



THE ART OF LOOKING AFTER YOUR GUESTS: CATERING

STEP 1 – CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE CATERING OPTIONS

Lunch, buffet, finger buffet, dinner – different events call for different kinds of catering provision. Choose the formula that best suits your event's objectives and the number of participants involved. Whichever formula you opt for, the quality of the food and the service must be impeccable – this is a crucial factor in creating a successful event.

- A business lunch is built into a working day and should offer your guests a chance to relax. A buffet, whether hot or cold, is the perfect formula because it allows them to select their menu for themselves. Offer light dishes in order to avoid drowsiness in the early afternoon. We also suggest that you don't prepare a seating plan. This more relaxed arrangement allows them to choose their own company and makes it easier for them to leave if they wish to take a break before the afternoon programme begins.
- In the evening, a finger buffet or sit-down dinner is recommended. A finger buffet is less formal and makes it easier for guests to talk to the other participants. For a sit-down dinner we suggest that you prepare a seating plan so that guests can find their place easily.
In all cases, be sure to create a lasting impression and give your evening a distinctive identity with elegant table decorations, eye-catching floral displays and – of course – immaculately presented food.

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STEP 2 – GIVE THE MENU CAREFUL THOUGHT

Traditional French cuisine, ethnic cuisine, something entirely original... anything is possible. Your caterer's advice and expertise are a key resource.

- When you have explained to the caterer the theme and mood you wish to create for your event, the caterer will propose a selection of menus. To help you choose ask the caterer to set up a tasting session so you can try the dishes, check their presentation, etc. Trust your own tastebuds – they'll tell you if you've made the right choice.
- The caterer will propose a wine list for your event. As certain dishes go well with certain types of wine it's a good idea to offer your guests a choice. Select the wines carefully and don't hesitate to ask advice – wine-lovers will really appreciate the effort.
- To be successful your event must satisfy everyone, with no exception, and so we suggest that you find out about the special dietary requirements of all participants in advance. Your caterer will be able to offer an appropriate solution whether your guests are vegetarians, vegans or have specific dietary requirements for reasons of health or religious belief.
On the day of the event remind the guests with special menu requirements to make themselves known to the event teams at the venue.

STEP 3 – PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO TABLEWARE AND DECORATIONS

Elegant presentation will set off the dishes carefully prepared by your caterer. It's a question of creating a memorable setting that will delight your guests and leave a lasting impression.

- Table centres, crockery, furniture, cloths, menus – your caterer will be able to suggest a range of products appropriate to the theme of your event.
- Think about your floral arrangements. Whether you're looking to create a mood or simply to adorn the meal, floral arrangements – classical, original, or avant-garde in style – will really bring the space alive. Ask your contact at the venue to put you in contact with their florist, who will be able to offer all kinds of ideas to delight your guests and express your company's ethos.
- For dinners, if you are creating an intimate atmosphere with subdued lighting add a few candles on the tables so that your guests can appreciate your caterer's expert presentation of the dishes.

ETAPE 4 – SERVICE

Delicious food, elegant table presentation, immaculate floral decorations... everything is in place to welcome your guests in style. However, in order to ensure that your meal is a complete success be sure not to underestimate the importance of the service, which should run as efficiently as clockwork.

- It is important that the French tradition of excellent service lives up to its reputation. Generally one waiter or waitress is provided for two tables of 8 to 10 guests. They should be attentive and discreet, bringing replenishments and new dishes without attracting attention. Their work should be supervised and coordinated by the head-waiters.
- Appearance matters: select the dress worn by your waiting staff carefully – it can be very traditional, or more relaxed, depending on the theme of your event. Whatever the case the serving staff should look immaculate.

STEP 5 – THE SMALL DETAILS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Be there to welcome your guests when they arrive – and to welcome the Chairman of your company and any other VIP guests. Guests will really appreciate your attention to their comfort and enjoyment.
- The cloakroom service should be free of charge. Seating plans should be displayed clearly so that your guests know that they need to find their place before sitting down. You can even give each table a name, reflecting the theme of the event – let your imagination run riot!
- As your guests arrive, offer them an aperitif. Champagne, white wine, a cocktail (alcoholic or non-alcoholic): anything is possible. Two or three appetisers per person are sufficient - ensuring that your guests can still do justice to your meal. Once everyone has found their place the waiting staff can set to work!

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