

10 things you need to know when hiring a caterer

Courtesy of Chick-N-Pizza Catering
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My name is John Fortini and I have been in the restaurant and catering business my entire life (my dad bought a chicken delight franchise in 1965). I have developed this FREE REPORT to assist you in choosing a caterer for any event you have planned.

If you choose my company or another cater these suggestions will help you plan and enjoy your event free from stress and get the maximum value for your dollar!

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1. Sample the food before the event

You would be surprised how many people call up a caterer and book an event without tasting the food. This is critical. What happens if the food is not what you expect? You leave yourself open to looking bad in front of all your guests and their family. Believe it or not more people will remember the “cold, tasteless food”, rather than the true meaning of this special event, a day of camaraderie and friendship.

2. Have a budget and goal in mind

You know the importance of **setting goals**, as they are a focal point to rally your family around. The vision of obtaining goals is what keeps everyone motivated and on course. A catered event is no different.

You **need** a vision of the end result. Do you picture a black tie formal event, or would you prefer guests casually enjoying a Backyard Party with all the fun?

The second part of the equation is **your budget**. Knowing in advance how much money you have to spend will save you time when exploring options. There is nothing more frustrating than having a specific meal in mind without the budget to see it through. Many caterers take advantage of disorganized party hosts by avoiding the subject of price. Let the caterer know how many people will attend, and then give them an absolute maximum budget per person. A good range is \$5 to \$15 per person (depending on the quality of food served).

IMPORTANT: Remember your deposit is your money. Get it back! There have been court cases that the judge awarded the person food compensation for the amount of the deposit!

3. How to avoid extra charges

Make sure the caterer understands that this budget should include **EVERYTHING!!** No hidden delivery charges, handling charges, silverware, service, etc. Many caterers are very good at presenting a low budget, and then padding the bill with lots of extras. Remember, the closer it gets to your party, the more leverage your caterer will have, as you'll be reluctant to start negotiations with someone else. Start shopping for your caterer early and discuss price openly at the first meeting.

While you may be able to argue with the caterer's bill after your party, it is much easier to avoid trouble by agreeing on a maximum price in advance. Write "Quote inclusive of all charges" on the contract and make the caterer initial it.

4. Do you understand how to tip?

Some caterers will hide a gratuity in the bill and then stand by silently as you tip them on top of it. Don't be afraid to ask if the price includes a tip, and tip only as much as you think the driver and/or server deserves. Did you know that **TIPS** stands for **To Insure Preferred Service**?

5. **Don't base your decision on price only**

The old saying, "*You get what you pay for*" rings truer today than ever. Because of competition, one caterer cannot afford to overprice service. Most caterers should be within 5% - 10% of each other for similar menus and levels of service.

Important: you'll find that someone offering a rock bottom price is probably cutting corners somewhere for YOUR party.

So compare apples to apples. Is cleanup included in the price – **or are they sticking you with the cleanup?** Is the food cooked fresh or re-heated? What about portion size? What is the

quality of the service ware and utensils? Are desserts and beverages included in the price? What is the gratuity or service charge?

BEEF for example has two grades: select and choice, a better cut. If your caterer is charging less than others, you can bet they are using the lower grade.

The list goes on and on. You see that all caterers are not created equally. You owe it to yourself to make sure you know what you are paying for. This will help you avoid any unpleasant surprises.

6. Can your caterer supply references?

Ask your potential caterer to supply you with proof that they've catered events successfully in the past. If they are unwilling to give you references or testimonials, keep shopping. Many caterers are just restaurants that deliver, but running a restaurant and operating a successful catering operation require different sets of skills. Some caterers improve over time; just don't let them use your party as practice

7. What are my menu choices and options?

The price of the same car with different options can vary as much as \$5000. Caterings are no different...options can add to the price tag. The opposite can also ring true. If you are willing to forego certain items or extras, you might be able to negotiate a lower price. Make sure you ask about the "base model" catering if you are on a tight budget. Most caterers will work with you.

If you have a larger budget be sure to ask about the extras. You might have enough to add the extra entrees, hors d'oeuvres, and desserts.

8. Find out what services are included

As mentioned earlier, you get what you pay for; this includes service. Find out exactly what the caterer does as part of his service.

Will they stay till the end and clean the entire area or just through the meal? Who is responsible for the trash? Does the caterer plan on setting up and serving the meal, or will the guest serve himself or herself? You need to be aware of what you are getting for your money. This allows you to receive the service you expect and prevents any unexpected surprises for you before, during or after your event.

9. Don't think the caterer won't run out of food

As thorough as you may be in taking reservations and estimating the number of guests, there will always be some people who show up unexpectedly. Usually, a caterer will require you to pay for the exact number of guest you guarantee. If extra guests join in, you are more than likely going to run out of food. Ask your caterer when the last minute is that you can add guests. Most caterers will require 1 week. Caterers who specialize in last minute parties often only need a few hours notice!

Running out of food is the #1 **biggest** disasters for an event. There are 3 steps to be sure you will not run out of food

- 1) Always order for 5 extra guests
- 2) Ask about portion sizes
- 3) Use a specialist for your event. Find a caterer who has experience in that field!

11. Does your caterer have a guarantee?

Guarantees are part of doing business for most industries. This protects you, from receiving less than you expect.

Look for a caterer that guarantees their product. For example, if the caterer runs out of food or doesn't provide the services that you contracted for, you don't pay. Make sure you go into your event knowing you are covered. Don't place the risks on your shoulder. You're giving up valuable dollars; you have every right to expect a guarantee for your important event.

Bonus tip 1. Is there a guaranteed price?

Not guaranteeing a price is a tactic used by many caterers especially if you are booking a party one or more years in advance. If you are making a commitment to use a caterer's service, negotiate your pricing so it remains the same as the day you booked the event.

To schedule your no risk tasting or receive our free catering brochure contact Donna or Karen at 823-2100 or contact us by email catering@chick-n-pizza.com subject line: party time

To place an order or view our menu visit our web site www.chick-n-pizza.com