types of catering businesses *on premises* and *off premises* catering.

On Premises Catering

A business that offers *on-premises catering* is in a facility owned or leased by the caterer. This is also sometimes called banquet hall catering as well. Hotels and banquet halls do the most of this type of catering since it can be pretty expensive to own or rent the property. Not to mention, the taxes and insurance that has to be paid as well.

Off-Premises Catering

Off-premise catering is done in a business where the food is prepared in another location before it is taken to an event location. You can usually find off-premises catering in locations such as museums, churches, and park field offices, etc. You have to really be careful when taking on off-premises catering jobs because of the kitchen and sanitation concerns. Some of these places don't have adequate running water.

On the other hand, you'll find a lot of off-premise locations have certain caterers that they prefer to do business with. Location managers know these caterers are familiar with their facility constraints. These are just some things to watch out for. We'll have more on the different types of catering a little later.

Sharing Or Renting A Kitchen

Every great caterer is only as good as the kitchen they cook in. Sounds great, right? But, that's not necessarily true. You can be a great caterer with a lousy kitchen. However, a good kitchen will make you a happier caterer. Sharing a kitchen for newcomers like you this is not necessarily a bad idea. Except if you've never shared a bathroom, a bedroom or anything else with anybody. This is another great way to save costs, but it doesn't come without some problems.

The question remains, will you be the renter or not? Chances are you'll have more control if you're the person doing the renting. You'll need to set up rules for using the kitchen just like with sharing a kitchen. Your catering kitchen needs to be laid out in a way that makes it easy for you to prepare the type of food you're specializing in.

We think the chef or the person who will be in charge of the food preparation should have a big say in the way the kitchen is laid out. It is important that the chef be able to work in a flow without bumping into other kitchen staff. The kitchen should be big enough to allow the kitchen staff to have easy mobility. Try to invest upfront in a good catering kitchen.

Here's our list of "***Top Ten Catering Kitchen***" must haves:

- 1) Direct access to dining & outside
- 2) Good lighting
- 3) Easy floor plan
- 4) Lighting is good
- 5) Doors and windows have screens
- 6) Proper ventilation for equipment
- 7) Fire extinguisher is nearby
- 8) Cleaning & cooking sinks
- 9) Equipment meets safety standards
- 10) No hazardous materials

Sharing a kitchen can save you money related to keeping the kitchen running like electricity, gas and water. If you're not in the kitchen, then chances are it could be utilized by the individual or company that is.

You'll want to lay down some ground rules on this one before hand though. For instance, what will be the protocol if you both have a big event on the same day? Do you share the kitchen with each other that day or do you try to work around that by setting up an availability schedule for the kitchen. What will happen if you're approached to do a job when the kitchen is not available to you is something else to watch out for. Sharing a kitchen is a great cost saving measure, but be sure to examine all the pitfalls first and come up with a solution to the problem before hand.

Required Equipment

Some of this will fall into the, "duh" category, but we still must go through it step by step so you'll have a through knowledge of the kind of required equipment you need. It's good to have a basic understanding of the kind of equipment you'll need from chairs and water glasses to refrigerators and ovens. It's also a good idea to know what it is that you want to cook before you start handing out a lot of cash on the equipment.

Let's say you are catering an event for a hundred people. That's a nice rounded up number that we'll use throughout his book because it's easy to figure out and because we're not mathematicians, we're caterers. It's easy. Let's say you are catering an event for a hundred people. Not only do you need equipment, but you need a great deal of space as well. To easily and comfortably prepare food for a hundred people, you'll need these items.

It is the best scenario if you have these equipment pieces:

- A walk-in cooler
- Large refrigerator
- At least two to four freezers
- A ten eye stove
- Two deep fryers that cook at least seventy pounds
- Three thirty quart mixer or a really large one
- Large dry goods storage
- A twelve inch slicker

Like I said it is the best scenario if you have these pieces of equipment, but unfortunately chances are you will not be so lucky starting out. Nor, should you necessarily have to be. Catering is a business that builds up over time with a little luck and great food. Or, maybe you are lucky and inherited a huge amount of money from a distant uncle whichever comes first.

You could start out saving a lot of money buying equipment that you're not going to use right away. Now before we go any further take a deep breath because this is where you'll have to spend a lot of your start up money. The thought of purchasing a lot of equipment can steal your breath away. Choosing what type of equipment to buy can also be very stressful. This is normal. Don't worry. Take a deep breath and we'll try to help you through this.

You'll need equipment for transportation first and foremost. This is the equipment that you'll use to take your kitchen and food from point a to point b. If, of course, your event is held in your banquet hall then you don't have to worry about this so much. Equipment such as linen, glasses, plates, etc. can all be rented the day before the event.

In fact, we recommend that you rent the equipment starting out. We believe this will save you a lot of money because you'll just rent the equipment when you need to use it. Your service equipment should be the best that your greenbacks can buy, so don't worry about getting it when you're just starting out.

First things first, you need equipment to transport your food. The container should be marked so that kitchen staff can glance at it in a moment and know what is in the container. No one really is going to have time to stop and figure it out. So use the seal and mark system, you'll be glad you did.

You'll need the chef or the chef's assistant to double check all the food before it is transported outside of the kitchen to the waiting vehicle. You'd hate to get to the event site only to find out that you left the sweet butter cream sauce in the refrigerator. You'll

need the ability to cook using several methods including surface, oven, griddle, deep-frying, broiling, steam and microwave cooking.

CHECK THE EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

Your checklist will quickly become your best friend when it comes to catering an event. We would not recommend your trying to cater an event without it. A checklist outlines what you have on hand versus what you need. It will vary from event to event, but you can have a list of equipment and check off what you need for a particular event. An equipment checklist looks something like this.

DISHES AND LINENS

- Table Linen Size_____ Count_____
- Table Skirt Size_____ Count_____
- Dinner Napkins Count_____
- Service Napkins Count_____
- Plates Size_____ Count_____
- Entrée Dish Size_____ Count_____
- Appetizer Size_____ Count_____
- Dessert Size_____ Count_____
- Soup Bowls Size_____ Count_____
- Saucers Count_____
- Cups Count_____

SILVERWARE

- Dinner Knives_____
- Butter Knives_____
- Bridal Knife_____
- Dinner Forks Count_____
- Salad Forks Count_____
- Dessert Forks Count_____
- Soup Spoons Count_____
- Sugar Spoons Count_____

GLASSWARE

- 10 oz. Water Glasses Count_____
- 3 oz. Cocktail Glasses Count_____
- 3 oz. Sherry Glasses Count_____
- 12 oz. Tom Collins Glasses Count_____

- 4 oz. Whiskey Sour Glasses Count _____
- 3 oz. Liqueur Glasses Count _____
- 5 ½ oz. Champagne Glasses Count _____
- 10 oz. Beer Glasses Count _____
- 1 oz. Shot Glasses Count _____
- 10 oz. Soda Glasses Count _____
- 7 oz. White Wine Glasses Count _____
- 9 oz. Red Wine Glasses Count _____
- 5 ½ oz Champagne Glasses Count _____
- 4 oz. Punch Cups Count _____

SERVICEWARE

- Salt and Pepper Shakers _____/2 Per Table
- Sugar and Cream Bowls _____/1 Per Table
- Water Pitchers _____
- Servers Trays _____/1 Per Table
- Tray Stands _____/1 Per Table
- Ashtrays _____/2 Per Table
- Coffee Urn _____/1 Per Table
- Hot Water Tea Urn _____/1 Per Table
- Bottle Openers _____
- Corkscrews _____

OTHER TABLE SERVICE EQUIPMENT

- Water Pitchers Count _____
- Ice Buckets Count _____
- Coffee Pots Count _____
- Teapots Count _____
- Punch Bowls Count _____
- Gravy Bowls Count _____
- Bread Trays Count _____
- Relish Trays Count _____

Rent Your Linen and Tables

Linen comes in different sizes shapes and colors depending on what you need. We say rent this equipment to save on washing, drying and ironing cost. You'll just have to shake and throw on with this method. We suggest you stick with the formal white linen, although since you're renting any color your client choose will suffice. However,

colors usually cost a little more to rent. Lace is popular for weddings and anniversaries. Nylon material can be used for buffet tables.

There are different **table** sizes depending on your needs.

- 96 x 30 is a 14 feet table
- 72 x 30 is a 12 feet table
- 60 inches round is about 16 feet
- 48 inch round is about 13 feet

Consult with the equipment rental company. They are experienced at renting equipment for events. They can tell you what size tables you need for your function. In addition to needing tables for just about every event, there may come a time when you need to rent a tent. A lot of events are held outdoors and we recommend having protection for the vast number of your guests. Not to mention protecting the food from the elements like the sun and mild summer wind.

Once again, we suggest that you rent-a-tent for the same reasons that we want you to rent your tables starting out. Tent sizes vary depending on the size of your party. In some cases, you may want to throw up two tents. One tent can be used for guests to sit under. The other tent can be used for the food banquet table. Tents also come in various sizes and colors. We suggest that you color coordinate the tent to the other colors of the day like the linen, balloons or whatever other decorations their might be.

Here's a look at **tent** sizes:

- 50' X 80' seats about 350 guests
- 40' X 40' seats about 150 guests
- 30' X 30' seats about 100 guests
- 12' X 15' seats about 30 guests

GRILLS:

Barbeque is a popular requested food for a lot of caterers. There are four popular types of barbeque grills. They each offer a different taste to the food. There are also some pros and cons of each use. You'll first want to look at whether the grill is big enough to cater for the event you are having.

Here's a list of the different kinds of grills that you can choose from.

- Smokers
- Charcoal Grills
- Gas Grills
- Electric Grills

You will find smokers in different sizes. They also utilize a variety of fuels. The coals on smokers are usually put at the bottom with a water pan sitting in between the coals and the food grate. Smoking usually takes anywhere from four to nine hours depending on the meat. Cooking in the smoke and steam takes much longer than other ways to grill, but the rewards are well worth it. The meat is usually moist and tender because the slow cooking helps the meat retain its natural juices. The smoker of course also leaves behind a delicious smoky flavor.

Charcoal grills are perhaps the most popular form of grilling. These grills also come in different sizes, but their styles differ. You can find some charcoal grills that have a top while others don't. A grill with a top on it allows you to cook big pieces of meat and poultry quicker. You can find some that are shaped like a giant kettle while others look more like a hibachi.

The charcoal grill is the hardest to get started. But, once it's started, it offers the hottest heat. Save yourself, time, energy and frustration if you're thinking about buying a cheap charcoal grill. The better brands ala more expensive brands are easier to start, burn hotter, burn longer and have less ash when it's all said and done.

The instant charcoal is man's greatest find. You can soak it in lighter fluid. Light a match and watch out! But, this is not the kind to use if the lighter fluid smell is going to bother you. You can try the hardwood charcoal although it takes a while to get started. Of course, in these days of fast food and fast everything else, no one has the time for hardwood charcoal, but it is still an option for you.

You'll need to have one of these fire-starting solutions on hand before you can start barbequing.

- Lighter Fluid
- Electric Starter
- Paraffin Starters
- Chimney Starters.

Well, we've already told you that lighter fluid starts fast and smells stinky. Let's look at the other heating methods for the grill. Electric starters have to be plugged up to electricity. It takes a while to get started, but it's not all that bad. On the other hand, paraffin starters are supposed to help get the charcoal started. They come in white cubs, or brown logs. You place them on a lump of charcoal and wait, and wait, and wait for them to burn. Get the picture. Not recommended.

Chimney starters are widely used by many chefs instead of lighter fluid for starting charcoal grills. You have to use newspaper with and a sheet of metal cylinder, but for the most part it is a good alternative to the lighter fluid in starting a charcoal fire. Once you get a fire going on the charcoal grill, your guests will have the best time eating of their lives. You get a smoky flavor from the burning charcoal on a charcoal grill.

If it's a gas grill that you're thinking about investing in, then you'll want a gas grill that has stainless steel and cast iron burners. We believe these grills give you better, more even heat. Gas grills are a good buy because they are easy to start up as well as regulate. The con to owning a gas grill is that it's sometimes hard to find the gas to replace. And, you don't get that good ole smoky taste in your meat with the gas grill. Be forewarned if you want to save a buck and buy the cheaper models, the heat is not as even.

You will want to rule out electric grills for even the smallest catering job. These grills are usually too small. Just for the record though, electric grills are easy to start and heat up well. However, as with the gas grill, you will not get that good ole smoky flavor.

Barbecues make the best kind of parties to cater. It's something about the good outdoors on a nice and sunny day that puts everyone in a good mood. No dish makes a barbeque more exciting than a chicken, beef or shrimp skewer. We have an excellent recipe for you at the back of the book, but for right now let's look at what the kind of kabob rack.

OVENS:

Range Ovens are used primarily for roasting.

Convection Ovens can be the most frequently used piece of equipment in your catering kitchen. It is the most up-to-date type of oven as well. It is used for baking and roasting and allows for cooking on multiple racks.

Combo Ovens offer a versatility that a lot of caterers love. It combines roasting and steaming in one piece of equipment. You have to really know what you're doing with this one though. The food is prepared ahead of time, refrigerated and reheated using sealed bags in hot water.

Deck (Peel) Ovens are a type of oven we like because it saves space and can be used for roasting and baking. Each oven also has its own temperature control.

Cook and Hold Ovens are a must for you to have in your kitchen if you roast a lot of meat. The slow cooking process reduces the amount of shrinkage during roasting.

Reel Ovens are really good for caterers who prepare a large amount of food on a consistent basis. The oven is made up of large trays that rotate.

SURFACE COOKING:

Ranges are the most common type of cooking surface. The heavy-duty commercial type withstands heat so you can cook more food in a shorter period of time.

Power Burners offer faster cooking at lower cost. The power burner gives more heat efficiency than range top cooking.

Stove Top ranges are designed to use with heavy stockpots.

You'll also need enough cooking space to prepare the amount of food you're selling. One range/oven combo should be enough to start out with. But, bear in mind; you may need another range as your business picks up. Properly maintain your heavy equipment so that it will operate more efficiently and last much longer. Now that we have made it through the different types of cookers, let's move on to the different kinds of equipment used for food refrigeration.

You can purchase your food on an as needed basis. Nevertheless, it is a good idea to have enough fridge space in case you need it

REFRIGERATORS

A refrigerator is one of the most important assets a cater can own.

Refrigerators come in different shapes, sizes and colors. You can reach in them, reach through them, walk in them and in some cases bend down under the counter to get to them.

The most important goal is for the refrigerator to be cold enough (40 degrees Fahrenheit) to keep your food safe from mold and bacteria growth. You'll need to judge a good one by the temperature it keeps, humidity, air circulation and convenience.

Walk-in Coolers and Freezers are just like refrigerators. They come in different sizes and styles based on your needs. Walk-in coolers offer the same kind of protection that a refrigerator can. However, it has a built in device to minimize the escape of cold air.

Freezers are often used to freeze foods that you don't have to use right away. A commercial freezer is not necessary unless you store a lot of food for long periods of time. Self-defrosting units cost more money. But, the expense can be worth it. The temperature in these units does not fluctuate giving your food added protection. There's a whole lot more to buying cooking and refrigeration units than we had time to go into. But, we suggest you consult with an expert about the pros and cons of each device to suit your individual needs.

You'll also need racks, bins and other containers for flour, sugar, salt, pepper, etc. Mixers, choppers, can openers. Other common equipment includes deep fryers,

vegetable steamers, steam kettles, waffle makers, toasters. You need easy access to waste disposal, storage rooms and sinks. The sinks need to be big enough for your largest pots and pans. You'll also need good lighting with protected bulbs for your catering kitchen. You'll need fans for ventilation fans, fire extinguisher and floor drainage. The sinks need

In Chapter Two we'll look at how you should setup and layout your kitchen. We'll also look at stocking your food pantry.

OTHER EQUIPMENT

The kitchen equipment is essential to getting your catering business off the ground. But, you'll soon see that other equipment is just as important to your business.

You'll need tables to set up at some function locations. The tables could be for guests to sit at or for food to be set on. The tables can be used for family displays such as baby pictures for a baby shower. Or, wedding pictures for an anniversary.

The tables could be used as a place for guests to store gifts. Tables play a vital role in any catering business. You'll obviously need to have chairs on hand as well if you are setting up tables for guests to sit on.

Start Up Coverage

You'll need a good accountant, business planner or your good sense of math skills in order to figure out how much you need to start a catering business.

We've already told you about some of the things you can do to cut corners starting out. It's a good idea to have several small events lined up before you actually start your business.

You'll need to figure out the cost for each event minus your production cost. Figure out a good profit margin that will enable you to continue with your next event and so on. Initially, you can cut costs on labor, but not at the cost of good food and service.

CHAPTER TWO ***Setting Up Your Business Your Pantry***

A lot of good caterers know the importance of seasoning with herbs, spices and extracts. You'll want to keep a lot of herbs, spices and extracts in your pantry. Herbs are chopped or minced into small pieces. We recommend you buy fresh herbs because the flavor lasts longer. Dry herbs are delicate and must be stored in a dark place to maintain their taste. Spices are ground from the seeds or bark. They should also be kept in a dark place.

Here's a look at herbs and spices. You decide which ones you want to have in your pantry.

1. Allspice, Use this in pot roasts and baked goods. It tastes like cinnamon
2. Anise, Use in baked goods, fruit and shellfish.
3. Basil, spicy, Italian dishes.
4. Bay Leaf, Meat, seafood, soups and pastas
5. Cayenne Pepper, seafood and egg recipes
6. Chili Powder, Mexican food and chili
7. Chives, mild onions, salads, vegetables,
8. Cinnamon, baked goods, fruit
9. Cloves ham, onions,
10. Curry powder, egg, lamb, fish dishes
11. Garlic, Italian, French dishes
12. Ginger, Chinese food, meat, baked
13. Mint, lamb, desserts
14. Nutmeg
15. Oregano, Italian dishes
16. Paprika, Spanish and Hungarian dishes, adds color and taste
17. Parsley, mild and bitter. Meat, Poultry, Fish
18. Rosemary, lamb and egg
19. Saffron adds bitter taste, fish rice and egg
20. Sage, Use in pork, fish and veal
21. Sesame, use on cakes, cookies and soups
22. Thyme use in soups, seafood, poultry and meat
23. Watercress is used in cold fish and other meat, salads, soups and sandwiches.

You *can* freeze:

- Meats and poultry
- Soups, stews and sauces
- Bread, pastry and unfrosted cake
- Milk
- Butter or Margarine

You *can't* freeze:

- Mayonnaise
- Raw tomatoes
- Raw Celery
- Seasoned meat
- Batter fried foods
- Potatoes
- Eggs

First, develop a menu of items you want to serve. You should take into consideration what your clients will like and what will make you the most profit. You'll need to know the skills of your catering staff and the limitations of your kitchen space. You'll also need to know about the latest trends in dining like who is eating what and on what occasions. Speaking of occasions, the type of occasion could also determine what your menu should be.

You'll need to know what time of day the event is being held. How old or young the guests are. And, how much the client has budgeted for the event. This is why it is a good idea to have several pricing levels for a menu. Believe it or not, societal changes play an important role in what you should have on the menu. Your pantry should be stocked with the food; spices and drink that you'll need to complete your menu. For instance, nowadays people are more health conscious. Salads, vegetarian dishes and no caffeine drinks are more important today than they have been in years past.

Your dinner options should include a three course meal:

- hor d'oeuvres or appetizer.
- 2-3 soup or salad choices
- 2 entrée choices
- 1-2 dessert choices.

Smallwares and Utensils

You'll have to play a bit of a guessing game when it comes to picking small wares and utensils. As your business develops, you may find yourself using one type more than another. In any case, these types of tools are important to have in your business. All kitchen utensils should have at least standard to heavy-duty construction.

You'll need equipment that is going to last the longest. We recommend using utensils that have a non-stick, scratch proof coating. However, for scientific reasons, you'll find that anodized aluminum pans and stainless steel is best to use for foods with a crust or sauce. We have talked a little about the larger equipment that is needed to make your business a success. But, the smaller house wares and utensils play just as important a role. You'll find a checklist of suggested small tools and utensils at the back of the book. These are just some of the things you'll need to get started. You will want to add on as you go on yourself.

Finding Used Equipment

So I hear what you're saying. All this talk about equipment big and small is good, but where can you find it, cheap! We have one word for you. Ebay. Have you heard of it? We'd check on Ebay to find good reasonably priced used equipment. We'd also check in the trade publications. And, believe it or not the bankruptcy section of the newspaper often offers you a glimpse at which businesses are having a tough time

making the ends meet. Maybe there heat in the kitchen could be just what you need to stay cool over high priced equipment.

Here's another idea. Check with the American Rental Association. They can help you find good rental equipment in the town where you live. They also may have a heads up on catering companies who are trying to ditch good equipment fast. Also, look under the rentals section of your local Yellow Pages to find the names of rental companies and restaurant supply stores.

In essence, talk, talk, and talk until you are blue in the face to anyone and everyone in the restaurant service business. A lot of these deals are done behind closed doors and without much fanfare because caterers want to update their old equipment with new. Maybe, we hope, you can find a great deal. Well, one solution to a very costly concern can be found in your yellow pages or local trade publications. From time to time for whatever reason a caterer or restaurant needs to sell used equipment. This can be an effective way for you to pick up the startup equipment you need. You'll want to make sure the sale price for used equipment is at least a third to a half of what you'd pay for new equipment. You should determine how old the equipment is and if the equipment is operating properly. Service equipment is equipment that you'll need to make sure your clients are, well, served.

Establishing A Menu

If you like to eat, then it is fairly easy to cook up a good menu. The U.S. Department of Agriculture put out a food pyramid guide more than three decades ago that looks at what amounts of foods should be eaten. The pyramid has basically replaced the old, four, four, three, two model for menu production that was developed in the early 50's. The current pyramid outlines food use as this.

The Food Guide Pyramid

- Six to Eleven servings of bread, cereal, rice and pasta
- Three to Five servings of vegetables
- Two to Four servings of fruit
- Two to Three servings of Milk, Yogurt, Cheese
- Two to Three Servings of Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dried Beans,
- Eggs and Nuts
- Fats, Oils and Sweets use sparingly

It's also important for a caterer to know what a serving size consists of because it varies from food group to food group. How many servings you need also varies depending on who you are. For instance teen boys and active men often need more servings to help maintain their energy levels throughout the day.

Men need about 2400 calories a day while women need about 1,850 calories day. Some women and the elderly may need fewer calories and servings of food throughout

the day to maintain their health and energy levels. Here's a look at what serving sizes look like:

Bread, Cereal, Rice, Pasta

1 slice of bread
1 ounce of cereal
½ cup cooked cereal, rice or pasta

Meat, Poultry, Fish. Dry Beans, Eggs and Nuts

2 to 3 ounce of cooked lean meat, poultry or fish
½ cup of cooked dry beans, 1 egg or
2 tablespoons of peanut butter count as 1oz meat

Vegetables

1-cup raw vegetables
½ cup vegetables cooked, chopped, raw
¾ cup of vegetable juice

Fruit

1 medium banana, orange or apple
½ cup cooked, chopped or canned fruit
¾ cup of fruit juice

Milk, Yogurt and Cheese

1 cup of milk
1 ½ natural cheese
2 ounces of processed cheese

These are all the foods and the serving sizes you should keep in the back of your mind when developing a menu. You should also think about what the latest food trends are and what your clients will like to eat. Then, think about what you can affordably make. We call this “catering for your customer.” It can be that simple. Tastes vary from person to person, but there are some basic rules for planning a menu.

The menu should offer some form of variety. A good menu will combine rich, lean, spicy, bland, salty and sweet tastes. It is also important not to repeat or mix ingredients on the menu. For example, if you're serving chicken noodle soup, don't serve chicken as an entrée.

Color and texture are both good for the eye to look at for obvious reasons, but it also lets us know that yes, this food is fresh and good. Plan to have a variety of color on your menu. There are three primary colors, red, yellow, and blue. There are three secondary colors, orange, green, and purple. Opposite colors will look more vibrant if they are placed next to each other on a plate.

As with color, texture is also important to help define a menu. Green peas, beans, and carrots add a whole lot of texture to a plate. The vegetables perform a double, perhaps triple duty. They also add shape and color contrast. Salsa, relish and a contrast to fish while we all know what bacon bits and chives can do to bring out a baked potato and soup.

Serving dishes that have similar cooking temperatures is just as important as color and not combining ingredients. Also, you'll want to avoid preparing two really complicated dishes at the same time. It is best to serve dishes that you can be stored in the refrigerator or freezer a day ahead of the event. You'll want a menu that follows the traditional dinner line.

FIRST COURSE

This course says wake up. Dinner is about to be served. It is a teaser of sorts for what is to come. The first course should be light and not too filling. Suggestions for first courses include, shrimp, cheese, and fruit or soup.

SALAD

The American theory on salads is that you serve it before the dinner to refresh the palate. Salads are usually served along with or just after the first course. On the other hand, Europeans serve their salads after the main course.

FISH

A lot of people do not know this, but fish is always supposed to be a course by itself at a formal sit down dinner. Of course, some people serve it as a first course with dishes like shrimp and salmon cakes. However, formally, it is supposed to be a course by itself.

MAIN COURSE

The Main Course should raise a lot of eyebrows and cause a rumble in the tummy. We have given you some great recipe ideas at the back of the book. This is your chance to capture the attention of your guests with a plate that is creative, colorful as well as delicious.

DESSERT

Some folks would argue that this is the best part of dinner. There are so many different options that you can offer your client. Bear in mind that cakes and soufflés take

much longer to prepare than ice cream and nuts and fruit. You'll want to take that into consideration when setting up your menu. Maybe, your client would prefer to have a baker prepare the cake. If that's the case, then preparing the cake is one less thing that you have to worry about. You can serve the fruit and not lose any money or time in the process because your catering rate wouldn't have to change.

Nowadays, it is also important to think about nutritional value in meals since so many people are health conscious. You should also think about the skill level of your chef, your facilities and time. In catering for your customer, you'll want to make sure certain foods are available for the season.

There are other factors that you should consider in preparing a menu. What kind of occasion is it? What time of day is the event being held? How many people are invited? It's also a good idea to have a finger on the pulse of your clients. What are they like? What do they like? What are they trying to accomplish during the event.

You could also look at the race and nationality of your clients for clues into what they may like to eat. In fact, we think it's a great idea to sit down with them in consultation with a developed checklist. Here's a sample of questions you could ask, but you may be able to think of a few more to add to the list.

Clients *Food Checklist*:

- What is the event for?
- What is the mood of the event?
- How much do you want to spend on food?
- Where is it being held?
- What kind of main dishes do you like?
- What kind of desserts do you like?
- Describe your guests
- Are there any diet concerns?
- What are your diet concerns?
- Do you want a buffet or sit down dinner?

These are all really good questions to ask your clients as you sit down to discuss a menu. You'll be able to help your clients decide on a menu if you are up to speed on the latest dining trends. Food preferences come and go over time. There are a few dishes that have remained constant over time. Some of the most popular menus are influenced by the flavors from these countries.

- Caribbean
- Italy
- Thai
- Mexico
- India
- Africa

- American

Healthy eating has been a trend in American living since the 90's through today. There are some other dishes that have cropped up out of a concern for healthy eating. The newest seem to be any thing that is low cholesterol, low calorie, low sodium and low fat diets. Americans are seriously having a battle of the bulge right now. Health experts say that most Americans are anywhere from twenty to thirty pounds over weight. We believe this move toward healthy eating will continue as long as weight is a problem.

You'll need to take into consideration seasonal changes when deciding on a menu. There are certain foods that are not available during certain times of the year. This is especially true of fruits, vegetables, and fish. Even if you can get some of these foods in the "off season", the price could be enormous. We think that would make it not worth it. Try to develop menus that are seasonally sound and always have a back up plan if a product is out of your budget range.

You should also let your client know that substitutions may be necessary. We wouldn't make this a habit; there's no need in worrying your client needlessly. But, if you are in doubt over whether you can get a certain dish, be sure to let your client know well ahead of the event. We think that's common courtesy and good business sense.

Okay, now that you have an understanding of the different kinds of food, you're probably asking yourself this question. What about a menu? Establishing a menu is a creative process and you should really have fun doing it. But, oh okay. We're easy. Here are some sample menus that can water even the best caterers mouth.

Menus Made Easy

Sample Breakfast Menu

- Plain or Denver scrambled eggs and Denver omelets
- Muffins, Pastries and croissants
- Toast white and wheat bread
- Fresh seasonal fruit
- Coffee and tea

Sample Brunch Menu

- French Toast Bake
- Bacon
- Ham
- Maple Syrup
- Ham and Red Bell Quiche

- Scrambled Eggs
- Breakfast Burrito

Sample Entrée Salads

- Curry Chicken Rice Salad
- Grilled Salmon and Vegetable Pasta Salad

Sample Dinner Menu

Roast Beef

- Rice Pilaf With Toasted Almonds
- Mixed Green Vegetables
- Bread and Butter
- Raspberry Pastry Puffs
- Iced Tea and Coffee

Barbeque Spareribs

- Roasted Corn On The Cob
- Sweet Baked Beans
- Peanut Cole Slaw

Roast Beef

- Rice Pilaf With Toasted Almonds
- Mixed Green Vegetables
- Bread and Butter
- Raspberry Pastry Puffs
- Iced Tea and Coffee

Prime Rib

- 12 oz roasted prime beef
- Baked potato
- Vegetables and horseradish crème

Grilled Salmon

- 6 oz salmon steak grilled with lemon and tarragon butter
- Herb rice
- Steamed vegetables

Wellington Style Beef Tenderloin

- Double Baked Mashed Potatoes
- Green Beans in Parsley Butter

Roasted Rib eye and au jus

- Garlic Mashed Potato
- Steamed Broccoli
- Fresh Green Salad with Dijon Mustard Dressing
- French Toast

Roasted Beef Tenderloin

- Mushroom Sauce
- Fresh Vegetables and Honey Roasted Potato
- Hot Rolls

Linguine

- Basil pesto sauce
- Julienne sun dried tomatoes
- Cheese

Sherry Chicken

- Marinated chicken breast
- Fresh mushrooms and dry sherry
- Wild rice
- Steamed vegetables

Sample Trays

- Cheese and Cracker
- Cheese and Fruit with Crackers
- Veggie Platter with Spinach Dip
- Fresh Fruit and Veggie Combo Tray
- Tex-Mex Pizza

Specialty Buffets

(Includes iced tea, dessert and coffee)

Italian

- Spaghetti
- Caesar salad
- Baked herb chicken
- Lasagna
- Mixed vegetables
- Garlic bread

Holiday

- Roasted turkey
- Honey baked ham
- Garlic potatoes

- Candied yams
- Cranberry sauce
- Rolls
- Pumpkin pie

Southwestern

- Beef tacos
- Chicken enchiladas
- Spanish rice
- Chips, salsa & guacamole
- Corn

Midwestern

- Roast Beef
- Green salad
- Garlic mashed potatoes
- Gravy
- Peas
- Corn on the cob
- Baked rolls
- Apple pie

Sample Kosher

- Matzo Ball Soup
- Chicken Sates
- Salmon
- Roasted potatoes
- Spring vegetables
- Bagels
- rugulah

It's a good idea to do what we call, "switch it up!" Keep your menu exciting by changing it every few months! You can change it seasonally, or by the special occasions whichever you feel most comfortable. You should also take anything off of your menu that does not seem to be popular among your clients. You will begin to tell which food items are the most popular over time. If you just love an item and can't understand why it is not selling, then try to update it in some way. Caterers are always trying to make their recipes and the recipes of others, better. A little later in Chapter 10, we'll provide you with a list of bonus recipes to play around with. Have fun with these recipes and try to update them to give the recipes your own flavor!

Setting Up A Kitchen

There are several legal and aesthetic things you should consider before setting up your kitchen. First, you'll want to make sure the location is zoned by the city for such a business. You'll also want to know if there are any restrictions to the hours of business. And, you'll need to check with the local authorities to determine whether you need any permits.

Chances are you will need something in writing. You may also want to seek the advice of a good lawyer and insurance agent. You'll want to lay your kitchen out so that you can get around it easily. This checklist will help you determine if a kitchen meets catering standards. Of course, you'll have your own checklist. You will know and grow to know what makes you comfortable in the kitchen.

You'll learn in cooking school to have all of your ingredients set up before you start to cook. Did your mother ever cook that way? Well, it looks so much more organized when you do. Plus, it makes cooking simpler too. How many times have you started to cook only to realize, oops you don't have an ingredient. Our next method is a tried and true way to prevent that from happening.

Here's a good tip. First, time out your meal. Start preparing the recipe that takes the longest to prepare first. Then, as you're cooking that, you can prepare the other parts of the meal. Wow, what do you know? Your whole meal is done at the same time. It's not a miracle. It's all about timing.

Did you know that you could cook some foods in the same container that you mix them in? This is another way to make your kitchen run with efficiency. In fact, manufacturers are making dishes with that in mind these days. Serving food in the dishes that you cook them in can also help you when it comes time for cleaning up. In fact, you should have someone wash dishes and clean as the caterer cooks to help prevent a lot of worker on the tail end of the day.

Service Equipment

There are several other things that you will need before you can start preparing the food. No, we're not talking about food; we're talking about small equipment. Depending on what you're cooking, this is what you may need.

- A cutting board
- Assortment of bowls
- Knife
- Wide mouth canisters
- Wax paper
- Paper towels
- Measuring cup
- Tray

Here's how these things can make your kitchen more efficient. You should have a tray ready with your bowls on top of it. Organize the bowls in the order that you want to throw the ingredients in. For instance, if you are cooking mustard greens, then you need a larger bowl for the greens and two small bowls for your seasoning and salt pork. The large bowl goes first on your cooking tray followed by the two smaller bowls.

You are now ready to start your real business starting to cater. Chopped ingredients like onions and celery can be cut up ahead of time and tightly stored in the fridge. A lot of cold deserts also fall into this category. Make recipe ingredients that have to be made ahead of time early as well.

We believe you should also have the largest cutting board known to man in your kitchen. The thought process here is that the smaller the cutting board, the less room you have to work on, the more likely the chance of an accident. You'll also need a large cutting board anyway if you are preparing food for a large number of people.

Another kitchen timesaver is preparing the food in advance when you can. Once you cut up your ingredients, you'll be looking around for the garbage. Well, don't look too far. You should have a large garbage container near the cutting board so that you can get rid of all that access food with ease. Flour and sugar are two ingredients that are not so easy to work with and not so easy to clean up once you spill them. We suggest using wide mouthed containers when you cook. You guessed it. You can start dipping your sugar out and if it spills, the wide mouthed container catches it.

There's nothing better, than a wide mouthed food container. You'll also want to find the widest wide mouth-measuring cup that you can find for the same reason. Make sure the wide mouthed measuring cup has giant numbers on it. It will help you to be more accurate as you count your ingredients. Speaking of ingredients, if you are using a pinch here and a pinch there, then use a sheet parchment paper. All you have to do is measure the ingredients out on the parchment and then pick up the sheet and slide the ingredients in the bowl. It's smart to invest in some parchment paper for your kitchen.

Since you or your chef will be slaving over a hot stove, then there are some things you can do to make that an easy experience as well. You should store cooking utensils near the stove in a container that makes it easy for you to grab them when you need them. Hang potholders and towels up near the stove so that you can reach them at a moments notice. However, don't keep them too close to the burning stove. We wouldn't want any accidents.

Organize your most frequently used items in the cabinets in the order you are most likely to use them. Put everything in the back of the cabinet that you rarely use. Also, store equipment in the same area that it is most likely to be used. We know a lot of caterers who store some sauces on a shelf near the stove because that is when they more often use them as they cook. For the salt and pepper, keep the shakers on the stove so that you can shake at will quickly.

Make it a habit never to buy cheap equipment. You will soon discover that it wears out fast or breaks easily. You should be able to find a good tool set for around \$20.00 to \$25.00. Think long and big when purchasing tools. The most expensive tools are stainless steel and heavy gauge for the tool head. You'll need a long handle knife, basting brush and a large spatula. Tong with an easy grip. Those items will make it easy for you to cook with and your tongs should be easy to grip.

On another note, there's more you can do to make your kitchen run smoothly. You should also group together tasks and equipment that are similar. Also there are many appliances that are available today that were not available years ago. Electric can openers, pressure cookers, and blenders just to name a few. Make good use of these appliances in your new highly efficient kitchen.

A stove goes hand in hand with a grill. And, a freezer goes hand in hand with a refrigerator. You'll want to keep a table close to the refrigerator so as you pull food out, you can begin preparing it without walking a country mile. You'll also want to lay your kitchen out so that you maximize the use of sanitary conditions. You also don't want a lot of unnecessary traffic in and out of your kitchen. Look for a kitchen that provides easy access, but not too much.

It is our belief that you shouldn't skimp on service equipment. The dishes and things that you serve food on is a reflection of you and your business. It costs a lot to own a full set of service equipment. Renting may be the way to go for beginners. You can rent everything from the tables and chair to the flatware and linens. In fact, renting your linens may be the way to go when you're first starting out. You'll need to determine based on your needs whether a rental will work with your function.

In a lot of cases, the rented linen is in good condition, but there are some horror stories. You are at the rental company's mercy when it comes to using their linens. Some linen is badly worn from usage, but you won't know it until the linens is placed on the table at your function. Rental companies also have the tendency to use only white table linens.

This makes it hard for you to add your touch of distinction, unless of course you prefer white table linens as well. Bear in mind that color can add a lot to an event and you shouldn't steer away from it just because white table linens are "easy." In some cases, you may want to give your client the opportunity to rent their own linen. However, if you choose to buy you'll want to have the stain resistant and flame retardant type. Manufacturers use the synthetic polyester fabrics a lot and these are totally acceptable to me.

A lot of rental companies supply the 72 inch square table cloths that can be used on a 54 inch round table. Here are some things to consider whether you are renting or will eventually own your own service equipment. On a final note about table linens,

you'll need to know the size of the tables you're using in order to order the appropriate size linen. Do this in before you phone in a linen rental order to save a little time.

The type of dishes you need depends on the type of service you want to provide. You should start out with a service of these pieces of dinnerware:

- Cups and saucers
- Dinner plates
- Salad plates
- Bread/butter plates
- Platters
- Soup bowls
- Sugar cups
- Creamer

There are all kinds of styles for you to choose from. Pick whichever one suits your fancy. Flatware and the serving pieces are also important parts of the service equipment. Is that an obvious statement or what?

Anyway, stainless steel flatware is the way to go. Here are some of the basic pieces you'll need!

- Butter knives
- Dessert/salad forks
- Dinner knives
- Dinner forks
- Fish forks
- Ice-tea spoons
- Soup spoons
- Teaspoons.

It goes without saying that if you don't serve fish you don't need a fish fork. And, if you don't serve ice tea, then you don't need an ice-tea spoon. It goes without saying so I won't say it. You be the judge of what you'll eventually need to start out. I think you will need other serving pieces include:

- Salad tongs
- Large serving spoons
- Cold meat forks
- Cake knives and servers.

I think the type of glassware that you select can also add distinction to your service layout. You'll need a wide range of types to meet the demands of your business. Bear in mind, glasses break easily so when you order them, make sure the manufacturer

is making glasses on a regular basis so you can have pieces of your set replaced. Here's a checklist of the types of glassware you might need.

- 3 ounce wine
- 4 ounce dessert
- 10-12 ounce beer
- 3 ounce cocktail

You'll also need chafing equipment if you're planning to serve buffet style. This kind of service equipment comes in all different kinds of shapes, sizes and metals. You can get aluminum, brass, copper, silver, or stainless steel. You'll need several utility trays to serve food on for the buffet as well.

Your tea and coffee service can be an upscale addition to any event. You will need a tea or coffee server, hot water pot and warming unit, creamer, sugar bowl and tray to serve these hot drinks. Again, silver or stainless steel can add the perfect touch to your buffet table. You can pick one or two areas. You can also decide to take on the whole spectrum.

You have learned in this chapter how to set up your catering business from what kind of utensils to use all the way to how to establish a menu. Before we move on you must be reminded of all the "little things" that you need in order to make the kitchen work well. You'll need a broom, mop plus, a whole list of other things. Once again, here's your handy checklist

- ❑ Aluminum Foil
- ❑ Ammonia
- ❑ Bleach
- ❑ Dishwashing Liquid
- ❑ Dish towels
- ❑ Garbage bags
- ❑ Glass Cleaner
- ❑ Hand Soap
- ❑ Kitchen Cleanser
- ❑ Paper towels
- ❑ Paper napkins
- ❑ Plastic Wrap
- ❑ Pot Holders
- ❑ Rubber gloves
- ❑ Scouring powder
- ❑ Sponges

CHAPTER THREE

Types of Catering Opportunities

Social Catering

Now, we're on to more fun things to talk about. What kind of catering do you want to do? This is where the sky is the limit to your creativity and imagination. Here are some of the different types of ***social catering***:

You could perhaps make the most money fast by catering to ***Birthday parties***. These events can be held any time of the day 365 days a year. The food for birthday parties is usually served buffet style in a relaxed atmosphere. You can give your clients the choice of doing a breakfast, brunch, lunch or dinner. You should also take the age of the honoree into consideration. A child or teen for instance would want a different kind of menu than an adult would. Pizza, hamburgers and potato chips are popular choices among young people. Birthday parties, no matter what the age of the honoree also gives you the opportunity to show some creativity with your decorations.

Adults would probably prefer live flowers as opposed to balloons for children. Please see page for a suggested menu for birthday parties. You'll be able to utilize a lot of creativity while catering an ***anniversary party***. An anniversary party is an event that marks a milestone in a couple's relationship. It can also mark a milestone in an individual's life such as 15 years on the job. An anniversary party can be either formal or informal. It can be a luncheon, dinner or buffet. You can offer your clients a wide range of menus and prices to choose from.

Engagement parties are another popular event. These events can be breakfast, lunch, dinner, buffet or a simple cocktail party. These events are usually small, but you have to make it a memorable as possible.

Bridal parties are perhaps the last time friends and relatives get to socialize with a loved one before marriage. These events also have to be made memorable. Guests bring gifts to the honoree so you'll need to set up a gift table. On that table, you could have pictures of the happy couple to make the occasion more special. If you have a deal to caterer the bridal party, you may want to set up a deal to cater the other events associated with the wedding.

We're talking specifically about a rehearsal dinner. The dinner is usually the last full course meal before a wedding. These are some of the more common types of social events that you can specialize your catering business in. Here's a list of some other social functions that you could cater. Can you think of your own unique catering ideas?

- Retirement Parties
- Wine and Cheese Parties
- Debutante Balls
- Bar and Bat Mitzvah's
- Housewarmings

- Picnics
- Pool Parties

Corporate Parties

Company parties are often large in scope. Instead of being sponsored by an individual, a corporation or business is having the party. Corporate functions offer you a chance of catering to a large variety of people. This could lead to more business if you do a great job. It used to be a time when the sky was the limit as far as corporate spending on parties was concerned, but all of that has changed in the wake of the 9-11 tragedy. Nowadays more companies are tightening the belt and looking for a creative low cost way to have a good time. You could create quite a niche for yourself if you consider these factors when planning your catering business.

Community Affairs

These functions are often held out in the community at a park or museum for example. A corporation or individual could sponsor this as a way to call attention to their cause or business goals.

Community affairs events give you yet another opportunity to show what you can do. You meet a wide range of people and the chance for making new clients is great.

Special Events

I guess you could say every event is special to the people who are presenting it. But, in this case, a special event refers to events that need your special attention as the caterer. These events include but are not limited to weddings, banquets, large outdoor picnics and banquets.

Weddings

No two weddings are ever the same. The bride and groom will have special requests of the caterer. You being the catering expert will do everything possible to make their wishes a reality. As with banquets, weddings offer you a great opportunity to gain referral clients. However, concentrate on doing a great job and the rest will follow. A great job includes helping the bride and groom through the difficult task of planning the reception. Some of the things you must know include where the reception will take place, the time, how many guests as well as the food preferences.

You will also need to submit a written proposal describing in detail the work to be done and the expected deadlines. As a social caterer, it's a good idea to have contacts with a florist, photographer and band. In some cases, you may be the first point of

contact for a client. Have a list of suggested facilities to hold the reception in case you are asked for a suggestion.

Also, make sure the facilities you recommend will accept “outside” caterers like you are. After all, you don’t want to recommend a location that won’t do business with you. Certainly how the tables at a wedding are decorated are of special concern to you. Be sure to consult with the couple to be about what they intend on putting on the tables. Your primary responsibility in addition to food preparation and layout is on how the wedding cake looks. It is perhaps one of the biggest most important things about a wedding. You’ll have to decide if you have the know-how to prepare a wedding cake or if you’d prefer to let a baker do it. However here are a couple of good things to know about wedding cakes. A wedding cake is almost always a multi-tiered cake. Just tradition I guess. The cake layers can be one on top of each other or separated by plastic or floral columns.

A lot of people these days are getting into the live flowers kick. Or you could decorate the cake using edible decorations. Wedding cakes almost always have a bride and groom sitting on top of them although; some folks are using the flowers as a top. You’ll want to be on standby, as the bride and groom get ready to cut their cake. They will first pose for cake cutting and cake eating pictures. You can either arrange to cut and serve the rest. Or, you can give the wedding couple a discount by allowing a wedding coordinator to do it. But, the primary responsibility for cake cutting a serving falls on your hands. If you are short staffed this is just one-way around it.

You can help the wedding couple create a special atmosphere by offering a very distinctive food item, one of your specialties so to speak. Again, this will help you to build your clientele. Folks should be asking, whose your caterer before the night is over. The sky is the limit when deciding exactly what kind of added, “treat” to serve. Talk it over with your chef. I’m sure you can come up with something delicious, but more importantly economical.

Part of catering any meal involves decorating as well. There are certain occasions that come around every year so you can plan for them wisely.

Here’s a list of the holidays that come around every year that you can prepare for.

- Valentine’s Day
- Easter
- Fourth Of July
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas
- New Year’s Day

A *Valentine’s Day* party can be a fun catering experience. Just make sure you have red and pink hearts all over the place. Balloons even for an adult V-Day party can

be an added attraction. You can also put lighted candles on each table to give a romantic effect.

At *Easter time*, just about any color of fresh, pastel flowers will look good as a centerpiece for your table. You can use a glass vase or a straw basket with the play grass in them as a container. Dyed Easter Eggs make a fairly cheap addition to the basket. Plus, it can also serve as a take home gift. Another decoration idea is to use silk plants to decorate a portion of the eating plate. These silk plants can serve as a take home gift for your guests as well.

The *Fourth of July* is always a fun holiday to cater to and decorate. The colors are easy. You have three colors to choose from. Can you guess what they are? You can have a vase full of little American flags in the center of the table. They will look nice all bunched up together. Or you can put one flag at each place setting for your guest.

Thanksgiving your centerpiece should have two legs and a huge breastbone. Your turkey will be the center of attraction at this party. However, you can decorate around the bird by using a lot of autumn leaves, straw, wicker, pinecones, and acorns. You can use candles and wicker for these table decorations as well.

As soon as the Thanksgiving events are over, it's time for *Christmas*. You can decorate the place settings with little gift boxes. It will be twice as nice if you can actually put a little gift in each one for your guests. You can have the table decorated with a vase full of winter flowers such as pine branches and holly.

Kosher Catering

Kosher is a biblical word. In Hebrew, it means that a food is acceptable to eat under Jewish dietary laws. The interesting thing about kosher catering is that the chef doesn't have to be kosher; it's all about the food. Do your homework if you're thinking about setting up a kosher catering operation. In fact, I'd talk to a Rabbi because the interpretation of what is Kosher has changed throughout the years.

Jewish law dictates that there are three categories of food.

- Meat
- Milk and dairy by-products
- Pareve foods

MEAT:

Food in the meat and dairy categories cannot be combined in the same dish or served at the same meal. Fish cannot be cooked together with meat. But you can use the same pot to cook different meat and fish at different times. Fish may be served before a meat course, but you cannot serve fish and meat together on the same plate. Kosher food

preparations include avoiding shellfish, pork, and dairy based sauces on meat and poultry. Cattle, deer, sheep and goats are the only animals that can be used for kosher meals. Meat that is found around the animals sciatic nerve are also non kosher.

It can be found nonkosher if meat and dairy ingredients are mixed. Even preparing a kosher meal using utensils and equipment that were previously used for nonkosher food will ruin a meals kosher standing. A kosher caterer can lose his or her reputation and destroy their reputation by not following the strict Jewish laws governing kosher food preparation.

Kosher food can lose it's standing based on how the meat was slaughtered or the type of meat. Kosher meat comes from animals that were slaughtered in a painless and so called "humane" way. The blood is drained out of the animal immediately. It is then salted and soaked in cold water.

PAREVE can be mixed with meat and dairy. They include:

- Grains
- Cereals
- Sugars
- Fruits
- Veggies
- Fish
- Eggs
- Vegetable oils
- Shortenings
- Seasonings.

CHEESE:

Stay away from Rennet processing if you need kosher cheeses. Rennet is processed from unearned calves. Rennet is used as a coagulating and curdling ingredient. It is also used in other dairy products like sour cream, yogurt and buttermilk. The use of Rennet makes cheeses and milk products no kosher. We'd check with a Rabbi to get some ideas on where to find kosher cheeses. Remember all cheeses have to have kosher certification.

Kosher Drinks

Wine and liquor are acceptable at a kosher meal, but first the drinks have to be certified as kosher. All wines, brandies and liquors that contain a grape component are permitted as long as they are prepared under supervision of a Rabbi. Bourbon, tequila, unflavored vodka; scotch and rye do not contain grapes so they do not require kosher certification. However, champagne, sherry, vermouth, brandy, sangria and cognac do require kosher certification.

Wine and Bar Service

The wine and bar service is seen as one of the most important aspects of any event. Some clients are going for non-alcoholic events, but this service is still popular among others. Your clients will more than likely look to you to be not only the connoisseurs of good food, but of good drink as well. They'll need you to advise them on good wine and liquor choices depending on the meal they are serving.

If you're going to serve alcoholic beverages, then you're going to need a liquor license. You should check with the authorities in your city and state to find out what department handles the regulation. Also, a liquor license is also good to have during a private event that is held in a house, townhouse or apartment. Having the license on hand protects you and your client.

You can also protect yourself by following your states strict regulation of wine and alcohol consumption. You have to be 21 years and older to drink. You run the big risk of fines and even jail time in some states for serving alcohol to underage drinkers. Because of the big risk, it is good to have servers at the bar that can monitor who is getting the wine and liquor. Can you believe it is not mandatory for the server to be 21 year old? Sounds crazy doesn't it. But, that's the law. In any case, we advise you to have servers who are over 21 years old. Although it is not the law, it just makes good sense.

Drinking and driving is one of the biggest killers in the nation. You'll want to make sure your clients understand the need to monitor "social drinking." Perhaps designating someone within the party to be a spot checker of sorts is a good idea. However, it's a good idea for you to take on a little of that responsibility as well. In some cases, a client may not need a full bar. Or, there could be some time constraints put on the open bar. In any event, discuss all the possibilities with your client.

Champagne is the choice drink of celebration for many people. Champagne adds sparkle and excitement to every occasion. If your client decides to serve champagne, then you should serve it chilled. Opening a bottle of champagne is tricky. You need to find the wire loop that is beneath the bottle's foil wrapped neck. Untwist the wire loop and loosen it. Remove the wire and outer foil. Cover the cork with a napkin and be very careful to point the bottle away from yourself at a 45-degree angle. Be sure not to point at anyone. Twist the bottle and gently pry the cork out. You'll want to be careful to avoid a loud sounding pop because you'll lose some of the champagne's gases and bubbles in that.

You'll want to use a tulip shaped or tall flute glasses with your champagne because the shape helps to keep the bubbles and bouquet rising. We'll have more on the different kinds of drinking glasses to use a little later in the chapter. We'd advise you to buy your wine and liquor on an as needed basis once you have secured your liquor license. Here's a checklist of wine and liquor ideas that you may want to have a pricelist on hand for in case your client asks. Also, these lists will have to be updated periodically

because wine and liquor prices can fluctuate tremendously. We advise you to markup your drink prices by half the cost of the bottle wholesale.

WINE AND LIQUOR PRODUCTS

- Red, White, Blush, Sparkling Wine
- Beer Bottled
- Beer On Tap
- Scotch
- Gin
- Bourbon
- Vodka
- Blended Whiskeys
- Liqueurs
- Rum

You'll need a few good mixers to use with the above drinks.
Here's a list of mixers.

- Club Soda,
- Lemon-Lime Soda
- Ginger Ale
- Collins Mix
- Tonic
- Cola

There are also a few other ingredients that you'll need for your drinks.

- Fine Sugar
- Grenadine
- Crème of Coconut
- Maraschino Cherries
- Angosura Bitters
- Lemon-Lime Peels
- Fresh Lemons
- Fresh Lime
- Tabasco Sauce
- Cocktail Olives
- Cocktail Onions
- Orange Juice
- Tomato Juice
- Pineapple Juice
- Crème

- Salt
- Pepper

You'll find these tips come in handy when preparing mixed drinks.

You'll want to stir mixers that are served with sparkling soda very carefully so you don't mix out the sparkle. Lemon and lime adds a bit of a tart to any drink, plus they make an excellent garnish as well. A good way to get all of the juice out of lemon and lime is to roll them between the palm of your hand and a soft surface. Split it open and you'll get plenty of juice. If you want to use the lemon or lime as a garnish, simply cut it in half. Squeeze a little bit in the glass and then throw in the rest.

You'll notice the lemon and lime begin to feel squishy. You can keep cocktails cold without using ice. Just pour the mix into chilled glasses. You can chill glasses by storing them in the fridge for about a half hour. If you need a short cut, the freezer will chill them in about ten minutes. However, be careful, you don't want your glass to break. When you do have to use ice, it should always go in the glass first.

You should use ice cubes for any drinks that are on the rocks. Do not reuse ice for any reason. To make the rim of glasses look more festive, moisten the rim of the glass with lemon or lime, and then dip in sugar for daiquiris and sours. For making margaritas look good, you'll want to use salt.

You really don't have to have all of the above beverages at one event. You can cost save and figure out a drink menu so to speak. The drink menu should take into consideration a choice of beer or wine for a reception if one is being held. The drink menu should also add in a drink during the meal, perhaps a blush wine. Some clients may prefer to serve wine at dinner and skip a reception.

Now opening a bottle of wine can be a bit of a challenge. First you have to remove the foil or plastic covering from the bottle. You can do that by running the blade of a knife under the bottle's neck. Put the corkscrew off to the center. Use a slow motion so you do not break the cork. You'll have to use a utensil to pull the cork back up if you break it. If the cork breaks into piece, you'll have to pour the wine into another container and dip the piece out. When you're at the end of pouring, twist the bottle so that the wine does not dribble down the side of the bottle.

Sometimes red wine collects sediment in the bottle from sitting for a long period of time. If you run across a bottle like that, then you'll want to turn the bottle horizontally to a vertical position. You'll have to allow the sediment to sit for a while until it settles at the bottom of the bottle.

Before you can recommend a wine to your client, you have to become a taste tester yourself so you'll know what you're talking about. Wines are tasted and judged using the following qualities. Now, we want you to stop reading to participate in a little

tasting to see what we mean. Do not try this if you have a drinking problem. Get a bottle of wine and see if your palate can sense the descriptions we have below. Write your experience on a separate sheet of paper for each.

1. **Acidity** refers to a wine's balance between being too hard or dull.
2. **Balance** is the absolute combination of acid, sugar, fruit & maturity.
3. **Body** how the wine feels in your mouth
4. **Bouquet** how the wine smells to you
5. **Complexity** refers to the balance, body and bouquet
6. **Dry** describes wine that is not sweet
7. **Finish** is the taste that's left behind in your mouth
8. **Flowery** is when the smell of the wine is like flowers
9. **Fruity** describes a taste of fruits like cherries
10. **Robust** is an intense tasting wine
11. **Soft** is a wine that is gentle possibly with no balance
12. **Tannic** means a harsh tasting red wine

A good bottle of wine goes well with the food you have prepared. Wine tasters throughout the years have come up with suggestions on what wine to drink with food. White wines should be chilled at least thirty minutes to one hour in the refrigerator or ice bucket before serving.

Here's a suggested list for white wine:

- Chablis/Light Meat, Oysters, Poultry
- Chardonnay/Light Meat, Poultry and Fish
- Muscadet/Shellfish, Poultry
- Chemin Blanc/Light Meat, Poultry, Salmon
- Riesling Dry/Pork, Poultry
- Riesling Sweet/Dessert, Fruit

You'll want to serve red wines at room temperatures. Here's a suggested list for Red Wines.

- Beaujolais/ Most Food
- Bordeaux/Red Meat, Game, Cheese
- Burgundy/ Red Meat, Game, Cheese
- Chianti/Seasoned Foods, Pastas, Red Meat
- Valpolicella/Spicy Food/Red Meat/Cheese
- Merlot/Red Meat, Game, Cheese

There are many more white and red wines, but you'll learn more about them as you progress in your catering business. Here's a good rule of thumb when you're trying to figure out what wine to serve with a certain dish. You should serve white wine for fish, poultry and white meat. Serve red wine with everything else. Remember that older guests usually like the sweeter tasting wines.

Once you figure out what wine to serve figure on putting two bottles of wine on every table of ten guests. You should remember to save the bottle corks because you can save leftover wine for at least a few days. However, if wine is exposed to air, it will lose its vitality and oxidize after a few hours.

Wine and liquor are also good as an after the meal cocktail. A traditional serving size of liquor is about 1-½ ounces so you should be able to get about 16 servings from a bottle of wine or liquor that is 750ml. The serving size for wine depends on the glass. As a cost saving measure, we'd suggest 4 ounce glasses, but glasses also come in 5 and 6 ounces as well. It really depends on the client. But, sticking to 4 ounces prevents waste. A guest can always come back for seconds.

We know what you're wondering now. How do you determine how much wine and liquor is enough? That's a good question and not as difficult as you might think it is to figure out. All you have to do is figure out how many guests and multiply it by the number of drinks per person. We know what you're wondering about now.

How do I know how many drinks per person? Good question. Would you believe that social experts have actually taken the time to figure that one out? All you have to know is how long the bar is going to be open.

Hours Bar Is Open/Drinks per person

- One Hour/2-3 drinks
- Two Hours/4-5 drinks
- Three Hours/5-6 drinks
- Four Hours/6-6 ½ drinks

Here's an obvious food for thought. The longer the bar is open, the more drinks a guest can have. Again, all you need to do is take the (number of guests) x (number of drinks per person) x (ounces per drink) to give you the total ounces you need. You can then help you client pick out a drink list based on the number of ounces needed.

There are a few other things you'll need to know when setting up a wine and liquor bar. A professional bartender will already have these items on hand.

BAR NECESSITIES

- Bar Towels
- Can and Bottle Opener
- Cutting Knife
- Corkscrew
- 2-3 Pitchers
- Ice Container and tongs
- Mixing glasses and spoons
- One-ounce jigger
- Paring knife
- Spoons For Measuring
- Wastebasket

Now you're ready for the party! You have your liquor license. You and the client have consulted about the number of guests, how long your drinks will be served at the open bar and the drink list? You also have the bare necessities for the bar. Now there are a few tips you need to know about serving wine and liquor.

For all intentional purposes, you could buy your own glassware, but you can lease or rent it as well. You'll want to make sure the glassware is appropriate for the drink you're trying to serve. We suggest your using an 8 ounce wine glass. Here are the glassware suggestions:

- Blushwine/8-10 ounce Tall or Wide Tulip Glass
- White wine/8-10 ounce Tall or Wide Tulip Glass
- Red Wine/8-10 ounce Tall Wide Goblet
- Beer/Pilsner glass
- Mixed Drinks/10-Ounce or 5 ounce glasses

A good bartender will also know that the temperature of drinks makes all the difference in the world. You'll want to make sure drinks that should be chilled are chilled and drinks that should be at room temperature are at room temperature. Most red wines are served at room temperature, but 65 degrees Fahrenheit is exactly the preferred temp.

White wines are chilled at 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Light sweet white wines should be served at about 40 degrees Fahrenheit. The gas inside of sparkling white wine explodes when the wine is too hot. So it is best to serve sparkling white wine cold. If you're serving the wine for dinner, wait until just before the food is served to open the wine bottle.

Beer drinkers also prefer that beverage to be very cold. Mixers and juices need to be cold as well, although most liquor is served at room temperature.

CHAPTER FOUR

Event Management

Managing An Event From Start To Conclusion

Planning and organization are the key components to organizing your time for party setup. By the time you get to this point, you should have a pretty good roadmap of the event already. You will already know who your client and their guests are. You know what time the event starts and ends. You will also know who your entertainment and florists are. Now all you need to do is come up with a timeline for preparing the food and setting up the party.

It's easy if you're a natural born organizer, if not, then you'll have to work at it. How much time you need really depends on the size of the event and the amount of help you have. A good rule of thumb is to allow an hour of preparation time for every 20-25 guests. The number of staff you need to have on hand is also governed by the size of the event and the kind of event you're catering.

A caterer could spend a whole week before an event preparing food, decorating and making sure everything is clean. Then, there's napkins to be folded and utensils to be wiped down. A good rule is if you can do it in advance of an event, then do it. Make sure you have enough help so that you're not overwhelmed. You may need help for a sit down dinner than you would a buffet. And, you'll need more help for a reception that serves hors d'oeuvres than you would a straight reception where just drinks are served. Another rule of thumb is to have at least one waiter person for every sit down banquet table of ten.

Organizing Your Time: Party Setup

There are napkins and plates to order, food to prepare, and tables and chairs to line up. Oh my. Preparing for an event can be a very tiring chore. But, with a little organization and planning, you'll be o-k. There are many things to do when you're preparing an event from start to finish. Here is a list of things that you have to watch out for.

- ❑ Order tablecloths, napkins, plates, and flatware at least four weeks in advance if needed.
- ❑ Order decorations if necessary.
- ❑ Make sure you have all of your food ingredients 2-3 days before.

- ❑ Make sure the staff knows the work schedule a week to a day before.
- ❑ Check with the event's facility to see how soon you can start the table and chair setup.
- ❑ Try to get into the facility at least 2-3 hours before the event. Sooner if you're preparing the food away from the facility.

You'll also need a list of assigned chores as well as food organization. Here's an example of what your list should look like.

Chore/Staff Member

- ❑ Cook The Main Course_____
- ❑ Cook The Second and Third Course_____
- ❑ Prepare Dessert_____
- ❑ Cleaning of Facility, if necessary_____
- ❑ Set up Table and Chairs_____
- ❑ Oversee Flower and Cake Delivery_____
- ❑ Help The Entertainers Get Set Up_____

You will want to split the list up into several categories depending on the facility and event. You will then need to develop a timeline for food servings. It helps the event roll along as scheduled if you help the event follow a timeline. It's as simple as putting out a form that an event starts at 5:00pm with cocktails. Dinner starts at 5:30pm with a salad, main course and desert. Dinner ends at 5:30pm. Dessert and coffee starts at 6:00pm. No serving of food during main speaker at 6:15pm.

Develop a schedule for cooking and preparing food. This will help you get your food done on time. It will also help you to focus on the task at hand without becoming so overwhelmed with work. You can adjust this schedule to whatever works best for you and your employees.

You'll hear a repeated theme throughout this ebook when it comes to food. Think Safety. Food that needs to be kept cold should be between 38 degrees Fahrenheit and 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Frozen food should be kept at minus 10 degrees Fahrenheit and 20 degrees Fahrenheit. That's also the words to live by when you're storing food away. It doesn't matter if you're storing food for the event, or storing leftovers after the event.

The most important thing to remember is to keep the food safe. Remember, your reputation as a caterer is resting on it. If you have a food that is supposed to be served cold, then make sure that it is served cold. Vice-versa when it comes to hot food. If you have a food that is supposed to be served hot, then make sure it is served hot. Make sure that the food item that is supposed to be served cold is kept refrigerated or cold on ice. You can find all kinds of thermal coolers and bags. You can also find other insulated containers for cold as well as hot foods at your local discount stores.

Another tip when it comes to storing food is a common sense one. You should never let food sit out in the open for a long period of time. You should also keep foods out of direct sunlight. Especially keep an eye on your buffet style setup. You want to get food back to their ideal situation as soon as possible. You really don't want to leave it out for long.

Here are some tips on the advance preparation of food in different food groups to help you get started.

Seafood:

- Don't ever take short cuts when it comes to seafood. It spoils easily and can cause great discomfort if it spoils and is eaten.
- A stinky, ammonia kind of smell is an indication that seafood has gone badly. Take no chances get rid of it!
- Use fresh fish that is not slimy or glassy eyed. This is also an indication of bad fish.

Bread

- There are certain kinds of bread that hardens pretty fast. They are wheat, rye, and pumpernickel. If you have to prepare bread early, stay away from these types.
- Use tiny, miniature rolls; they keep better when left out.
- Use a breadbox to keep bread soft, or if you don't have one, place a paper towel over your bread while you're waiting for service time. But, don't leave bread out for more than an hour.

Finger Sandwiches

- Cut up the day of the event because the bread, meat and veggies could dry out if prepared too soon.
- Veggies should be sliced before they are placed on the sandwich to prevent them from making the bread soggy.
- You can store the sandwiches in the refrigerator if you are preparing them more than an hour in advance.

Two To Three Days Before

About 2-3 Days before the function you can begin preparing your finger food that can keep in the refrigerator. These are finger foods that taste great after

they've sat for a while and aged a bit. It's a good idea to keep the preparation time in mind when it comes to preparing food. There are not too many foods that do that well, keep this in mind when developing a menu:

- Hor doerves like Cheese balls
- Meat Balls

Given a different timeframe, there are other foods that do just as well when they are prepared a day before the event. We suggest you have any one of these items on your menu as well because it cuts down on preparation time the day of the event. In these cases, it is a great idea to prepare these items one day before an event.

- All Baked "Filled" Pastries
- Fruit and Veggie Trays
- Cheese Trays

Morning Of The Event

You should wait to prepare highly perishable items and items that wilt and look bad when it's out for a while until the very day of the function. In some cases, like in fresh fruit like cantelope and strawberries, you'll want to wait until up to an hour before the event. Fresh fruit and vegetables should also be stored on ice to help keep them fresh and crisp. Here's a look at some of the foods that should be prepared the day of the event.

- Meats with Sauces
- Pastries
- Dips
- Fruits and Veggies
- Hours of the Event
- Bread and Crackers
- Cheese Trays
- Veggies
- Strawberries.

Bear in mind that vegetables are usually sliced, diced and chopped for their arrangement on a veggie tray. While the seeds are usually removed from fruit that is mostly peeled, sliced and cored. It will probably take at about two hours to prepare these trays. That is a large amount of time considering you still have to prepare the entrée.

Develop A Deadline For Cleanup

Just like serving food requires a timeline to keep an event going smoothly, so does the cleanup. It should be noted on the work order what the procedure for cleaning

will be. In most cases, cleaning begins as soon as a guest has finished his or her plate. Instruct your employees to graciously start taking away dirty dishes at that time. However, if a guest speaker starts to talk, then it's proper etiquette for the waiter staff to allow him or her to finish before cleaning resumes.

How To Estimate Food Quantities

Catering has been around so long that most of us got this down to a science. Did you know that men usually eat more than women? I bet you did if your dad lived at home with you. Also, did you know that men consume more meat and starches and women consume more salads? Caterers have this down to a science! That's why we feel more than comfortable offering you this meal to live by sample of what a per person amount looks like.

- 6 ounces of meat
- 3-4 ounces of starch
- 3-4 ounces of veggies
- 2 rolls
- 4 ounces salad
- 2 ounces salad dressing
- 1 dessert
- 1-2 cups of coffee
- 1-2 dinner drinks

We have this down to a science. That's why we you can estimate food quantities by knowing how many guests you are trying to serve and how much food your recipe will prepare. Every recipe we list in the closing chapter of this ebook will prepare enough food to feed ten people. You then just need to use a conversion chart similar to the one below to estimate the amount of food you need to prepare.

Leftovers

As a caterer, you should know that there is a lot that you can do with leftovers. Veggies and ham or turkey meat make an awesome leftover salad. Cooked fish, ham, chicken, and turkey thrown into a broth makes a good stew. Beans, rice, and potatoes make a good soup. Try at test with your leftovers; you may just develop something very special and tasty.

Floral Décor & Sub Contractor Services

This is a gray area for many caterers. It is usually up to the client to decide if he or she wants to use a live band versus a deejay. It is also up to the client to decide whether they want to use a room full of red roses or if they're more than happy with just

lighted candles on the dinner table. Still, that doesn't mean that you cannot be on hand to help the client make a well-informed decision on the flowers and entertainment.

We suggest that you do your homework on these two areas. In case you're asked for some input, have a list of different florists that you can highly recommend for the job. You should go in and meet with the florist. Look over their prices to make sure if you recommend them that your client will be getting more bang for the buck. If the florist is expensive, but you really like them then make that a note to pass on to your client. You can tell them that this florist is really good, but really expensive or another florist is good, but cheap. Then, step back and let your client decide.

The same holds true for a live band or deejay. Since it's impossible to know ahead of time what kind of music your client will like, we suggest that you have a list of different kinds of entertainers ranging from blue grass to pop. Once again, it is usually not the responsibility of the caterer to come up with the entertainment and florists. However, you can still help your client by making suggestions if needed. It will be appreciated. And, if it is appreciated, then that's another notch under your belt for being a great caterer.

We think it's a good idea to touch basis with the florists and entertainers before the big event. It helps everyone stay on the same page as far as the event is concerned. An experienced florist can tell you how long it will take for them to prepare for a particular event. You'll want to take your clues from them. A florist needs to start setting up about an hour as well depending on the decorations. If we're just talking about setting flowers on the tables, then an hour could do.

Determine with the florist and entertainers what the "teardown and cleanup" time will be. It is not solely your responsibility to clean up following an event. The florist is responsible for taking the floral arrangements down. And, of course, the entertainers are responsible for whatever mess they may have made. In any case, if you end up taking care of those duties, then the charges could be passed onto the client. If you're in a good mood, and the mess isn't so bad, then you could just let it go.

Scheduling Staff & Assistants

An outline of duties helps to put everyone on the same page. It also helps to ensure that everything that needs to be done has someone assigned to do it. It can outline everything from what the staff person needs to wear that day, to the total number of people working, the date and time of the event and what the job description includes.

A great caterer is only as good as his or her catering staff. It's important to align yourself with quality help. In the beginning, your business may be so small that is just you and one or two other people.

There are at least six areas that have to be covered in a catering business whether you are wearing all the hats or not at first. **The sales person** is the person who handles all of the contacts and contracts with the clients. The salesperson makes sure you can handle the catering event within the client's specifications. It's important that the salesperson draws up an accurate contract assessment because that is the work order so to speak that the rest of the crew has to work with.

The Production Planner is responsible for the look and feel of each event. He orders everything from linen to chairs. He is also responsible for arranging services such as flowers, photographers, etc.

The Menu Planner does as the title suggests, plans menus. The Menu Planner purchases, receives and stores food and liquor for each event.

He also works closely with the chef to make sure all the ingredients are ordered in the right amount. The Menu Planner and Production Manager positions are often consolidated into one.

The Chef. It's perhaps the most important position in a catering business. It doesn't matter how good your salesperson is or how nice the facilities if the food tastes like crap.

Your chef needs to be creative with a flair for what people like to eat. He creates recipes depending on the type and size of an event. He also supervises the packing and transportation of food.

The headwaiter sets the room up for the function and helps to break it down afterwards. He is also responsible for overseeing any service staff that you may hire the day of the event.

Finally, the **Banquet Manager** manages every position from the salesperson to the chef. It makes it real easy if you're wearing this hat and doing another job because you are in essence, your own boss. The banquet manager could even roll up his sleeves the day of the event to serve as headwaiter.

You also have to come up with some employee rules as if just determining a menu and setting up the business wasn't hard enough. The employee rules should govern personal hygiene, behavior and attendance. First of all, your employee represents your catering company. We suggest business attire at all times when dealing with the public for sales and management. On the other hand, your staff should also be in uniform especially when working an event.

Personal Hygiene

It should be required that your employees uniforms be cleaned, pressed and spot free. Their hair and nails should also be neatly done. It is preferred that the hair on

waitresses be pulled back in a bun. No one wants someone working over his or her food with hair hanging all over the place. This increases the chance of hair falling in the food your male workers hair should also be neatly done.

You don't want that to ruin your chances of getting a bad reference from the client. Nails are another big concern. It's good idea to have your waitresses not wear polish on their nails when working an event. I guess these days you could require that of males as well. On another note, your employees should have good personal hygiene that includes bathing regularly, brushing teeth and wearing deodorant and wearing clean clothes upon showing up for work.

In any event, loud perfume or cologne is also a no, no. As is anything that would be annoying or noticeable to a client or guests like gum chewing and pens sticking out of the ears, or money rattling in the pocket. As far as jewelry is concerned, we don't see any problem with fine delicate jewelry. But, we think it should be against your rules to allow anything that is gaudy like big earrings, rings or dangling bracelets. This may sound like silly stuff, but the idea is to make your waitresses and waiters practically invisible except for the exceptional service they are providing.

We also believe you should have some “**etiquette rules**” for your employees to live by. Here are a few off the top of our head. You may think of more.

- Be courteous and helpful to guests at all times
- Be at an event on time
- Find out your duties before starting an event
- No gum chewing on duty
- No smoking on duty
- No personal phone calls while on duty

This gives you an idea of what we're talking about. You can add onto this list or take anything off of it if you want. On another note, it is important that your employees know up front about your policies. You should give them a copy of them upon their hire and keep them posted in an area where employees can regularly see them. These rules do not include the hygiene rules that many states mandate that caterers follow.

You may want to post these rules in your bathroom, kitchen and employee lounge areas. Here's a list of them.

- Wash Hands thoroughly after using the restroom
- Wash Hands thoroughly before handling and serving food
- No preparing or serving food with open sores, cuts or scratches in the skin
- No working with a fever, cold or communicable disease.

Hiring Vs. Leasing Employees

Now all this hired help would be nice to have, wouldn't it? But what if you don't have the money to hire a lot of people upfront. It's o-k. We've all been there. You just have to work a little harder, be more creative and cut corners wherever you can. Just don't let it affect your service or food taste. Those are the two essential products necessary for a successful catering business.

The question remains, how do you know when it is better to hire an employee versus leasing an employee. You have the assurance when you hire someone that the employee will follow your rules and regulations because you have trained him or her. You have hired that person so you have put him or her through all the necessary background checks. If you are just starting out in the catering business, then hiring a daily hire or part-time employee could be the way to go. If you are just starting out without a lot of regular business then this could be the way to go. In some cases, caterers will pay their part-time employees straight out of the pocket to avoid payroll and social security taxes.

There are all kinds of fees that you could end up paying if you decide to lease an employee from a personnel agency, you could possibly end up paying a larger hourly fee as well. Once you get your business up and going, we recommend you lease employees if you get in a bind and really need to. Otherwise, we believe there is no shortage of people willing to work a few hours a day for an event.

A good rule of thumb is to schedule your staff two to three hours over the length of an event. For example, if an event is scheduled to last four hours. Then, you should schedule your staff to work at least seven to eight and in some cases nine hours depending on the event. You should not try to bear these initial costs before an event alone. We suggest you charge the client a deposit before the event and make it nonrefundable if the job is canceled. In turn, the deposit money can help you pay for your part-time employees, food and rental equipment.

It's best in our experience to have the remaining balance paid on the day of the event. You can cook your own meals or you can hire someone to do it if you prefer. You can also hire a salesperson and an event coordinator to help the day of the function. You may want to start off slow at first. It's o-k to get your feet wet before you dive into catering a lot of events.

Outsourcing Entertainment

Bet, you didn't know that as a caterer, you're an overall entertainment planner as well. Well, you are. Your name is totally tied to the success or failure of an event. You'll want to make sure the guests have an overall pleasant experience. We talk more about hiring entertainers in Chapter Four under "Floral And Subcontractor Services." One thing to remember, it is not your sole responsibility to pick and choose entertainment for your client.

In a lot of cases, your client will know what they want for entertainment. However, you being the great caterer you are should have a list of different kinds of entertainer ranging from clowns to classical musicians on hand in case your client asks for a recommendation. It's also good to know the entertainer before you give out a glowing recommendation. How well the entertainer does will have a direct reflection on you.

CHAPTER FIVE

Marketing Your Business

Defining Your Niche

As we've been telling you think of your catering business as one big party. Think: Fun, Fancy and creative. Your banquet facility should mirror this thought. Another thing to think about is what kind of image do you want to project. The banquet hall should mirror this image by using colors, flowers, music, and other decorations.

You can play off of the food you want to serve as a way to build up your image. For instance, if your specialty is Italian food, then you should model your banquet facility in the style of ole Italy.

You can have the tables decorated with checkered table clothes, wine racks on the walls, and don't forget about the baskets. Choose baskets in every size shape and color to match the ole Italy theme. Or maybe your food specialty is Japanese. You can have the low to the floor tables like the ones in Japan. A table wouldn't be complete without chopsticks decorating the table. And, you can play music from that region of the world. You could find out that your guests are of Irish ancestry. They may want to have the tables set in traditional plaids.

It's good to call attention to your business by being different in whatever interesting way you can. It can be as simple as serving food and drinks that are unique to your business. Offering specialty food can be your mark of excellence. You can make up as you go along, but some of the ideas we have include, fruit bowls, German chocolate cake topped with ice cream, shrimp salad with scalloped shells. You can carve out a niche based on what you like. Drinks are also a specialty you can use in the marketing of your business. For instance, I am a dead ringer for daiquiris. You can have daiquiris in every flavor and color. You can offer mini daiquiris that never did much for me. Or you could do super sized daiquiris.

You could have alcoholic or non alcoholic. Garnish you drinks with fresh fruit to add a special touch. You decide. You can also carve out a niche by dressing your staff in specialty gear. An example of this would be old Italy costumes for serving Italian food. For instance, we knew a couple whose first date was held at a barbeque restaurant.

Well, that's where they decided to hold their wedding reception. All their guests dressed in jeans, bibs and cowboy hats. I guess you get the picture.

You could try to make every function different or you could make your functions quite predictable. You can talk to your client to find out what your client prefers. Or, you could cater a baby shower. If you find out the baby is a girl, then you'll want to use lots of pink or yellow in your décor. First, be sure the parents want to announce the baby's sex. So you could help to market yourself by becoming a caterer who caters to the type of party a guest wants to have. Or, maybe your menu is going to be a hodgepodge of American dishes. You can build your theme around a color instead of a food. Beige, pinks and other pastels are always great banquet hall colors. You also cannot go wrong using white table clothes. We think you get the picture.

You'll more than likely have to work from scratch in putting together your motif. But, you'll have lots of fun and frustration at the same time.

How To Get Business

When it comes to choosing a location for your banquet hall there are several factors that you must look at. Choosing a location that is visible is good because it allows you to have free access to people. Remember, word of mouth recommendations are your best source for building a clientele. Pick a building that is in the heart of the business district where you'll get lots of free advertising because people can drive by and stumble on you. You should also pick a location that is accessible to the public and the kind of clientele you're looking for. A building centrally located is a great idea. This makes it easy for your client's guests to attend the event.

Whatever you do, pick a building that reflects what kind of image you're trying to convey. You'll want to make sure the landscape is kept up using trees, shrubs and flowers. A decorated fence can also set your business apart from others in the area. And, don't be afraid to fork over a lot of cash for a nice sign or awning outside of your business. Your outdoor sign sets the tone for your business. Make sure the sign or awning has your business logo proudly displayed.

Putting Together A Promotional Kit

Logos are quite easy to make with the help of a good graphic artist, but hiring an artist can be expensive. You'll want to shop around. When you find a Graphic Artist, make sure you are on the same page. He or she will ask you some of the questions we've been telling you about. What is the name of your business? What is your business about? What image are you trying to convey? What colors would you like to use. You get a two-for one by hiring a good graphic artist. The same design you use for the outdoor sign, you can use for your letterhead, business cards, thank you notes and guest bills.

We guess we should actually call that a five-for since you're getting "five for one" with the logo design. Of course you'll still have to pay for the items separately, so shop around for a good graphic artist. They are out there! Getting back to decorating your business, what would you think is a good way to create an ambience? If you said lighting, then you are correct. Lighting is perhaps the cheapest way to play on or off of your image.

You'll want to make good use of lighting along the front, sides and back of your business. Not only can lighting create the perfect ambience, but also it is also important for safety reasons. You don't want a guest tripping and falling because the lighting was bad. While we're trying to drive home this point about lighting, let me encourage you to make sure the parking lot is well lit. Yes, you need to make sure the lot is safe by keeping it visible. It's also important to make sure the lot is big enough to accommodate your guests' guests.

A good rule of thumb to follow is that you need one parking space for every two to four seats up to the capacity of the banquet hall. For instance, if you are seating two hundred people, you should have at the very least 60 to 100 parking spaces. You can even make some extra money if you decide to have valet parking. It just depends on how you want to handle it. We're sure your guests would love it if they could park convenient and free!

One thing to remember, your insurance rates could go up dramatically by using a valet attendant. We're told it can almost double the rate depending on the location of the facility. Once you get past the sign, fence, scrubs and lights on the outside of the banquet facility, you have to move inside. It's just as important that the "image" continues to convey the message you want. The lobby should be big enough to handle the number of people you're having for a function. It should be decorated with nice chairs, sofas, tables and carpeting. You'll be glad you have this because the additional space can serve as a meeting place either before or after the event begins. You can also use the hall as a place for a wine tasting or social hour before the big dinner. Think creative!

Nearly everyone has a cellular phone these days, but nevertheless, try to have a payphone installed for your guests who are not living in this century. You're going to be too busy catering the function to have to stop to let someone use your office phone. Plus, the expense can really build up. Unless you live in an area where the weather is nice 24/7, then you'll need an area set aside for a coat checkroom. The coat check should be near the front door. Again, you can charge a service fee for the coat check, or offer it to your guests free of charge.

This can be one of the most fun aspects of your catering business or it can be darn right scary. Marketing is for people who are outgoing, love people and love to sell. All the rest of us have to really work on it. Under the umbrella of marketing, you'll find a place for promotion and advertising as well. There are all kinds of ways expensive and

inexpensive to market your business. We knew you'd want to talk about the inexpensive ways first.

There are other cheap ways you can market your business. Creating a color brochure can be one of the most expensive, yet rewarding ways to promote your business. You'll have to pay someone to write, design and print the brochure for you. You may be able to cut costs if you are a good writer. You can write it yourself and have the printer design it to save money. The color brochure should reflect your business scheme. Here we are getting back into the colors you've picked, again. But, it really is important to everything flow together. Your brochure should emphasize several aspects of your business ranging from quantity and quality of your menu to the good service you provide.

Since menus change, it's a good idea to print a sample menu in the brochure. You can print a more current menu on separate cards. That way, you won't be stuck with an old brochure if your menu changes. You can also have a printed linen chart to give your clients an idea of the types of table and flatware you have. On another note, it's a good idea to have printed promotion materials on the outside services you do business with. We're talking about floral arrangements, limo services, entertainers and photographers.

Getting Referrals & Repeat Business

If your clients are happy and satisfied with your food and service, then you will get referrals and repeat business automatically. In some cases, you may have to solicit it.

Here's a few ways you can do that.

You can provide a questionnaire to your customer at the end of the event asking them some specifics about the event. How did they enjoy the event? What did they enjoy the most? How could you have made it better for them? Questions like that that asks specific questions about your service.

You can then offer a discount up to ten percent off the next catered event or you could trade out with another business for a gift certificate. Note: Businesses trade out as a way to share services at no cost. You could also place a cash value on referrals. For instance, you'll give the client ten dollars for every client that they send to you. Plain and simple, if you follow all of the rules outlined in this book, more work will come.

How To Advertise Your Business

You'll find that having pictures of events helps new clients visualize your service. Perhaps the best advertisement is the kind that you get from a satisfied customer. You may have to bend over backwards and jump through a burning loop to get it, but in the end a recommendation is worth it. Sometimes one event has the possibility to get you in with a good circle of potential clients. In that case, you'll want to make extraordinary

steps to get there. Advertising in local directories is a good idea. Be sure to have your name printed in bold type or highlighted in a way to bring attention to yourself.

I know of one catering business owner who named their business, “A Catering Business.” O-k, so the name is not that unique. But, let me tell you why the caterer chose that name. She wanted to be the first catering business you come to in the event planning section of the phone book. Crazy? Maybe, maybe not. The strategy seems to be working for her. She gets a lot of calls from first time clients who saw her add in the phone book.

Advertising in the local media is a little more costly, but you can directly present your business to your target audience. For example, you can advertise your baby shower-catering specialty inside of a local parenting magazine. Direct Mail letters and brochures go directly to your potential clients. You can approach the groups you are trying to reach directly. It could be a charity, school or political function. Or it could be a company that holds a holiday party every year or business meetings every other day.

Schools often hold reunions. Start with your alma mater. What better way to help a former student succeed than to support his or her business? If you love the idea of catering for weddings, then place an ad under the engagements section of the local newspaper or bridal magazine. Offer a discount. That always suckers me in.

Tracking Your Success

You’ll know early on whether you are a success or failure. You’ll know if your phone is ringing off the hook and you have more bookings than there are days of the week. Yes, this is a sure fire sign of success. However, chances are your phone will not ring off the hook during the first six months to a year in business.

You’ll have to track your success in other ways. First, you should keep an open line of communication between you and the client. You should keep track of the amount of money you have earned from an event. Did it cover your expenses? Did you make a profit? What can you do in the future to cut more costs? Finally, you should have a feedback form for the client to fill out after an event.

Earlier in this chapter, we gave you some ideas on how to track your success. You’ll want to pay close attention to the section on “Getting Referrals And Repeat Business.” Also, in Chapter Six, we’ll talk about “Keeping A Portfolio” which will also help you to track your success!

CHAPTER SIX

Sales

Written Agreements and Contracts

Always consult with an attorney about matters involving contracts. Now that we have that out of the way, let's talk about why contracts are needed in the catering business. Let's face it. As human beings our memories fade really quick. Putting an agreement in writing helps us to understand and remember what it is that we agreed upon. A contract is a legally binding document between two or more people. A contract is a legal obligation by each party to perform certain duties or functions.

In your case, a contract obligates you to supply whatever the food and service agreement says. The client on the other hand is obligated to pay for the food and the specified services. If either party fails to perform it's obligation, then the other party has the right to legally sue for damages.

A client could agree to a deposit under the terms of a signed contract. The amount of a deposit varies. You can base it on whatever factors you'd like including the clients reliability. In most cases though, a deposit should be anywhere from 20 to 30 percent depending on the size of the job. The balance should be paid on the day of the affair or right after.

The reasons why you want a deposit are pretty clear. You are entitled to be paid promptly since you have incurred considerable cost in completing your part of the contract. You more than likely bought food, prepared it and gave it away to your client's guests.

You'll also want to make sure your contract has a catastrophic occurrence and a cancellation clause. A catastrophic occurrence clause protects you and the client of any legal responsibility in the event of a blizzard, earthquake, flood or any other act of Mother Nature that is beyond your control. Think about that also when you're purchasing insurance because insurance will pay you back for any losses. A catastrophic occurrence clause just protects your name and reputation.

This is how some states such as New York City regulate bad weather.

- I. In the event of such unusual weather conditions that local or state police agencies prohibit travel or public transportation of any kind, then the patrol will be relieved of payment for their guests. However the patrol is obligated to pay for dated printed matter or such perishable items that have been specifically order for the affair.
- II. If travel is possible and only travel warnings issued. And affair is delayed for no more than one and a half hours, and then there will be on overtime penalty. A common clause reads like this.

- III. If a consumer cancels a catering contract and the caterer can rebook the date, the caterer's cancellation fee is 5% of the total contract price or \$100.00 whichever is less, plus the actual expenses reasonably incurred. If a consumer cancels a catering contract and the caterer cannot rebook the date, the caterer's cancellation fee may not exceed the difference between the total contract price and the cost of performance, plus actual expenses reasonably incurred. The caterer must be able to show diligent efforts to re-book and must fairly calculate the cost of performance.
- IV. It will be presumed that a caterer who received notice of cancellation six months or more before the scheduled date of the function will be able to rebook. Here's a look at how some of the consumer protection laws are worded. The exact verbiages may vary from state to state. But, as you can see, local governments are trying to find a happy medium protecting consumers while honoring the rights of businesses too.
- V. Cancellation occurs when the customer mails the caterer a notice of intent to cancel or when the caterer has actual notice of the consumer's intent to cancel.
- VI. Refunds. The caterer must return to the consumer any sum received which exceeds the permissible cancellation fee as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days after rebooking.
- VII. Contract forms must disclose the caterer's cancellation fee.
- VIII. Delegation of Performance. A caterer may not delegate performance of any contract to another caterer without the consumers consent. This consent may be obtained only after the caterer advises the consumer of its inability to perform under the contract.

How Much To Charge

This is a great question! There are many factors that go into what you should charge for an event. The number of guests, the date and time of the event, and where it is being held are all key factors. You'll need to figure in the direct costs such as food and labor. Initially, you'll want to develop a written estimate of what the food will cost. The estimate is good for up to one month before the function. At that time, you should have a better idea of what an event is going to cost you.

We recommend you price on a per person basis based on the pricing from your menu. Caterers usually charge per person for a function with rates starting at \$15.00 to \$20.00 per person. A more elaborate menu can cost upwards to several hundred dollars a person depending on if you're serving a fine menu like filet mignon, lobster, beluga caviar, etc.

For the most part we believe it's safe to say that your first clients will want the first price range. You have to first determine how much your overhead is going to be. You don't just want to break even, you want to make at least a 15% to 20% profit. It's a safe bet that the more guests you have the more money you'll make on any catering job.

The pricing has to be broken down into the cost of ingredients and portions. Equipment rental and employee pay rates, transportation costs. Some caterers like to charge by the breakdown of the cost by categories.

Price per category includes a cost breakdown in these categories:

- Food and Beverages
- Equipment Rental
- Labor
- Other Costs, Labor, Taxes and Equipment

However, we recommend you use a per person pricing list keeping in mind that it's the little indirect costs that can really add up. These are costs like licenses, office supplies, advertising and insurance. You also need to figure in what other caterers in your area are charging for similar functions because you'll want your prices to remain competitive with theirs. As you gain more and more experience in the catering business, you'll be able to demand more.

Menu Pricing

Here's a quick look at how even dummies can figure out menu pricing. First, armed with the number of guests you have and a menu, figure out how much food is going to cost for each category of food. For instance, Salad is going to cost \$30.00 to feed fifty people. Do this for every category of food. Second, determine what your labor is going to cost you. For instance, 10 waitresses cost \$500.00. Do this for every employee. Add together the food and labor costs. Add in a profit at 1/3 to 1/4 of your total cost-plus the gratuity costs.

Here's a mock menu price.

Food	Per Portion	Multiply 50 Guests
Appetizer	.30	\$15.00
Salad	.30	\$15.00
Entrée	2.00	\$100.00
Dessert	.25	\$ 12.50
Coffee	.15	\$ 7.50
	\$3.00	\$150.00

Plus Labor

1 Cook @ \$75.00	
1 Waiter @ \$50.00	\$125.00
Total Food and Labor:	\$300.00
Profit at 1/3 cost:	\$100.00
Divide by 50 Guests	\$ 8.00 per guest

So under this scenario your cost will be \$8.00 per guest. We kept this sample really simple by keeping the menu and the guests to a minimum, but chances are you won't have it this simple. But, if you follow this formula, then you will not have a problem figuring out what to charge a client per guest. Oh, we almost forgot. This does not include the 15 to 20 percent gratuity for your wait staff. It's a good idea to add that onto the labor costs before you figure out a total food and labor. We're sure your wait staff would appreciate a small token for their hard work at the end of the event.

We think it's a good idea to charge the smaller events like Cocktail parties by the hour. You would figure out an hourly rate in much the same way as you figure out the cost per guest. First, determine how much the alcohol costs per bottle. Determine the cost of food to be served. Add in the pay rate for the bartender and waitress. Multiply this by the estimated number of drinks per guests. Add the 15 to 20 percent gratuity and Sales Tax at about 8 percent depending on where you live. Divide the total by the number of expected guests. This is your price per hour.

In any event, communication is the key to catering a great function. You as the caterer need to know what it is the client wants in order to deliver.

Closing The Deal

You'll need to have a couple of suggested sample menus plus the cost when it's time for closing the deal. You should have all of the other things we have talked about on hand as well. Things like the pre-printed menus, marketing brochures and samples of the dishware and linens to show the potential client what he or she will be getting. In some cases, we've known caterers to have samples of their dishes on hand. You, of course, will also need the contract that we just discussed.

This is also a good time to show your client the dining and kitchen areas if you are an on-premises caterer. Or, you could meet your client at the site where your off-premises catering function will be held. It's actually a good time for you to meet with the managers of the off-premises site as well. Closing the deal is probably the last time that

you'll get to talk one on one with the client in a quiet setting. Chances are the next time you meet will be the day of the event.

The closing is also a good time to run through some of the other important aspects of the deal. There are some things that are just as important at the food believe it or not. You need to settle on table decorations, printed menus, entertainment, florist, and photographer. It's time to go over the contract after you talk about the specifics of the event. You can give the client a copy of your contract. You should go over the contract line by line to make sure your client understand what he or she is signing. You should be prepared to discuss in detail how you reached your prices and the services you are offering.

Keeping A Portfolio

We would suggest that you develop a portfolio for every event that you cater. The portfolio contains your contract as well as other information that you need for an event. You should not rely on your memory to do this. Why? As humans our memories often fail. A portfolio can also contain a list of items you'll need to successfully cater an event. It's a long checklist and we've never seen a pre-printed form for it although we believe one exists out there somewhere. Take note and make up your own list. However this covers the things you need:

- 1) Client Name
- 2) Client Phone Number
- 3) Client Address
- 4) Type of Function
- 5) Date of Function
- 6) Time of function
- 7) Location
- 8) Number of guests
- 9) Minimum deposit
- 10) Event Time

Believe it or not, office supply stores keep a lot of these kinds of forms on hand for a small price. You'll need a book request form that gives the name, address and type of event, and date of the event. The booking request just shows that someone has expressed interest in a catered event. The function estimate is a line-by-line estimate. It mainly determines how many hours for an event, where it's going to be, how many staff members will work and how much sub contractors like photographers will cost. A banquet contract details what the client wants to do. It details the amount of food and drinks to be served, what time and other special concerns including coat check, parking, decorations and uniforms, gratuities and overtime charges. A banquet contract also shows a floor plan and other special needs for instance if a band needs a microphone and spot lights.

Finally, another form that goes into the portfolio is the final bill. It outlines food, beverage, liquor, beer, wine, soda, equipment, and entertainment and labor charges. It shows a total cost, minus the deposit. The final bill shows a balance due.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Running Your Business

Estimating Quantities and Writing Proposals

In this chapter we'll talk a little about writing a proposal and estimating quantities. A PROPOSAL is not binding the way contracts are. A proposal is considered just as important. It is your offer to cater a function at a particular time for a particular rate. It gives an estimated rate for the event. It also outlines everything that you intend to do for the client in exchange for that rate. It's a good idea to put your offer in a written proposal form. It helps the client see what he's getting for the buck. It lists food, and services. It also gives a price for each item. You can find an outline for proposals and any estimated item forms at your local office supply store. Your proposal and contract estimate should include the following items.

- Your company name
- Your address
- Your phone number
- Name of the client
- Date of function
- Number of people serving
- Labor, Food, Transportation, Facility, Entertainment

The estimate should also include sales tax if any and the name of the estimator along with the date. A food conversion table will help you to estimate the quantity of food you need

Calculating Kitchen Labor

You should figure your kitchen labor costs in with the rest of your employees. However, you can expect for your kitchen staff to spend more hours on the job. You can determine how many hours they'll need to work by looking at your menu, the time of the event and the amount of preparation that is needed. You can expect a chef to work on an average the day before a big event and the entire day of the event. You will also want to add a day or two in there if the chef is also responsible for ordering food. So for a part-time catering company just starting out, a chef could average 3-4 days per big event. You'll also want to figure in the cost to have someone come in and help with the cleaning and dish washing during the time that the chef is in as well.

Making and Food Presentation

Imagine yourself as Picasso or Monet. But, instead of painting a pretty picture with brushes and colors, you're catering good food using color, food and decorative plates. Catering is a creative field there's no doubt about that. You have to be creative looking for food and creative in presenting it as well. Showcase your food like you would a fine sculpture after all food is not just about looking good, but tasting good as well.

Edible centerpieces are fun and actually give your guests something fun to talk about. It's an icebreaker so to speak. You can make an edible centerpiece to have as an appetizer before a meal. Fun shapes include a ham decorated with pineapples and cherries or a lobster filled with shrimp. You should also make sure the centerpiece is big enough for each of your guests to get some of.

You should use earth tones for food. Why? Take a moment to think about it. Still looking for an answer? We should use earth tones for food because we eat earth tones. We don't eat red, or blue foods now do we. That's something experienced caterers think about all the time. Either we have too much time on our hands, or we're brilliant. I vote on the later.

You have two options. You can serve fish on a plate next to some rice and a green salad. Or, you can spice it up by pouring a little butter sauce over the top, garnishing with lemon and a green salad with tomatoes, cucumbers to add color. You take your pick. Which would you prefer? We'd take the butter sauce and lemon any week, any day, any hour. Remember, you can spice up any dish by adding sauce and salad for color and creativity.

Speaking of salads, they are usually one of the main viewing areas of your table. Remember when you were little and your grandmother would move stuff off the table to make room for the salad. Make sure your salad is arranged in a way so that it looks pretty. A clear colored bowl is usually the best to highlight the greenery. Radish and other veggies can be used to garnish your salad.

You can also arrange trays of food in an attractive way. Appetizers can go on trays of varying sizes, and shapes. Meat and cheese could be garnished with colorful veggies and lettuce. Meat also looks great when decorated with fruit like pineapples and cherries cut in fun shapes. Dry food like cookies and hor d'oeuvres look really good on paper doilies. You get the idea.

Beverages And Alcohol

Beverages are not as easy as coffee and tea anymore. Those two drinks represent a busy as usual attitude toward catering. Nowadays, with so much emphasis on the

specialty coffee and drinks, you could really get a lot of good attention by creating your own beverage specialties. You'll still want to offer the c and t for your clients who are not so daring. But, for those who are offer a variety of beverages that are nonalcoholic as well as alcoholic.

Beer of course is another popular drink. You'll definitely want to offer this. But, it can be hard to choose one with so many brands, and styles on the market. We'd suggest you offer at least two selections of an American beer and two selections of foreign beer. One light, one regular is a good offering. Your client will let you know if he or she has a special request.

Alcoholic drinks are easy as well. If you buy the usual wine, vodka, brandy, gin, bourbon, rum and whiskeys, then you will be covered. However, you can get those drinks mixed anywhere. We suggest you come up with your own house specialty. Try some of these recipes out and pick the one or ones that you like the best.

Public Service Perishable Food Distribution

So let's just imagine the function is over. It was a smashing success. The guests loved the food. The client loved the fact that the guests loved the food. Despite that, you look around and you have a ton of it leftover. What do you do with it? First you allow the client to have the first say in what happens to food that is left over. Nine times out of ten the client will want to take the food home or give it away to guests.

Leftover cake and dessert should also be given to the client. However, some folks don't like the idea of wrapping food up and carrying it out. In that case, it becomes your responsibility to get rid of it!

We have several suggestions on what you can do with food that is leftover. You could give it to a homeless shelter, battered women's shelter or military mission. You can usually find places like those run by the Salvation Army. A soup kitchen may also be a place that would welcome the leftovers.

As a caterer, you should know that there is a lot that you can do with leftovers. Veggies and ham or turkey meat make an awesome leftover salad. Cooked fish, ham, chicken, and turkey thrown into a broth makes a good stew. Beans, rice, and potatoes make a good soup. Try at test with your leftovers; you may just develop something very special and tasty.

When it comes to storing food, you'll want to make sure you use the proper containers. You can store some food in the metal, tempered glass and enamel pots that you cook them in. The only exception is tomato paste based foods that are best kept in glass dishes. In fact, glass and ceramic dishes are the best to use for most food storage. Plastic is also a good food storage material. You can usually use it in the freezer, fridge or pantry. However, plastic containers can pick up food colors and smells.

Foods like spaghetti with sauce and onion are better stored in ceramic or glass storage dishes. We like to use plastic bags for storage because they're so easy to use and there's no dish to wash afterward. The plastic wrap is not our most favorites to use because freezer burns can seep through to the food. You have to use multiple layers of wrap to prevent that from happening, plus use a little aluminum foil to keep the freezer burns out.

As a caterer, you're going to be so busy most of the time that it's hard to keep up with when you prepared what. It's a good idea to label your food with a freezing date to help your memory. Unless, of course, you have an excellent memory, in that case, forget this step. Some foods don't need the labeling or wrapping up. Mushrooms and strawberries do very well stored without wrap because the air helps it stay fresh.

You can top off your work of art in a number of ways. Parsley is one of our favorites. Its a good looking food reminds us of a flower with the various curves. You can put the sprigs on top of your food or on the side of your plate to fill in some space whichever you choose. You can also cut it up in a food processor. Sprinkle it on top of the food and you automatically get a totally different looking dish with little effort.

Greens are a second favorite of ours. We're talking about any of the leaf kind like romaine, iceberg lettuce, endive and escarole. You can lay the greens on your plate and serve up your entrée on top of it with the greens showing of course. It gives a great look when you put pasta and sauce on top of it as well. Can you feel our excitement when we talk about greens? It's a great tool for food art.

Bell Peppers come in a wide variety of colors. Orange, yellow, green, red, and purple. Take advantage of bell peppers. Not only do they look good, but freshly cut, they smell good as well. Make circular rings out of them or cut the bell peppers up. Put the peppers around your entrée any way you'd like. You're the boss.

Green Onions go very well when topped on steaks and other dishes like stir-fries. We like to use green onions for food art as well because onions are fresh. Cherry tomatoes are perhaps our best tasting art food. And, boy can they brighten up your dishes. Place them on top of food, on the side of food, use them whole or in half. Cherry tomatoes and any of the ingredients we just listed are the bests ever to use for to make your Picasso.

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Establishing Relationships With Wholesale Purveyors

You'll want to make wholesale purveyors your best friend second only to your local health officials. Seriously, wholesale purveyors can make your day or break it depending on their food prices. You purchase your goods from wholesale purveyors. And they have the power to give you a big break on prices. Wholesale purveyors can also keep you up to date on the latest trends in food prices. Chances are if they like you, they'll look out for a good deal with you.

You'll need a wholesale purveyor who is reliable, trustworthy and cheap. No, seriously. You'll want someone who will give you a good price even when the market values on food are up. There are several ways to find a good wholesale purveyor. Your states Department of Agriculture may have a listing. You could also check on the Internet for a listing of wholesale purveyors in your area. The National Restaurant Association is another source or you could check with some food establishments in your area to see whom they use. You'll be surprised by the number of business owners who will recommend their wholesale purveyor simply because they want to score brownie points (and lower food prices) with the purveyor

CHAPTER EIGHT

Insurance Suggestions

Product Liability Insurance

Product liability insurance protects you in case your client and guests become sick while eating your food. A product in the case of liability insurance can be anything that is used or touched as well. We recommend that you get this kind of insurance because you prepare food. And, you will be protected if something goes wrong. It's our belief that most business owner's policies will include coverage for product liability, but you should double-check that with your broker. In rare cases, you may have to buy product liability insurance separate from your current policy. You may want to up your insurance if you are serving an extremely large crowd of people.

Public Liability Insurance

Public liability covers you in case of a claim of injury. It indemnifies you, your employees and the company when someone is hurt due to negligence on your part or the part of your employees this includes any food that you prepare. Negligence is when you do something without taking proper care or not doing something. A public negligence lawsuit can be brought against anyone, organization or group of organizations. It may be required for you to get this kind of insurance depending on where you live in. Some states require it.

Workers Compensation Insurance

You can never guess the time and place of an accident. That is one of the reasons why this kind of insurance is good for employers to have. You don't want to be sued if an employee accidentally injures himself on the job. Workers compensation insurance protects you and your employees in case of an injury. Workers compensation pays the employee while he or she recovers from the injury. It's an added assurance that the employee will take time in getting healed and eventually back to work where you need him or her.

CHAPTER NINE ***Growing Your Business***

Employing Family and Friends

Employing your family and friends can be a rewarding experience for you as a businessperson. You know these people. You know their strengths and weaknesses. You know whom you can rely on and whom you can't. At the same time, you could also save some money in labor costs if you have relatives and friends who want to help you succeed in your business. In some cases actually partnering with your family and friends could be financially beneficial to both parties. You can split the costs among yourselves. On another note, maybe you'll have the kind of relationship where you supply the finances and your relative or friend supplies the labor. It's a fifty deal and you both can benefit that way as well.

But, in a lot of cases, you will want to go into the business as the head honcho. You supply the finances and some labor as well. You then, pay your relatives or friends to work in the business. We have a strong belief on this point. If you hire your relatives or friends, you should pay them just as you'd have to pay someone else. In other words, don't try to get off easy by cheaply compensating your relatives and friends. You'll be sorry you did. Your relatives and friends on the other hand should also expect to follow the same rules and regulations as your other employees.

Please see *Chapter Four* under *Scheduling Staff and Assistants* for the rules and regulations governing catering employees.

Food Handling And Sanitation

We talked a lot about being clean in the earlier chapters. Everyone who comes in contact with food must have clean hands and a clean uniform. We talked about this in earlier chapters and it should go without saying. Here's a handy hand washing technique. Use anti-bacterial soap for added protection. And, when you wash your hands, rub your hands together for at least twenty seconds using hot water.

You as the boss must take responsibility for encouraging this behavior in your kitchen staff. You should supply clean uniforms, towels and a clean atmosphere. Catering companies have to follow the rules and regulations of the State's Board of Health. It's a good idea if you are planning to cater to follow these sanitation rules.

Here's catering rules to live by:

- It's a good idea to carefully store your food
- Properly wash your dishes and utensils at 158 degrees Fahrenheit
- Properly rinse your dishes and utensils at 180 degrees Fahrenheit
- Always store chemicals and cleaning solutions away from foods
- Keep all foods at least eight to twelve inches off of the floor

Here are some tips on how to store food. We'll get into the more specific rules on the next couple of pages.

Follow the label directions on food packages

- Do not overcrowd food in the refrigerator. Air has to flow
- Wash the refrigerator with baking soda to keep it clean
- Buy food that is packaged properly free from rips
- Refrigerate cooked foods soon after cooking

Not only do you have to make sure that hands are clean, but you also have to make sure foods are handled in a way to prevent infective or toxic gastroenteritis. They are:

- Poultry
- Mayonnaise
- Meats
- Seafood

You should always wash poultry with cold water before cooking it paying very close attention to the body cavity. Salmonella is spread through reusing infected knives, countertops, cutting boards, and tabletops. You should always scrub these things clean after coming into contact with any of these foods.

You will also want to clean your counter tops, cutting boards, and table tops with a spoon full of chlorine bleach in a gallon of water. There are a group of foods that are susceptible to the salmonella bacteria. The best way to prevent salmonella bacteria is to keep hot foods hot and cold foods colds. You should also keep cooked meats, poultry seafood refrigerated until serving time. Most people don't know it but canned and bottled products should be checked for food poisoning as well. Any can that looks swollen or strange looking should be thrown out immediately. Those products are susceptible to Botulinum, the bacteria that causes botulism. Botulism is a deadly disease that attacks the nervous system.

Make a special note at how these foods should be stored in your catering kitchen:

Poultry

Poultry should be cooked very well and refrigerated soon after cooking. Don't let it sit on the table for long. If you're cooking a turkey for the holidays, then do not stuff it the night before you cook it. People use to do that a long time ago before we discovered that bacteria thrive inside the stuffing of a bird. You can stuff your bird right before serving, but don't over pack it. If you choose to serve it this way, you also shouldn't freeze a turkey that is stuffed. Poultry should also thaw out inside the refrigerator below 40 degrees F. But, you should never let it stay in the refrigerator more than two days.

Meat

You should store meat in the coldest compartment of your refrigerator. It takes about eight to twelve hours for meat to freeze. Meats that are frozen in the refrigerator's freezer do not freeze as well as the meat kept in a freezer. Salt interferes with the freezing of some foods like bacon, sausage, and hot dogs so it's a good idea not to freeze them for long. Wrap cuts of meat like pork chops, and steaks separately. For hamburger, wrap them in patties and separately as well. Label your meat with the weight and date so that you can use the oldest food first.

Pork and ham should always be cooked very well because of the danger of trichinosis parasites. Cook pork until the pink color is gone from the meat and juices. A meat thermometer will help you to measure the internal temperature of your meats. Use a meat thermometer religiously. Don't forget to sterilize it after use following manufacturers directions.

You don't want to cook meat halfway. So you need to completely thaw out frozen meat. Luncheon meat is just as susceptible to food poisoning. Keep it tightly wrapped and try to use it within 5 days.

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT BEEF

You'll need to know that beef is perhaps the most highly graded form of meat. The government has some tough inspection regulations. You'll need to know what these standards are and how it can affect the price of your beef.

- USDA Prime in a word this grading means, "best." It is the juiciest and the most tender. The prime quality meat goes to business establishments like hotels and restaurants. Usually under this grading, the meat has a good fat to lean ratio.

- USDA Choice is “second best.” It is still tender and juicy. However, it has less fat than USDA Prime. This meat is usually sold in supermarkets.
- USDA Good is you guessed it, “third best.” It is mild in taste and tender to a certain extent. But, it is not as juicy and it has less fat than USDA Choice.
- USDA Standard is meat from young animals that is not as juicy, tender or flavorful as some other animals. Meat in this standard doesn’t have that much fat.
- USDA Commercial is the rating given to meat from older animals that has a tendency to be tough.

Meat is easier to cook if you invest in a good thermometer. You’ll find that your food is cooking well when it reaches the following temperatures.

- Honey Ham, 170 degrees F
- Poultry, 165 degrees F
- Veal, 165 degrees F
- Pork, 160 degrees F
- Beef, 155 degrees F
- Lamb, 155 degrees F
- Rare Beef, 125 degrees F
- Rare Lamb, 125 degrees F

Seafood

You have to purchase fish fresh. Fresh fish should smell mild. If it smells fishy, don’t buy it. You can test the freshness of fish by looking at its eyes and body. The eyes should be clear and round. The gills should be bright red and the scales should firmly be on the skin of the fish. Speaking of firm, the fish should feel that way as well. If you are planning on storing the fish for use at a later date, then you need to make sure that the fish has not been previously frozen and thawed out.

Fresh fish should be covered in aluminum foil, plastic wrap or heavy waxed paper. Fresh fish needs to be frozen at below zero temps. Shellfish should be alive when you buy it and canned fish must be used within a year. Look for an expiration date on the can. You’ll want to make sure your chef follows the proper procedures when it comes to cooking fish because it runs such a strong chance of ruining your business if it’s served incorrectly.

You can tell if a fish is done because the flesh becomes opaque. It will also flake when you put a fork into the thickest body part. The head and tail can be removed after

you've cooked the fish for best tasting results. Leaving the head on helps to lock in the juice.

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT BUYING FISH

You can buy fish in six different states of preparation whenever you decide to buy them. You and your chef can decide which way is best for you.

1. ***Drawn*** is the term used to describe when a fish is scaled and its insides are taken out.
2. ***Dressed*** is another term used to describe when a fish has the head fins and tail removed in addition to the drawn.
3. ***Fillet***s are a common term that you probably already know. A fillet refers to a fish that has the head, fins and tail removed. The meat is then cut away from the bones.
4. ***Pan dressed*** is when the fish has the head, fins and tail removed. The fish is then split with the backbone removed.
5. ***Steaks*** are the pieces of meat that are left after a fish has the head, fins and tail removed. The meat is cut into crosswise slices.
6. ***Sticks*** are used to describe fillets when they are cut off the bone with the head, fins and tail removed. Sticks describe fillets that are cut into long and thin pieces.

Cheese and Milk

Milk and cottage cheese should be used within four days of purchase. It starts going bad anytime after that. Canned milk should be refrigerated after the can is opened. Processed cheese needs to be refrigerated in plastic wrap because plastic folds easily around the cheese. Throw out any cheese that shows signs of molding. Dry milk can become stale if it is not kept in an airtight container. Keep air out of it and also store dry milk away from heat.

Eggs

Eggs need to stay cold and dry. You need to keep them in a closed container until it's time to use them. Do not buy or use cracked eggs. You can freeze eggs for up to a year without losing their flavor.

Fruits and Veggies

Inspect all fruit for insects, dirt, soft spots, mold, odor and bruises. You shouldn't let frozen veggies sit out for a long time after it has been cooked. Also do not refreeze veggies that have been thawed out. Bruised fruit and veggies should not be stored near fresh ones because of concerns about if you notice any of these things. Don't buy it. Fruit should look good. Canned fruit and veggies can store up to a year in a cool place. Also, you may want to look at Chapter One where we talked about complying with city ordinances for more on this topic.

CHAPTER TEN

Professional Organizations

There are several professional organizations that you can team up with to learn more about the catering business. Here's the name and web site addresses of just a few.

American Culinary Federation

www.acf.org

American Dietetic Association

www.eatright.org

American Frozen Food Institute

www.affi.com

American Institute of Baking

www.aibonline.org

American Institute of Wine and Food

www.aiwf.org

American Meat Institute

www.meatami.com

Commercial Food Equipment Service Association

Info@cfesa.com

Food Marketing Institute

www.fmi.org

Food Marketing Institute Association

www.fpmsa.org

Food Processing Machinery & Supplies Association

www.fpmsa.org

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Bonus Recipes

Hor d'oeuvres

A good hor d'oeuvres says to your guest. Sit and stay a while. It should wet the appetite and the senses. A good hor d'oeuvres gives the guest a sense of what is to come. It sets the groundwork for the rest of the meal. If you are serving a dinner with a Mexican flavor, then why not try an appetizer with an influence from Mexico like the Tortilla Rolls. Mini pizzas are great to pass around at a super bowl party. And, if you're having a traditional Italian dinner, try a not so traditional appetizer.

Recipes for all three are on the next few pages. Enjoy!

Tasty Tortilla Rollups

- 4 8-inch tortilla
- 4 oz 1/3 less fat cream cheese softened
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives or 1 teaspoon dried basil leaves
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 4 oz thinly sliced deli cooked ham
- ½ red bell pepper, cut into thin julienne strips

Procedure:

Cut cracker bread in half in small bowl and combine cream cheese, chives, basil and oregano. Mix well. Arrange ham slices over cream cheese on cracker bread Starting about 1 inch from straight edge, arrange half of bell pepper strips in rows parallel to straight edge. Starting at straight edge roll up tightly jell roll fashion. Wrap roll tightly in plastic wrap. Repeat with remaining ingredients to form second roll refrigerate at least 20 minutes or until firm enough to slice. .

Lil Pizza Muffins

- 1 package English muffins
- 1 small jar Ragu sauce
- ¼ pound sliced pepperoni
- ½ cup chopped onions
- 8 ounces shredded mozzarella cheese

Procedure:

Cut muffins in half. Spread sauce on muffins. Layer pepperoni, onions on top with the cheese. Place on cookie sheet and back at 350 degrees for 10-12 minutes.

Cheeseballs Ala Italy

- 1 8oz pkg 1/3 less fat cream cheese softened
- 4 oz 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/3 cup sliced green onions
- 1/2 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley

Procedure:

Combine all ingredients except parsley; blend well. Stir in pimientos. Cove and refrigerate 30 minutes shape mixture into two balls roll each in parsley. Serve immediately. Serve with any kind of cracker or crisp breadsticks that you like.

Swedish Meat Balls

- 1 cup minced onion
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 cup fresh breadcrumbs
- 1/4 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1-pound ground chuck
- 1-pound ground shoulder pork

Sauce

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1-teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoons salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 1-cup water

- ¾ cup light cream

Procedure:

Sauté onion in 2 tablespoons butter until golden. Meanwhile in large mixing bowl, beat egg; add milk and crumbs. Let stand six minutes add salt, sugar, nutmeg, chuck, pork, and onion. Blend well with fork.

Sauce. In same skillet heat two tablespoons butter. Using 2 teaspoons shape the meat mixture into small balls, about ½ to ¾ inch in diameter. Drop some balls into skillet and brown well on all sides; remove to warm casserole; repeat until all meat is brown. Then, stir flour sugar, salt and pepper into fat left in skillet; add water and cream slowly. Stir until thickened. If desired, pour gravy into casserole with meatballs and heat thoroughly. The gravy may be served separately if desired.

Appetizers

What’s the difference between hor d’oeuvres and an appetizer? One has a fancier name than the other? That truly is it. Hour d’oeuvres are reserved for the fancier more exclusive dinners while an appetizer is good for the everyday meal. Nevertheless, we’re not going to skimp when it comes to you so you don’t skimp when it comes to your clients. Here’s a look at recipes for some pretty fancy appetizers.

Simply Sensational Salmon

- 1 pound of fresh minced salmon fillet
- ¾ cup finely chopped red onion
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1-tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1-tablespoon cognac
- 1-tablespoon olive oil

Procedure:

Mix the chopped onion, minced garlic, lemon juice, salt, pepper, cognac and olive oil together in a large bowl. Cover the salmon fillet in with the ingredients in the bowl. Serve on a large bed of lettuce.

Cajun Catfish Fingers

- Vegetable oil for deep-frying
- 1 large egg
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ cup old bay seasoning
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/8 teaspoon Tabasco sauce
- 18 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¼ cup yellow cornmeal
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ pounds catfish fillets, cut into 1-inch wide strips

Dip

- ½ cup of sour cream
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon of paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon chopped fresh oregano
- ½ teaspoon chopped fresh basil
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Procedure:

Heat the oil to 350 degrees in a deep skillet or electric fryer. In a medium size bowl, whisk together the eggs, garlic powder, old bay seasoning, worcheshire, Tabasco, oregano, and black pepper. Mix the cornmeal and salt together in a shallow dish. Dip the catfish strips in the egg mixture and then into the cornmeal mixture to thoroughly coat them. Fry the fish until golden brown. Remove from oil and drain Serve immediately with the Cajun dip. DIP: Mix together all the ingredients in a small bowl. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours for the flavors to develop before serving with the catfish fingers. Makes one cup.

Mextortilla Dip

- 2 ripe avocados
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Pinch of salt and pepper
- 1-cup sour cream
- 1 package dry taco-seasoning mix
- 1 can bean dip
- 2 green onions with tops chopped

- 2 medium tomatoes coarsely chopped
- 8 ounces cheddar cheese shredded

Mash avocados with lemon juice, salt, and pepper. In separate bowl combine sour cream and taco seasoning. Spread bean dip on your serving dish. Add avocado mixture. Layer with sour cream and taco mixtures. Sprinkle with chopped onions, tomatoes and olives and cheese. Serve chilled with chips.

SOUP

Ole Potato Soup

- 4 large baking potatoes
- 2/3 cup butter or margarine
- 2/3 cup all purpose flour
- 5 cups whole milk
- Pinch of salt and pepper
- 3 onions
- 1 pound cooked and crumbled bacon
- 3 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 ½ cups sour cream

Procedure:

Wash potatoes and prick several times with fork. Bake at 375 degrees for an hour or until done. Let cool. Peel and cut potatoes into small chunks. Melt butter in pan. Add flour and milk. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture thickens and bubbles. Add potatoes, salt, pepper onions, ½ pound of bacon and 1 ½ cups of cheese. Cook thoroughly for 20 minutes, but do not boil. Serve with remaining onions, bacon and cheese or you can put all in soup at one time.

Veggie Soup Mama's Style

- 1 packages frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 pounds boneless stew meat
- 8 cups water
- Salt and pepper
- 1 32 ounce can tomatoes untrained
- 2 large potatoes chopped
- 1 16-ounce can whole kernel corn

- 3 sprigs of parsley
- ¼ teaspoon rosemary
- 1-teaspoon thyme
- ½ bay leaf
- 1 small can tomato paste
- 1 large onion, sliced thin, divided

Procedure:

Cut meat into small chunks. Place in large Dutch oven. Add water, salt, pepper, tomato paste, ½ onion, and soup bone. Simmer, covered, for 1 ½ hours or until meat is tender. Remove bone; skim fat from top. Add barley; simmer for 45 minutes. Add rest of onion, tomatoes, vegetables, parsley, rosemary, thyme and bay leaf. Simmer until vegetables are tender. Remove bay leaf Makes 8-10 large servings.

Chicken Soup For Caterer’s Heart

- 3 cups homemade chicken stock or canned broth
- 8 ounces cut up skinless chicken breast
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 cup bay leaves
- 2 cups cooked rice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

Procedure:

Combine the chicken stock, chicken strips, and mushrooms in a large saucepan. Cover and bring to a boil. Then, reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes or until the chicken and mushrooms are tender. Stir in the bay leaves and rice. Add salt and pepper. Serve immediately with crackers.

SALADS

Mango Fruit Salad

- 1 large mango, peeled, cut into small cubes to make two cups
- 1 medium papaya, skin and seed removed cut into ¾ inch cubes about two cups
- 2 cups chopped nuts for garnish
- ½ cup flat champagne

- 1/3 cup sour cream
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1 tablespoon poppy seed

Procedure:

Place the mangos in a large bowl along with papaya, add the champagne and let it sit for fifteen minutes. Place in a blender along with sour cream and honey. Blend for fifteen to twenty seconds. Put in large bowl and serve chilled with nuts on top.

Caesar Salad

- 2 heads romaine lettuce
- 1/2 cup parmesan cheese
- Croutons
- 1 egg boiled
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup salad oil
- juice of one lemon
- 2 garlic cloves
- salt and pepper to taste

Procedure:

In a large salad bowl, tear lettuce into bite size pieces. Combine all ingredients for dressing beat well and pour over salad. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and toss. Add croutons and toss again. Serve immediately.

Layer Salad

- 1 medium head of lettuce torn
- 4 ribs celery chopped
- 1 bunch green onions chopped
- 1 10-ounce box frozen peas thawed but not cooked
- 3 hard cooked eggs chopped
- 6-8 slices bacon fried crisp crumbled
- 1 1/2 cups sour cream
- 1 1/2 cups mayo or miracle whip
- 3 or 4 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Procedure:

Place lettuce pieces in bottom of large glass or wooden bowl. Sprinkle the celery over lettuce, the green onions over celery, peas over the green onions then eggs and half the bacon. Make a dressing by combining sour cream mayo sugar and garlic salt. Pour dressing over salad. Sprinkle Parmesan, cheese and remaining bacon over top. Chill overnight serves 6-8.

Chicken Florentine

- ½ cup onion
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 8 ounces chopped spinach
- 1 cup 4 ounces shredded Swiss cheese
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 4 skinless boneless chicken breast

Mushroom sauce

- 2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1-cup chicken broth
- 2 cup milk
- ½ cup dry white wine
- Pinch of pepper

Procedure:

Sauté onion in margarine. Remove from heat and add spinach, cheese, and nutmeg. Spoon spinach into four mounds in lightly greased baking dish. Place chicken piece in dish on top of spinach. Bake at 350 degrees from 20-30 minutes

Sauce: Sauté mushrooms in butter. Add lemon juice, broth, milk, wine and white pepper to mushrooms. Bring to a boil and cook until sauce is slightly thickened. Spoon ¼ sauce over each serving.

Rubbling Roast

- 1 5-6 pound rump roast
- 2 teaspoons seasoning salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 ½ teaspoons accent
- 3 cups water

Procedure:

Preheat oven to 325 degrees season roast generously with salt, pepper and accent. Place in a Deep baking pan. Cook for two hours. Remove roast from oven and pour grease out of pan. Add water and mix well with drippings in pan, scraping bottom of pan. Put roast back in pan and baste. Cook another hour. Taste your gravy during the last hour to see if you need more salt. When done, take roast out of pan and slice. Serve with rice or potatoes.

Filet Mignon

- 4 filets mignon about 1 1/2 to 2 inches thick
- 3 teaspoons black pepper
- 3 sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup beef bouillon
- 2-3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 6 tablespoons butter, divided
- 1-2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

Procedure:

Dry filets and sprinkle each side generously with 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Place on plate and cover, refrigerate 2-3 hours. In a skillet heat olive oil and add 1 tablespoon butter, cook filets quickly on each side approx 4-6 minutes per side. Place meat on a warm platter to keep warm.

Pour excess pan drippings from skillet into pan and add 3 tablespoons butter to pan. Sauté mushrooms for 1 minute over medium heat and add pan drippings. Add red wine vinegar and boil for one minute. Add remaining butter and mix with pan juices pour over filets.

Halibut

- 5 ounce uncooked plain egg noodles
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 lb halibut fillets
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon chopped green onions
- 1/2 teaspoon grated gingerroot

- 1 tablespoon soy sauce

Procedure:

In a bowl combine cilantro, onions, gingerroot, garlic powder, and pepper sprinkle half of mixture on one side of halibut fillets. Spray skillet with cooking spray. Heat over medium to high heat until hot place fish seasoned side down in hot skillet cook 2 to 4 minutes before turning. Fish is done when it flakes. Serve with rice or noodles.

Vegetables

Roasted Vegetables

- 1/3-cup butter
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1-cup cauliflower
- 2 cuts broccoli
- 3 cups carrots cut into small strips
- 2 small onions, quartered

Procedure:

Heat oven at 400 degrees. Melt butter in 9 x 13 inch baking pan in oven 5-6 minutes stir in thyme, salt and pepper. Add remaining ingredients toss to coat cover with foil bake 22 to 27 minutes or until vegetables are crispy and tender.

Southern Fried Corn

- 5 ears fresh corn
- 3 tablespoons butter and bacon
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 cup of water for each cup of corn
- Salt and pepper to taste

Procedure:

Remove shucks and silks from the corn. Cut tips for kernels from ears of corn. Heat corn, seasonings and water, stirring constantly for about two minutes to heat

through. Lower heat and cook stirring frequently until corn is thickened and color almost transparent about 15-20 minutes.

Barbecued Green Beans

- 6 slices bacon, diced
- 1 onion chopped
- 1 pound cans cut green beans drained
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1-cup catsup

Procedure:

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Cook bacon and onion together in medium sized skillet over medium heat. Remove with slotted spoon and place in ungreased 2 quart baking dish. Add green beans mix brown sugar and catsup in medium size bowl. Fork into green beans bake covered 250 degrees for three hours serves six to eight.

Potatoes

Twice Baked Potatoes

- 5 large potatoes scrubbed and baked
- 1/3 cup half and half
- 1-cup sour cream
- 3 tablespoons green onion or chives minced
- 4 strips bacon, fried and crumbled
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 ½ to 2 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ¼ teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 egg beaten
- 1/3 cup butter
- ½ cup mushrooms sliced and sautéed in butter

Procedure:

Bake potatoes for 1 hour at 350 degrees until tender in the center. Cut in half lengthwise scoop out potato carefully so not to tear skins. Mash potatoes with mixer add half and half and continue to beat until smooth. Add all other ingredients and mix well. Mixture should be somewhat softer than regular

mashed potatoes to prevent drying out when baking again. Fill skin shells with mash potato mixture and arrange on cookie sheet. Top each with extra grated cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes serves 8 to 10.

Gourmet Potatoes

- 6 medium potatoes
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup butter
- 1 ½ cup sour cream
- Paprika
- 1/3 cup green onion, finely chopped
- 1-teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2-tablespoon butter

Procedure:

Cook potatoes in skins and cool. Peel and shred coarsely. In a saucepan over low heat combine cheese and ¼ cup butter; stir occasionally until almost melted. Remove from heat and blend in sour cream, onion and seasonings. Fold in potatoes. Turn into greased 2-quart casserole. Dot with 2 tablespoons butter, sprinkle with paprika baked uncovered at 350 degrees for 30 minutes until heated serves 8

Creamy Grilled Potatoes

- 5 medium potatoes peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 medium onion, slice
- 6 tablespoons butter or margarine
- ½ cut cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoons parsley, minced
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- Salt and pepper
- 1/3 cup chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons bacon bits

Procedure:

Place sliced potatoes and onion on 18 X22 inch piece of heavy-duty foil. Dot with butter. Sprinkle with cheese and parsley, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper. Fold up foil around potatoes add chicken broth, sprinkle with bacon bits. Seal edges tightly. Grill packet on covered grill for about 35 minutes or until potatoes are tender serves 6.

PASTA

Angel Hair Pasta With Chicken

- 8 ounces Angel hair pasta
- Chicken broth
- 2 skinless boneless chicken breast halves cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 Carrot sliced
- 10 ounces of frozen broccoli
- ¼ cup Grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cloves Garlic

Procedure:

Heat water for pasta. Cook chicken in 1-tablespoon oil stirring until chicken is cooked. Remove from skillet and drain. Heat remaining oil in the same skillet. Add carrot to skillet, broccoli and garlic to skillet add pasta, chicken broth, basil and Parmesan to skillet stir to combine return chicken to skillet reduce hat and simmer for about five minutes. Serve with pasta immediately.

Fettuccine Primavera

- 1 cup of broccoli
- ½ cup chopped green pepper
- 8 ounces fettuccine noodles
- ½ cup chopped onion ½ cup chopped green pepper
- 12 ounces fettuccine noodles
- ½ teaspoon dried basil leaves
- ¾ cup margarine 1/1/2 sticks
- 1 fresh tomatoes peeled and cut into wedges
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Parmesan cheese grated

Procedure:

In skillet over medium high heat, sauté broccoli, green pepper, onion and basil in margarine until tender. Stir in tomatoes and salt. Simmer 7-8 minutes. Cook fettuccine as directed on label, drain. Toss vegetable mixture with hot fettuccine. Add Parmesan cheese

Lasagna Pie

- 12 ounces ricotta
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese
- 1 pound extra lean ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 6 ounces tomato paste
- 1-½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese, divided
- Salt and pepper
- 1-cup milk
- 2/3 cup packaged biscuit mix
- 1 egg

Procedure:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease 10-inch pie pan. Place ricotta cheese in layer on bottom. Top with Parmesan cheese. Brown beef over lower heat and add onion and green pepper cooking until the onion is translucent. Add oregano, basil, tomato paste and ¾ cup of mozzarella salt and pepper to taste. Spoon over the cheese layers in pie pan. Beat milk, biscuit mix and eggs until smooth. Pour into pie pan and bake for 45 minutes. Sprinkle with mozzarella and serve

DESSERTS

Buttercreame Brownies

- 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate
- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup of butter
- ½ cup of sugar
- 2 eggs beaten
- ¼ cup chopped nuts
- 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons of butter
- 1 ½ cup confectioner's sugar
- 1-tablespoon cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Procedure:

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour an 8 X 10 pan. Mix ½ cup of butter, sugar and egg. Add melted chocolate and flour. Thoroughly mix ingredients. Pour batter into pan and put in the oven. It takes about ten minutes to bake depending on your oven. Let it cool at room temperature for about an hour.

Topping: In a small mixing bowl, melt together 1 ounce of unsweetened sugar and 1-tablespoon butter or margarine. Pour on top of finished brownie after the brownie has cooled down. Makes 12 nice sized chocolate brownies.

Ginger Cake

Description: Spicy ginger cake topped with cinnamon.

- 1¼-teaspoon ginger
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 1-teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 3-tablespoon flour
- 2 tablespoons oats
- 1 tablespoons brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1-tablespoon margarine
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup milk
- ½ cut molasses

Procedure:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Use cooking spray on a 10 inch round pan. Mix 1 tablespoon of flour, 2 tablespoons of oats, 1 tablespoon of margarine 2 tablespoons of brown sugar, 1/4 teaspoon of cinnamon, ¼ teaspoon of ginger, in a bowl. Bake for 45 minutes. Let cool before adding topping

Topping. In another bowl, combine flour, baking powder, 1-teaspoon ginger, baking soda and salt. Mix and apply to cake once the cake is cool.

Sweet Love Cake

- 1 6-ounce chocolate chips
- ¾ cup chopped pecans
- 1 box yellow butter cake mix
- 4 eggs

- ½ cup oil
- ¼ cup water
- 1-teaspoon vanilla
- 1 small box vanilla pudding
- 1 8 ounces sour cream
- 1 16-ounce box of powdered sugar
- 3 squares baking chocolate melted ¾ stick margarine softened milk

Procedure:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Pour dry cake mix in bowl. Coat chocolate chips and pecans with the cake mix. Mix together the remainder of cake mix, eggs, oil, water, vanilla, vanilla pudding and sour cream. Fold in chocolate chips and pecans. Pour into a greased and floured pan. Cool before adding chocolate frosting.

Dixey Peach Cobbler

- 5 cups large ripe peeled and pitted peaches
- 3 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 1 cup cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1 ½ cups all purpose flour
- ¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, chilled
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Procedure:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 2-quart baking dish. Combine the peaches, brown sugar cornstarch, lemon juice, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a large saucepan. Stir about fifteen minutes over low heat. Peaches should be tender. Pour the filling into the baking dish. Stir flour, ¼ cup sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Add butter strips. Add the milk and vanilla and quickly blend together with a spatula. Add biscuit mixture on top of the peaches covering them completely. Add remaining sugar all over. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes. Serve hot or cold.

Non-Alcoholic Beverages

Mint Tea

- French Mint Tea
- 3 family sizes tea bags
- Water
- Handful of fresh clean mint
- Juice of four lemons
- 1 12-ounce can frozen orange juice
- 2 cups of sugar

Procedure:

In a pot boil tea bags, water and mint. Cover and remove from heat. Allow steeping 30 minutes. Remove tea bags and mint. Add lemon juice, orange juice and sugar. Add enough water to make 1 gallon. Refrigerate to serve chilled.

Cappuchino Froth Mix

- 1-cup instant coffee creamer
- 1-cup instant quick chocolate
- 2/3-cup instant coffee
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg

Procedure:

Combine all ingredients in blender until very fine. Store in airtight container. Use three tablespoons mix to 8 ounces of water makes 3 cups dry mix.

Tuti Fruiti Punch

- 1 6-ounce can orange juice frozen
- 1 6-ounce can lemonade frozen
- 1 6-ounce can frozen pineapple juice
- 1 12-ounce can apricot nectar chilled
- ½ cup lemon juice
- 1 quart orange sherbet
- 2 large bottles ginger ale chilled

Procedure:

Add water to frozen concentrates. Add chilled apricot nectar and lemon juice. Add sherbet before serving.

Business Forms

These are forms you will need to start your catering business. You can find most of them at an office supply store or special order them off of the Internet.

Your Master Checklist: A form that you use to check off the things you need for a function. We went over the specifics of this form in Chapter Six under Keeping A Portfolio. In fact, copies of all of these forms need to be placed inside a portfolio that you will build for your client.

Booking Request Form: You give this form to the client to fill out. It should include:

- Your company name
- Your company address
- Your phone number
- Your hours of operation
- Client's name
- Client's address
- Client's phone number
- Type of Event
- Tentative Date Of Event
- Time
- Client's Budget
- Menu Preference
- Special Requests
- The Name of the Person doing the booking
- Copies go in a file and to Sales Manager for follow-up

Function Estimate: You provide this form to the client after you have reviewed their wants, needs and budget. An estimate is good up to 30 days before an event. After that time, it may change due to unforeseen costs. It's a good idea to keep the final cost to within 10% to 20% of what you estimated. Be prepared to explain to the client if there is a huge difference.

Here's what the function estimate should include:

- Your company Name
- Your company Address

- Your Company Phone Number
- Your Hours Of Operation
- The Client's Name
- The Client's Phone Number
- The Client's Address
- The Date Of Function.
- Number Of Guests
- Facility
- Menu
- Breakdown of Food Costs
- Breakdown of Beverage Cost
- Gratuities at 17% to 20%
- Breakdown of Labor Cost (optional)
- Entertainment Costs (optional, if you're handling)
- Decoration Costs (optional, if you're handling_
- Final Estimated Costs

Banquet Contract: This is one of the most important forms. It outlines in complete detail what the client is getting. It includes the same items as in the estimate, but the client signs this one. Copies are then forwarded to everyone involved. The contract also provides a complete outline of whether there's a reception before the dinner as outline here:

- Reception Hours
- Type of Service
- Price per person
- Liquor
- Type of Service
- Bartender Charge
- Price per person
- Dinner Hours
- Type of Service
- Price per person

In other words, if a client wants to have a reception before dinner, then you'd note on this form that the reception is from 6:00 p.m. until 7:00p.m. The reception is for 50 guests at \$7.00 per glass. They type of service is waitress/bar. Don't forget to note and charge for special requests such as coat check and valet parking.

Final Bill is the breakdown of all services at the conclusion of a catering event. As we mentioned in a previous chapter, you may want to collect the final payment on the event the day of the event. The final bill is important and this is what it should include.

- Your company's name
- Company's address

- Company's phone number
- Type of Function
- Date of Function
- Number of Guaranteed Guests
- Itemized cost of food
- Beverage
- Liquor
- Beer
- Wine
- Soda
- Labor
- Equipment
- Flowers
- Photos
- Printing
- Music
- Limo
- Sub total plus tax
- Less deposit
- Balance due

Take the Catering Challenge

Well, it looks like we've gone over a lot of information together. We hope you are well on your way to starting your own catering business. But, before you go, let's test your catering knowledge.

1. How long does it take for a student to complete most culinary schools?
2. What governmental agency regulates meats?
3. Name the two types of catering.
4. Name the four types of animals that can be used in kosher meals.
5. How many drinks at an open bar in two hours can you expect a guest to have?
6. Describe three ways to advertise your business.
7. How much of a deposit should a caterer ask for?
8. What kind of forms should be kept in a customer's portfolio?
9. Name as many events that you can think of where caterers are needed.
10. What does the culinary term "sauté" mean?
11. A glass of white wine goes well with what meat?
12. When is it a good idea to share a kitchen with a caterer?
13. True or False. It's safe to stuff your turkey overnight.
14. True or False. A dressed fish is one with the head still on.
15. True or False. A federal agency regulates the catering business.

Catering Challenge Answers

1. About 15 months
2. United States Department of Agriculture or USDA
3. On-Premises and Off-Premises
4. Cattle, Deer Sheep and Goats
5. Four to Five Drinks
6. Phone Book, customer referrals, and local publications
7. Twenty to Thirty Percent
8. All forms, letters and other information related to the catering job including the contract and booking request form.
9. Weddings, Anniversaries, Birthday Parties, Bar Mitzvah's, Bat Mitzvah's, Bridal Showers, Bachelor Nights, Graduations,
10. Sauté means to cook on top of the stove in butter or fat.
11. Fish and white meat.
12. It's good to share a catering kitchen when you're starting out in the business and trying to build up clientele or you are a part-time caterer.
13. False. Stuffing a turkey overnight can lead to food poisoning.
14. False. A dressed fish has the head, fins and tail cutoff.
15. False. Local laws in some states govern the catering business.

Start Your Catering Business Today

We're asking you the age-old question. Why put off tomorrow what you can do today? Get started on your own catering business right now from the comfort of your own home by getting your creative wheels to spinning. Maybe you have already asked and answered these questions for yourself, maybe not. But it doesn't matter if you want to prepare a whole meal, or cookies. Do what you can and start building your business, today!

The Best Name For My Catering Business

I can devote how many weekly hours right now

My Specialty for right now is

My first client will be

I need how much money to get started

I can make how much with this first job

I can get more clients by

CULINARY TERMS

CATERER'S SHOULD KNOW TOO!

So you think a coupe is a car you drive on a sunny day in July and Cafe Noir is a fancy restaurant on 6th Avenue in New York. You're wrong. The catering and the culinary world are filled with words that you're going to have to get use to. As they say, if you talk the talk, you got to walk the walk. Here are some of the more popular culinary words to get your vocabulary going!

1. A la broche: cooked on a skewer
2. A la mode: in the style of
3. Au gratin: sprinkled with crumbs or cheese and baked
4. Au jus served with natural juice and gravy
5. Au lait with milk
6. Au natural: cooked plain
7. Bien Cubit: Meat well done
8. Blanquette white mean in cream sauce
9. Braise food browned in hot fat and simmered until tender
10. Café Noir: Black coffee
11. Chiffonade dish with shredded vegetables
12. Coupe: An ice cream dessert
13. Flambé a food served with lighted spirits over it
14. Fondue au from age: A melted dish
15. Julienne small strips of meat, veggies or cheese
16. Lonnie: cooked with onions
17. Macedonia: Mixed fruits and veggies
18. Mousse: Dessert or main dish Light airy dish contains beaten egg whites or whipped cream
19. Nappe: Coated thin with sauce and jelly
20. Panache: two vegetables mixed
21. Puree: Mashed
22. Saute: Fried in fat
23. Souffle: A fluffy baked main dish or dessert made from milk and egg yolks

24. Tarte: tart or pie

25. Vinaigrette: a marinade of oil, pepper, herbs and vinegar

Didn't we warn you that there was more than what meets the eye about the catering business? You hung in here until the very end while we went through a lot of technical information. Now you're informed and well on the way to becoming a great caterer. Just remember to think safety at all times. Serve great food and give great customer service. As an added safety net, keep the *No Nonsense Guide To Catering* close by your side when you need a reference, or a really good vibe! Best of Luck to you! As they would say in France, Bon Apetit!