

8

Hospitality and catering concepts

Learning objectives

On completion of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Explain various approaches to catering in the events industry
- Understand key issues associated with menu design
- Explain the various phases of catering operations
- Recognise the importance of sustainability in an event catering context
- Understand various approaches to sustainability in an event catering context
- Perform a hazard analysis to ensure food safety
- Provide an overview of approaches and processes associated with the elimination or reduction of food wastage
- Discuss procurement issues and challenges, as well as issues associated with the safe and secure storage of food
- Understand key principles of food and beverage matching.

Food is not only essential for our sustenance and survival but often defines a culture. It is in fact, a central feature of most cultures and lifestyles around the world. Cultural elements that can be expressed through the food that people eat, the way in which it is prepared, and the knowledge, skills and rituals that surround gastronomic traditions, are useful and effective ways of communicating and sustaining a national culture. As a result, food represents a particularly important element at cultural festivals and events.



What cultures that you are familiar with have recognisably different traditions in terms of the food that is eaten and how it is prepared and presented?

Food is a key element in the successful staging of most festivals and events. It can represent an incredibly positive and engaging approach to enhancing and enriching an otherwise standard event. The broad array of food types, food presentations, and approaches to food service, can add colour and appeal, making the event appealing, memorable and significant.



What events have you recently attended in which food has added significantly to the colour, excitement, and impact of the event?

While the importance of event catering varies between events, there are few if any events that can afford to ignore the provision of some form of food or beverage. Even for events of relatively short duration or in which food and beverages are not a key focus, catering will generally need to be considered. In fact, even a two-hour meeting is likely to conclude with some food and/or beverages that facilitate social engagement, discussion, and perhaps the development of contacts. The impact of F&B service can be facilitated by event caterers through sound procurement practices, skilful and well-thought-out menu design, and creative catering practices.

The event catering process

The process of event catering varies depending on whether it is managed in-house or contracted out to external caterers. However, in general, event catering follows a three-phase process that commences with set-up, followed by the food and beverage (F&B) service, and finally, clean-up.

- **Set-up** involves getting the venue ready for F&B service. This may require the transportation of supplies to the venue. The venue may or may not have cooking facilities. If it does, other equipment, such as pots, pans and serving trays may need to be taken and unloaded at the venue, along with tables, chairs, and other furniture. Front of house set-up involves laying out tables and chairs according to a floor plan. For outdoor events, tents are generally divided into two staging areas, one for food service and the other, a temporary kitchen for cooking.

Case study 8.1: Setting up a food stall at a festival

The caterer would need to apply for a permit in order to participate at a festival. Consideration needs to be given on the lead planning time – is it three months or less? Can the caterer physically procure the food and recruit staff? What facilities are nearby? This information is usually obtained beforehand upon which permits are granted. Consider the layout of the site, water supply, proximity to the road and supply of electricity.

- **The service** involves a number of staff which generally includes:
 - Catering co-ordinator
 - Supervisor
 - Waiters
 - Stewards
 - Buffet attendants
 - Bartenders
 - Kitchen manager.
- **Clean-up** involves the cleaning of everything including equipment, and the packing and return of equipment and furniture. Supplies such as glassware, dishes and silver need to be thoroughly washed. All rented supplies need to be washed and returned, and the event venue restored to normal. It's often during clean-up that items can be damaged or lost, so care needs to be taken to avoid these problems.

Key questions

Some key questions to be considered in F&B provision are:

- Will F&B provision be a peripheral activity, or will it be a central feature and perhaps, an important income stream of the event?
- Should F&B be managed in-house, or should it be contracted to an external caterer or caterers?
- Should F&B service be developed in a manner that is consistent with the event theme, or should it be based on a standard F&B approach?
- Will alcohol be provided?
- How many catering staff are required?
- How can food safety be ensured?
- What should the menu look like?

- How can food wastage be eliminated or minimised?
- How will issues associated with COVID-19 be addressed?
- What other sustainability issues should be addressed?

Each of these questions will now be considered.

A central feature or a peripheral activity?

In view of its potential positive impact, a fair degree of planning and creativity must go into any event catering activity. Hence, unless client needs and preferences dictate otherwise, F&B should be treated with the high degree of importance it deserves. At the same time, there are a broad range of catering types that offer varying levels of sophistication. Different stakeholders will expect different levels and types of F&B service. For a mega or major sporting event for example, these catering types may include:

- VIP catering
- Staff catering
- Sponsor catering
- Competitor / athlete catering
- Fixed concessions
 - Fast food
 - Beverages
- Mobile concessions
 - Coffee carts
 - Hamburger / hot dog units
 - Ice-cream carts
- A combination

While VIP catering may involve the highest level of F&B service, hospitality and catering may also be a major part of the package that is offered to sponsors and their guest. On the other hand, competitors or athletes may have quite specific dietary requirements that relate to their sport.



How would you expect staff catering to vary from the catering that is provided to athletes or competitors?

In-house or outsourced?

For event organisers that offer the same or similar event on a regular or on-going basis, there may be a sound argument for managing the catering function in-house, particularly if the appropriate expertise exists within