

# Catering 101

We all lead busy lives. For those of us who love to cook, even when our days are booked solid, we can usually whip up a dinner party for three or four couples. But sometimes even Superwoman has to realize her limitations and give herself a break. Would it be a sin to admit you can't always do it all and hire a caterer? If you've never tried it, you may be surprised how wonderful it can be to arrive at your own party cool as a cucumber, confident that everything is done, and finish up the evening looking at your spotless kitchen (that you didn't have to clean).

## Checklist for hiring a caterer

There are a lot of things to consider and discuss with your caterer. Where you hold your event affects which questions apply, but the following checklist is a good place to start.

### What you need to know

- Set a date, time, and location. Stay flexible and you could save money.
- How many will attend?
- Is it a formal sit-down affair, a buffet, hors d'oeuvres, or only the main dish for a party?
- What's your budget?
- What kinds of food do they offer?
- Can they accommodate individual dietary needs (allergies and such)?
- Is tax and gratuity included?
- What are potential extra charges?
- What will be the portion sizes? You don't want to try to feed a football team on super model portions.
- If you're serving buffet style, how do they decide how much food to provide?
- What happens to the leftovers?
- Do you need help to serve and what's the dress code for servers?
- Can you provide your own alcohol? (A real cost saver if it's allowed.)
- How will you handle underage or intoxicated guests?
- Do they handle setup and cleanup?
- How many electrical outlets will they need?
- Do they supply chairs, tables, dishes, linens, and tents? It may be easier to let the caterer arrange for these things but you may see substantial savings renting elsewhere.

Once you know what you want, discuss it with the caterers you are considering. Be sure to ask for references and check them out. When you decide which caterer is the one for you, get everything in writing and read the contract carefully to make sure everything you agreed upon is included.

There are a lot of questions to ask yourself and the caterer, but it's important to cover them all. The answers will mean the difference between an event to remember and a possible disaster.

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To place an order or ask questions, please contact Chef Josh Perkins at [catering@willystreet.coop](mailto:catering@willystreet.coop) or 251-6776 x400. See our menu at [www.willystreet.coop/catering](http://www.willystreet.coop/catering) for ideas of what we can do for you.

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#### Giggles

144 East Main Street  
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### SHARPEN HER KNIVES

If you want to do something wonderful for your mom, have her knives professionally sharpened. She won't believe the difference it makes, and she'll be safer because sharper knives are less likely to slip. A great place to have your knives sharpened is at the new Wisconsin Cutlery & Kitchen Supply. Owner Bill Peterson not only hand sharpens knives, his shop carries a mind-boggling selection of new knives, cooking tools, and gadgets of all sorts, and chefs' supplies. Knives sharpened to perfection are a gift that keep on giving.

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### CLEAN UP THE GARDEN

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