

## Caterer's Checklist

*Caterers do it all. Now, we provide you an easy way to remember it all! Here's a great list you can adapt to your own needs and timelines. It will help you keep track of everything you are doing to make sure your clients don't have to worry about a thing.*

- ☐ Book event, determining date, time, theme and exchanging contact information (including mobile numbers for 24-hour availability)
- ☐ Determine budget for the event
- ☐ Ensure billing is clear (hourly vs. flat fee, hard costs, mileage, due on delivery vs. direct bill, etc.)
- ☐ Set reminders on your calendar (electronic or otherwise) leading up to the event
- ☐ Post or make available your business license, insurance coverage, and worker's comp policies
- ☐ Ensure location is booked; understand its capabilities and policies (number of seats, table availability, chair availability, staff help for set up, electricity, microwave, ovens, coffeemaker, dishwasher, cleaning supplies, etc.)
- ☐ Ensure date has no major conflicts for parking or attendance
- ☐ Discuss invitations, including correct address (always ask your client for a copy of the invitation so you are sure what has been promised)
- ☐ Understand guest list (will there be children?)
- ☐ Determine table service: buffet, seated, or pass arounds and all related needs, including chairs
- ☐ Decide personnel needed for event and book their time (servers, setup, cleanup, etc.)
- ☐ Offer advance tastings with the client
- ☐ Determine any food allergies or sensitivities of invited guests (gluten free, diabetic, special diets)
- ☐ Set menu (appetizer, salad/soup, entrée, dessert, toppings or other extras, coffee and beverage service, bartending needs)

- ☐ Clarify with client serving time for food as it relates to start time of event (tip: serving time should not be the same as start time or you'll end up with late guests and cold food)
- ☐ Discuss paper or plastic, china or other for plates, napkins, cups, flatware (may need to rent, buy, or borrow)
- ☐ Discuss centerpieces and determine whose responsibility they are as well as delivery, size and location for set up
- ☐ Determine need for tablecloths/centerpieces/fresh flowers and discuss room set up
  - Plates, utensils, napkins, cups
  - Punch bowl or bartender space
  - Decorations and centerpieces
  - Candles/lighters/tea light refills
  - Banners—theme specific
  - Displays (wedding photos, etc.)
  - Serving forks/knives
  - Coffee service
  - Ice
  - Soda supply/chilled drinks
  - Storage containers
  - Gifts/gift bags and tissue if there is a food-related guest gift
  - Musicians/playlist
  - Sound system
  - Check bathrooms and tissue paper
  - Trash containers and liners
- ☐ Discuss caterer's visible presence, if any (aprons, uniforms, etc.)
- ☐ Ensure food safety requirements, with hair nets or ties, hand sanitizer, water stations
- ☐ Determine kitchen needs, such as chafing dishes, serving utensils, etc.
- ☐ Ensure clarity over your policy on leftovers, and stock containers for storage as necessary
- ☐ Determine delivery or pick up times; if delivery, ensure vehicle insurance, availability, gas, stable shelving or food carriers
- ☐ Make your grocery lists and set your shopping timetable and storage options (i.e. freezer space)

- ☐ Make your prep list based on recipe needs (consider unthawing time, dough raising time, baking time, cook times, etc.)
- ☐ Taste as you cook—never forget to taste
- ☐ Ensure mop cloths, plastic gloves, knives, serving utensils, cleaning supplies, step stool, etc. are prepared and ready to go with food delivery
- ☐ Have emergency cash for last-minute replacements or to tip your outside help
- ☐ Know in advance if you will share recipes; if so, make them available with your contact information and business cards
- ☐ Be aware of music and how it coordinates with service times (particularly with a live band or DJ)
- ☐ Be aware of any obligations client would like you to assume (decorating, ambiance such as building a fire, taking responsibility for freezing the top layer of a wedding cake, tableside carving, etc.)
- ☐ Ensure directional signage
- ☐ Discuss parking signage, attendant, or special arrangements
- ☐ Be aware of all printed materials such as place cards, menu, program
- ☐ Do a final confirmation of all details a week prior to the event with the client
- ☐ Take a few photos of your own during the event for promotions, or arrange to receive copies of any professional food photography that can be purchased or used on your web site
- ☐ Ensure you have a web site, business cards, and plenty of business referrals; maintain a list of facilities and party services or rentals in your area for reciprocal promotions (florists, photographers, DJs, sound systems, table/chair rentals, projector, linen service, etc.)
- ☐ Ensure cleanup and trash removal
- ☐ Provide a hostess gift as a thank you for the business (suggestion: fill a small gift bag with chocolate truffles, bath salts, or thank you notes and include a note that says, “Relax, put your feet up, and thanks for letting me help with your event!”)

*Checklist created by [foodchannel.com](http://foodchannel.com)*