

THE ESSENTIAL CATERER HIRING GUIDE



CELEBRATE THE GOOD LIFE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Throw your best party ever! With Pamela Keith's professional advice for choosing the right caterer, you're off to a great start!

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TOP TEN TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EVENT

Planning the party of the season is half the fun. Enjoying your party, and receiving the after-party oohs and aahs from your guests, is the rest of the fun! It's your event and you want to be able to express your creativity and personal style in the planning. At the same time, you want to relax and have fun with your event, knowing it's being handled by a caterer who's in tune with you.

Banish your concerns! Here is my quick and easy checklist for finding and hiring the right catering company for you and your event.

1. Before you start the search for the right catering company, get your ideas on paper

- What's the occasion? Decide from the beginning what type of party you want to throw.
- Prepare your guest list.
- Think about your menu "wish list." This will help the caterer to create a better menu for your review, more quickly.
- Decide on a location. A good caterer will help you determine what works and what may not work in terms of the party details and the location.
- Set the date.

2. Source 2 to 3 catering companies

This is a quick trip through the internet, and some emails sent out to friends and associates. Find catering companies in your area. View their websites. Do they look professional? Do they include testimonials? View their Yelp reviews. Ask your friends which caterers they recommend.

3. Set a target budget

Different options mean different price points. A buffet might be less expensive in labor than a waiter-served dinner. Be honest with the caterer about how much you want to spend. Give the caterer a range - low and high. If it's below their minimum, move on to the next company. Catered events can cost anywhere from \$30.00 per person, up into hundreds of dollars per person. Be realistic about what you can get for \$30.00 per person.

4. Ask for two different menu proposals in your price range

Compare what the different companies have provided. One might be priced lower, but is it what you really want?

5. Plan as early as possible

Reputable caterers are usually booked in advance. Make sure you can reserve the date.

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6. Check for licensing and insurance

Is the catering company full licensed and insured? Do they operate out of a licensed, certified professional kitchen?

7. What other services do they offer?

Do they offer a full line of event services like wait staff, party rentals, florals, music, valet, lighting, and take-home gifts?

8. Ask for client references

Request the names of five different clients. Ideally, each reference is for a different style of event. It speaks to the versatility and expertise of the caterer.

9. Check their policies

What is the required deposit and when is it due? What are the cancellation and refund policies, guaranteed guest count minimums and when is payment due for final balance? Have all costs been communicated and presented to you? Are you satisfied with the staff attire?

10. What are the bar policies?

Are they licensed to sell and serve alcohol? Are you allowed to provide your own alcohol and if so, is there a charge?

Finally, trust your instincts. It has to be a working relationship that you can trust. Does the caterer care about you, your guests, and how their performance impacts the entire experience? Have they been professional and responsive in all communications? Are they leading and guiding you with expertise in the event planning? Do they want to build a relationship with you?

Your party is all about you and your guests' experiences. By working with the right catering company, your party will be a bigger success and the sought after invitation of the year!

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