



How to Avoid the 9 Biggest Catering Blunders

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 exactly what you expect? You leave yourself open to looking bad in front of all your guests. Believe it or not, more people will remember the “cold, tasteless food,” rather than the special event you want them to have in mind. *The Squeeze In would be thrilled to host you at your convenience for a tasting, we'll prepare the foods you'll be serving and you'll know exactly what to expect at your event. Hey, we do this for a living, we get it!*

2. Have a Budget and “Goal” in Mind

We often ask this question, “What does success look like to you?” You know the importance of goal setting in life and it's no different for catered events!

With a good vision of your successful event, you're much more likely to get there. Do you picture a black tie formal event, or something more casual? Sit down service or trays carried by servers?

The second part of the equation is your budget. Knowing in advance how much money you have to spend will save you time in exploring options. There is nothing more frustrating than having a specific meal in mind without the budget to see it through.

3. Base Your Decision on the THREE P's: Product, People, Price

Product: You could go to any big box warehouse store or sandwich shop and do the thing yourself: little quiches, pre-made platters, foods prepared and packed three states away and shipped on pallets. But, then, you'd look like everyone else trying to cut corners. Make your event memorable by standing out, serving fresh foods and meeting a wide variety of tastes.

Price: The old saying: “you get what you pay for” rings truer than ever in catering. Rock bottom pricing could mean bottom of the barrel quality. Get what you pay for and get it fresh. Be sure you're comparing apples to apples. Is clean up included in the price? Is the food cooked fresh or re-heated? What about portion size? What is the quality of the serving ware and utensils? Are dessert and beverages included in the price? What is the gratuity or service charge?

People: What's the service level? Does the caterer deliver in throwaway trays with plastic utensils? Do they even deliver or do you have to pick it up (do you have time for that with everything else you're doing for your event?). Is someone there to monitor your event and be sure it looks presentable at all times?

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

4. Choose Two Entrees Instead of One – or Have a Buffet

Most group meals consist of a number of guests that have special diets and/or desires. Years ago you could order one entrée and be sure everyone was happy. Today, you need to consider adding a second entrée. Perhaps adding a vegetarian option would help to accommodate all of your guests.

Not every event requires two entrees, but it is advisable to find out on the front end. A professional caterer should have options available to please everyone without breaking your budget.

5. Explore all Possible Options

The price of two cars with different options can vary as much as \$5000. Caterings are no different in the fact options can add to the price tag. The opposite can also ring true. If you are willing to forgo 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 full service, appetizers, beer and wine bar or full liquor service.

6. Find Out What “Service” is Included

As mentioned earlier, you get what you pay for. This includes service. Find out exactly what the caterer does as part of your 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 guests serve themselves? 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.

7. Make Sure the Caterer Won’t Run Out of Food

Have you ever been to an event that ran out of food? How did it make the host look? Running out of food is the **biggest** catastrophe for an event. Make sure your caterer provides you a written guarantee they won’t run out of food for the number of people you agree on.

8. Have a Plan for Extra Guests That May Show Up

As good a job you will do 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 pay for the exact number of guests you guarantee. If fewer guests show, you’re stuck paying for food you didn’t use. If extra guests join in, you are more than likely going to run out of food.

Some caterers use a “flexible guarantee.” You give the caterer a guaranteed number of guests, and the caterer guarantees there will be enough food to feed an extra 10%. If extra people show, you pay for them. If they don’t, you’re not on the line for uneaten meals.

If you are afraid fewer guests will show up than expected, you can guarantee a lower number. The 10% leeway will protect you in the event you guessed wrong. Again, the advantage to this is that you minimize your investment in meals that go uneaten.

Make sure you insist on this kind of guarantee. There are many reputable caterers that offer the “flexible guarantee.”

9. Use a Caterer That Guarantees Your Experience

Guarantees are part of doing business for most industries. This protects you from not getting what you expect. You have the right to receive what you expect – and what you pay for.

Look for the caterer that guarantees their product. An example would be 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 risk on your shoulder. You’re giving up valuable dollars. You have every right to expect a guarantee for your important event.

The Squeeze In knows how to cater the right way! We do it fresh, wholesome, AND guaranteed. We’ll work with you on all the details of your event to make sure it all goes smoothly.

Contact Heidi Davis, Squeeze In Catering Manager at (530) 414-1881 or catering@squeezein.com to schedule your next catered event or to come in and taste our food!