

How to Choose a Caterer

When you are confronted with the challenge of choosing a caterer it is good to have a few recommended caterers in mind that you can trust.

Before you make the initial call to the caterer, a few details must already be laid out.

- How many people do you plan to serve?
- When and where is the occasion going to be located?
- What is the purpose of the event?

At times, the location of the event has a lot to do with what caterer you will decide to use. Most often hotels, museums, and most meeting venues already have a preferred caterer or a list that you could choose from to best suit your needs and desires.

Most caterers will quote you an average price per person based upon the menu you choose. Costs can normally range from \$5.00 per person for a simple box lunch up to \$250 per person including drinks, appetizers, dessert, and wine or champagne with your dinner.

If you plan to accommodate a party of 30, you can expect to pay about \$20 to \$25 per person for food, another \$12 to \$15 for service, and \$5 to \$7 for wine and liquor. As the number of your guests increases, the cost typically decreases.

You may wish to inquire about the style of dress the caterer's employee's use at formal settings. It is a wise to keep in mind that the service provided is a reflection of you and your special day. Also, ask about the decorations or centerpieces that are available, if any, for the occasion.

Finally, check with the guests that are coming if there are any diet restrictions or special requests you need to know about before the event. Some caterers will provide a few vegetarian meals at no extra charge and a few extra regular meals in case of unexpected guests.

Here's some advice when searching for the perfect caterer:

- Make sure the caterer is properly insured, licensed and has all the necessary permits.
- Make sure the caterer's employees are covered by workers' compensation. If something was to go wrong the caterer would be held liable, not you.
- Get references from friends and people in the community. Chances are reputable names will overlap.
- Find a caterer that has been established for a substantial amount of time and whose owner is an active part of the company.
- Tour the facility, especially the kitchen.
- Don't neglect the importance of the quality of the food. Make sure to sample several dishes that you will be serving at your event.
- Always choose someone that you feel comfortable and confident with. Don't neglect enthusiasm. It's important to find someone that will go the extra mile for you.