



cater the opportunity

*Foodservice Guide to
Catering Success*



the catering advantage

Catering presents a golden opportunity for foodservice operators aiming to expand their reach and drive business growth. With the return to office life and the rise of convenience-seekers, catering is more than just an add-on service; it presents new, profitable avenues to take advantage of.

Consumers are giving operators more opportunities to cater to their everyday lives, and those operators who do are cashing in on both top-line and bottom-line growth.

Sabert has had a pulse on the catering industry for over 40 years, and we understand the need for an evolved approach to meeting today's market demands. Whether you're a small operation just starting, or a national chain focused on elevating your catering offerings, the current landscape is ripe with opportunities to reimagine your catering strategy.

This guide will explore strategies and insights to help businesses harness the power and potential of catering.

The Menu

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Growing DEMAND



Why Consider Catering?

CAPTURES NEW MARKETS

Catering enables operators to expand beyond their regular customer base and reach new audiences. A positive experience can also lead to word-of-mouth referrals and new business.

PROVIDES ADDITIONAL REVENUE STREAM

Adding catering creates an additional revenue stream beyond regular foodservice operations, helping to stabilize the business against fluctuations in traffic and seasonal changes.

CAN LEAD TO HIGHER PROFIT MARGINS

Catering events often command premium pricing and can be pre-planned, leading to better profit margins compared to daily operations.

MAXIMIZES CURRENT RESOURCES

Operators can leverage current kitchen, staff, and equipment during off-peak hours to meet catering demand.

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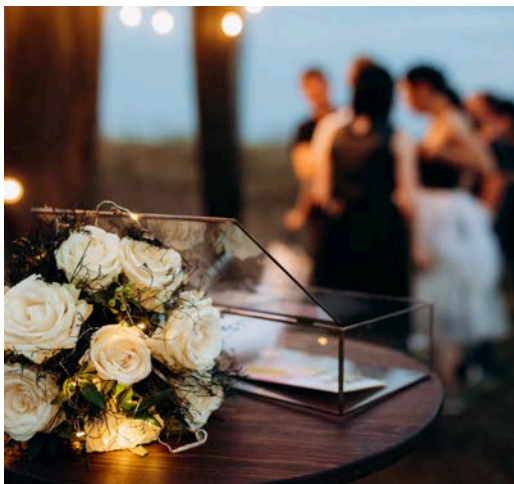
The catering industry is experiencing significant growth, with industry reports predicting the global catering market will **reach \$328 billion by 2025** at a 4.5% CAGR. This expansion is fueled by several factors, including the return to in-person office work, increasing demand for corporate catering, and a growing trend towards convenience in foodservice.

According to ezCater, approximately **75% of operators expect their catering revenue to increase by 20% or more this year.** Given the profitability potential, it's no surprise that many foodservice providers are increasingly focused on expanding their catering services.

Success STRATEGIES

Catering can be a natural and profitable extension of existing foodservice operations. From company parties to weddings to family gatherings, there's consistent demand for catering services across various segments.

Operators can succeed by identifying the right opportunities, understanding what consumers are looking for, and staying ahead of trends to stand out in the market.



FIND YOUR SWEET SPOT



MASTER THE MENU



STAY AHEAD OF TRENDS

FIND YOUR CATERING

Sweet Spot

There is more than one way to inject catering revenue into your current business. One effective approach is to specialize in specific sectors, such as corporate catering or everyday occasions, allowing for tailored services that meet unique client needs.

Types of Catering Occasions

	<i>Occasion</i>	<i>Considerations</i>
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebrations• Dinner Parties• Event Parties• Family-Style Gathering• Holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ease of transport• Ability to serve/eat from• Ease in prep• Presentation• Temperature
BUSINESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board Meetings• Corporate Outings• Happy Hour• Luncheons/ Meal Incentives• Office Parties & Service• Trainings/Seminars• Holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivery/Drop Off Service• Ability to serve from• Presentation• Temperature
SPECIAL EVENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black Tie Events• Ceremonial Events• Charities• Cocktail Parties• Milestones Celebrations• Weddings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upscale Presentation• Service Execution• Innovative Experience• Temperature

**TOTAL
CATERING
MARKET**

63%

B2C/social catering

37%

B2B catering



Technomic, 2024



SOCIAL CATERING

Social celebrations such as parties, community gatherings, and even weeknight dinners present incremental revenue opportunities to offer catering packages aligned with everyday occasions. Multi-serve and family-style programs can bridge the gap between individual takeout meals and large party catering events.

As food prices continue to rise, consumers are looking for ways to save time and money, especially in the kitchen. One trend that's gained momentum is ordering catering to-go items from a fast-casual restaurant and assembling an assortment of meals for the week. This concept is more about simplifying meal planning than overall savings, but it is another way to tap into the social catering market share.

BUSINESS CATERING

Corporate clients represent a significant portion of the catering market, with businesses frequently seeking meal solutions for meetings, conferences, and employee events. Especially as workplaces are looking for ways to keep employees engaged as they return to the office, catering's role can offer an attractive and delicious incentive. Oftentimes, employees are given a short window to break for lunch or a snack, so convenience is key.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events provide the chance to shine with unique, tailored offerings. These occasions, from weddings to galas, demand custom menus that reflect themes, seasons, or client wishes. Innovative approaches like interactive food stations or live cooking can elevate the dining experience. Collaboration with event planners and vendors ensures smooth execution.

Attention to detail is crucial in executing a flawless event, from decor to dish presentation. By excelling in special event catering, businesses can differentiate themselves from competitors and build a reputation for excellence. Satisfied clients are likely to recommend the service to others, leading to more bookings and opportunities.

While the differences are not always clear, to achieve guest satisfaction, **operators need to recognize who the consumers are, their involvement in the dining experience, and how their satisfaction will be measured.** Business consumers primarily value their guest satisfaction, while social consumers primarily value personal satisfaction. By identifying and focusing on target markets and demographics, foodservice operators can tailor their offerings to meet specific needs, thereby expanding their market share and driving sustained growth.

MASTER The menu

The menu is the heart and soul of a catering business. It showcases culinary expertise and entices potential customers.

A well-crafted and appealing menu can be a powerful advertising tool, drawing people to your services now and in the future.



Clear allergen labels: 43%

Personalized item options: 41%

Customizable trays or packages: 40%

Single-serve goodies: 37%

Beverages: 35%

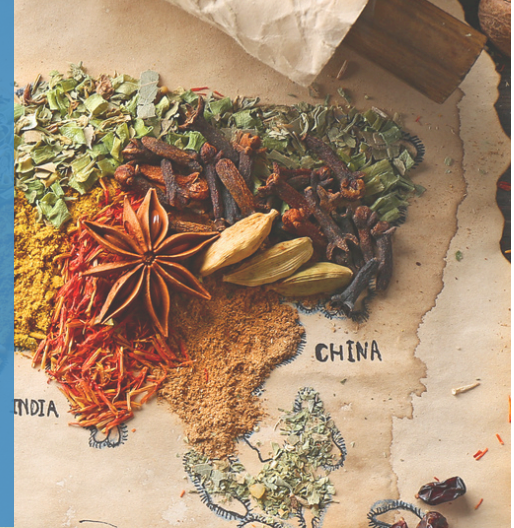
Visuals for each menu item: 32%

Source: ezCater, 2024

**CATERING
MENU OPTIONS
THAT win in the
workplace**



Global Flavors, LOCAL INGREDIENTS



Catering is witnessing an exciting fusion of global cuisines. **International flavors are more prominent than ever**, with caterers incorporating a diverse array of cuisines into their menus. The culinary landscape is vibrant and eclectic, from the fusion of Korean BBQ with Birria tacos to the subtle blending of Moroccan spices in Italian dishes.

However, this global influence is balanced with a respect for authenticity, as caterers strive to honor traditional recipes while adapting them to suit local tastes and dietary preferences. Themed events are particularly relevant to this trend, with menus being crafted to reflect the culture and cuisine of the chosen theme, be it a traditional Indian wedding or a Mexican fiesta.

Consumers also have an increasing interest in supporting their local communities, prompting caterers to focus on seasonal menus that use fresh, local ingredients.



DIETARY Considerations

Another significant trend reshaping the catering industry is the interest in health-conscious and dietary-specific offerings. Modern menus now feature a **wide array of options, including vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and allergen-free choices.**

Catering to diverse dietary preferences ensures customers can enjoy the meal safely while boosting satisfaction.

Clear labeling of ingredients and allergen information is essential, helping consumers make informed choices and safeguard against potential health risks.



Purposeful **REPURPOSING**

Simplicity is key, and **success lies in leveraging existing ingredients on the regular menu** to create recipes for the catering menu. Repurposing ingredients to craft new catering menus enables operators to maximize resources and minimize waste.

By creatively using existing inventory, foodservice operators can develop unique and appealing menu options without incurring additional costs. For example, surplus vegetables can be transformed into gourmet salads or side dishes, while leftover proteins can be used in sandwiches, wraps, or appetizers.

This approach also demonstrates a commitment to sustainability—a key concern for many consumers. By strategically planning and repurposing ingredients, businesses can maintain a consistent flavor profile. However, do not shy away from developing new signature recipes only available through catering services. This menu strategy can encourage customers to want to experience both.

One best practice is to **develop a scalable and flexible menu** that can be easily adapted to different event sizes and accommodate diverse client needs and preferences without sacrificing quality.

Standardizing recipes and portion sizes ensures consistency and simplifies preparation. Consumers love customization and providing customizable menu options can enhance customer satisfaction and cater to a wide range of tastes.

Ultimately, menu flexibility provides a tailored experience and positions the business as versatile and client-focused, essential traits for long-term success.

FLEXIBILITY & Scalability



HOW TO QUALIFY *Catering Menu Items*

Do ingredients exist within the current menu?

Is the recipe easy to make and scale?

How well does the food travel in packaging?

How well does the food hold and maintain integrity before being served?

Does the food present well in packaging?



STAY AHEAD of Catering trends

Foodservice operators must constantly adapt to evolving consumer preferences and market shifts to maintain a competitive edge.

By being trend-aware, caterers can anticipate customer needs, introduce innovative menu items, and enhance service offerings.



CATERING AS THE great connector

Food has the ability to bring people together. When consumers gather over a meal, they are more likely to engage in meaningful conversations and develop deeper connections. Catering elevates this connective power of food by enhancing the overall experience.

Foodservice operators can not only provide delicious fare but also create an environment that encourages interaction, sharing, and discussion, such as family-style meals, shared platters, or interactive food stations.

Focusing on the sensory aspects of food—taste, aroma, and presentation—can forge memorable moments that resonate with guests long after the event ends. Signature dishes, unique flavor combinations, and visually stunning presentations contribute to the event's success.

Eco-Conscious CATERING



Sustainability is now table stakes for any caterer.

The Sustainable Restaurant Association found that **65% of customers are more likely to choose a catering service that prioritizes sustainability**, with 80% willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly options. According to Eventbrite, 84% of event planners are taking steps to make their events more sustainable. This trend presents an opportunity for catering businesses to differentiate themselves and attract environmentally conscious clients.

43%
of orderers prefer sustainable food packaging, and 37% of workplaces have made it a company requirement.

ezCater, 2024

Embracing sustainable catering practices can involve careful menu planning to avoid overproduction, utilizing eco-friendly packaging materials such as recyclable or compostable alternatives, incorporating organic and local ingredients, and adopting waste reduction strategies like donating excess food to local food banks.

As sustainability becomes increasingly important to consumers and businesses alike, adopting these practices is not just an ethical choice but also a smart business decision that can lead to increased customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and potentially higher-value business catering orders.

Eco-friendly packaging is a cue for consumers who value both food quality and sustainability. Operators who align with consumer's green preferences can gain a competitive advantage.

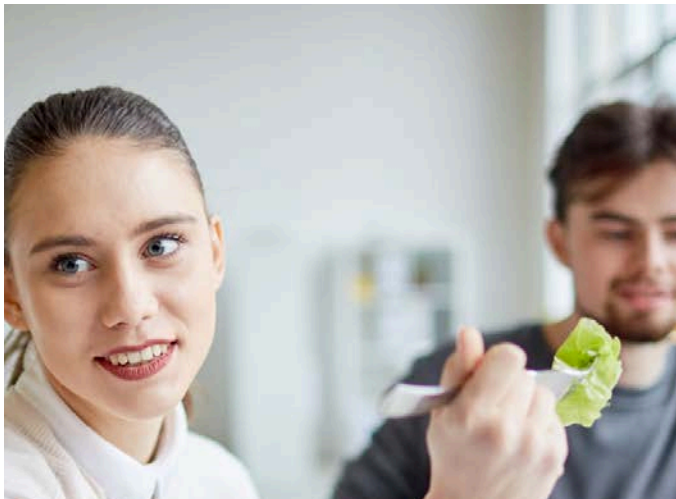




RECIPE FOR *Tech innovation*

Technological innovations are revolutionizing the catering industry, enhancing operational efficiency and scalability. Digital platforms now offer menu planning and ordering systems, making it a breeze for clients to personalize menus and place orders when it's convenient for them. Delivery tracking and mobile ordering are a growing priority. Customers want the assurance of real-time tracking information to monitor progress and ensure that their catering order arrives on time. Notifications and updates can keep both clients and staff informed, ensuring smooth communication and coordination and increasing satisfaction.

In addition to the customer experience, catering management software helps operators monitor inventory and manage staffing schedules. By making strategic technology investments, operators can simplify customers' lives with on-demand, tech-smart services.



EMPLOYEE *well-being*

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Employees are heading back to the office. Resume Builder surveyed **1,000 corporate decision-makers**, and **90 percent estimate employees will return to work in person by the end of 2024**. Employers are turning to catered food as a strategy to boost employee morale.

Catered meals can accommodate various dietary needs and preferences, ensuring that all employees have access to healthy options. This inclusivity not only supports individual health goals but also demonstrates that the company values both the physical and mental well-being of its employees.

Healthy and nutritious foods can also improve focus and energy levels, making employees more effective in their roles while avoiding the afternoon slump that can hinder productivity.



The Art of PRESENTATION

“People eat with their eyes first. It has to look a certain way in order to bring people in.”

Giada De Laurentiis

In a world of social media and influencers, caterers are not just chefs; they are culinary artists, employing creative presentation techniques to turn each dish into a visual masterpiece. Interactive food stations and build-your-own bars add an element of engagement and customization to events.

Thematic catering takes this a notch higher, with every element of the food and drink experience designed to complement the event's theme, be it a roaring twenties cocktail party or a rustic countryside wedding.

The aesthetics of food play a pivotal role in the overall dining experience, with caterers using color, texture, and composition to create dishes that are as pleasing to the eye as they are to the palate.

Layer by Layer



To take your plating to the next level, consider incorporating vertical elements and layering techniques.

- Stack ingredients or use tall, narrow serving vessels
- Create layers of flavors and textures within a single dish
- Utilize garnishes and sauces to add height and visual interest



PACKAGING TO *perfection*

From buffet-style foil pans and uninspiring food lining the table, catering has evolved significantly.

Whether serving hot meals, cold dishes, or convenient snacks, caterers aim to replicate the quality and presentation of restaurant dining. Operators now recognize that food packaging and presentation **are crucial** to creating a positive experience.

Thanks to advancements in food packaging innovation, caterers can now offer a wider variety of menu items without compromising on quality, safety, and aesthetic appeal. **Proper food packaging solutions have expanded the possibilities for catering services, allowing them to meet diverse client needs and expectations.**

DEVELOPING THE RIGHT *packaging strategy*

When approaching a food packaging strategy, there are a number of factors to consider.

Durability

Fitness for Use

Presentation

Sustainability

Safe & Secure

Customization

Versatility

Convenience

(Culinary) Love **AT FIRST SIGHT**

The moment a guest lays eyes on the food, they begin forming opinions about its quality and taste.

Attractive and functional packaging can enhance the visual presentation of the dishes, making them look more appetizing and sophisticated.

For instance, clear containers showcase vibrant colors and textures, helping the menu items pop and appeal to the clients' senses. Additionally, the use of eco-friendly or premium materials can further elevate the perceived value and quality of the catering service.

Investing in the right solutions is an essential strategy for enhancing the client's dining experience in an industry where first impressions matter.



POWER UP *your brand*



Food packaging offers **unique branding opportunities** to help caterers stand out. Customized packaging can feature a business's logo, colors, and design elements to reinforce brand identity and visual consistency.

Well-branded packaging can also serve as a marketing tool, spreading awareness from the kitchen to the various events.

Reputation is everything

The success of a catering operation hinges on its reputation. It's not just about delivering consistent quality and service. To truly stand out, caterers must deploy effective marketing strategies. From capitalizing on social media to leveraging testimonials and reviews, there are numerous proven techniques that can help caterers stand out from the competition and drive business growth.

Social Media



Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn offer unique opportunities to showcase your culinary creations and events.

Actively using social media can help you build a strong online presence, attract new clients, and elevate your reputation.

Client Testimonials



Positive testimonials and reviews are a powerful way to attract potential clients. Encourage satisfied clients to leave reviews on popular platforms like Google, Yelp, and social media. Showcase testimonials on your website, in marketing materials, and across your social media channels to build credibility.

Networking



Event planners and office managers often serve as gatekeepers to lucrative opportunities, from weddings to corporate events. Begin by identifying key event planners in your area and reaching out to introduce yourself and your services. Attend industry events, trade shows, and local networking gatherings to enhance relationships.



Delivering safe, fresh, and delicious food is a top catering priority. Maintaining the correct temperature of food is essential for both safety and quality. Proper food packaging is designed to keep hot foods hot, and cold foods cold, ensuring that dishes arrive at their destination in the best possible condition.

Clients expect their meals to be served at the right temperature, and failing to meet this expectation can lead to negative reviews.

Packaging such as corrugated paperboard can effectively and efficiently insulate the meal, allowing the transport of a variety of foods without losing their integrity or heat.

Another key component of any catering experience is ensuring that food is protected during transit. No one wants a messy platter where food has spilled or leaked out. Durable packaging features, such as secure locking lids and sturdy construction, help to safely transport food for drop-off catering, take-out/delivery, and food service retail.



Compartmented catering solutions are a win-win as they can easily separate dishes, preventing any food migration and helping to maintain dietary specifications.



SEEING *green*

 Sabert
making food not just green

Integrating sustainable packaging into foodservice catering operations requires careful consideration of materials, end-of-life, and fitness for use. Operators should prioritize renewable, recyclable, or compostable solutions like pulp, certified paper products, recyclable plastics, or solutions that incorporate post-consumer recycled content. However, caterers need to evaluate eco-friendly solutions to ensure they maintain food integrity, safety, and temperature during transport.

Providers should also consider local waste management infrastructure to ensure that compostable or recyclable items can actually be processed appropriately.

By thoughtfully building a diverse packaging portfolio that addresses these factors, catering operations can significantly reduce their environmental footprint while maintaining high standards of food quality and presentation.

A MATTER OF *convenience*



Convenience and functionality are critical factors in enhancing customer satisfaction.

Clients and their guests appreciate packaging that is easy to handle and open. Ergonomically designed containers with features like ample grip space keep food displays intact and make the dining experience more enjoyable and hassle-free.

Catering events often involve large groups of people, making it essential for the packaging to facilitate smooth and efficient service. By prioritizing user-friendly packaging solutions, caterers can reduce the stress and effort required from clients, leading to a more positive overall experience.



YOU COMPLETE *me*

Offering a complete catering program that includes the right disposable items adds value and will contribute positively to customer satisfaction. The ability to offer a variety of different tabletop and serving utensil items helps catering programs align with more occasion types and adds a layer of customization.

Consumers love customization, and having more ways to offer customization will lead to more frequent catering orders.



There are multiple ways to incorporate catering revenue into your existing business model. Sabert's packaging solutions can help you diversify your catering offerings, expand your reach, and boost your bottom line.

We invite you to explore our innovative and sustainable solutions and discover how Sabert's packaging can help you capitalize on catering opportunities.

For packaging options, or for more information, visit www.sabert.com or call 1(800) 722-3781.