

- **Catering Styles**

- **Plated meal**

This is the most formal service, so naturally it's a fit for events with a formal vibe such as black-tie galas and fund-raisers. Caterers also suggest table service for events that involve a presentation or educational content during the meal since it keeps guests in their seats, minimizing noise and allowing everyone to focus on the speaker. A sit-down meal is also good for intimate conversations and can be an effective way to encourage small-scale networking. With this service, the menu is usually limited to one or two entrées, so if many of your attendees have dietary restrictions it may not be an effective option. Keep in mind the venue needs to have enough space to accommodate the tables, the chairs, and room for servers to move around. In general, a plated meal is the most expensive type of service.

- **Buffet**

A buffet is good for large crowds and events where guests may be arriving at various times. It's also a great way to offer a variety of food, accommodating picky eaters and those with dietary restrictions. To keep service flowing, be sure to create ample lines to access the food. Once the guest count goes above @75 attendees, consider adding an additional bar, or bartender. If there is a buffet, make the buffet double-sided or add another buffet to mirror the original. Avoid offering "build-your-own" concepts such as deli buffets and fajitas because they slow down the line. To encourage mingling, provide a mix of seating options such as standard tables, high-tops, and lounge furniture.

- **Passed hors d'oeuvres and small plates**

Keep the focus on guest interaction with strolling wait staff that offer hors d'oeuvres and small plates. By bringing the food to guests, they don't have to stop their conversation in order to get something to eat. This is the most budget-conscious option because you can control the quantities. When planning the menu, consider the timing of the event: If it's during the dinner hour, offer more substantial food. Even small plates containing a starch, vegetable and protein can be passed. When passing hot items, consider serving them atop a base of mashed potatoes, grits, or pasta because these items can help to hold in the heat.

- **Action stations**

Create an interactive experience with chef-attended action stations, which allow guests to have their food made to order while they watch. This is the best option to accommodate dietary restrictions and preferences, and it also can add a fun, energetic vibe to an event. If networking is important, offer limited seating and food that can be consumed easily.

- **Catering Tips**

Linens and china * Catering companies rarely provide so ask up front as you may need to rent them from another outside vendor. Keep this in mind when calculating your budget.

Kid's menus * If children are attending the event, order appropriate food items. Inquire about reduced cost for their meals.

Vegetarian Options * Most caterers will accommodate restricted diet requests and can provide vegetarian options. If you know of vegetarians in your crowd then tell the caterer of that count.

Dessert Buffett * Two schools of thought here... If you place the buffet out early, those with a sweet tooth will indulge and will not eat

Catering Staff * Take note of what your catering staff will be wearing, usually they will dress to a theme if requested. They should always dress appropriately and be well-groomed.

The following pricing guidelines are not guaranteed. Prices will fluctuate depending on the vendor, time of the year, and services requested.

- **Suggested Pricing**

Prices will vary depending on service style and menu. These are a suggested range for various options:

- Hors d'oeuvre Reception- \$15-\$25 per person
- Lunch, buffet and plated- \$12-\$25 per person
- Dinner, buffet and plated- \$25-\$75 per person

- **Tips and Gratuities**

Keep in mind that catering proposals do not typically include gratuity and service. Depending on the type of service those charges will be higher and range between 12%-20% of the total bill.