

CATERING MENU TEMPLATE AND PLANNING TIPS



Event Menu Planner Template

Plan, Organize, and Present Your Menus Like a Pro

Event Name: _____

Date: _____

Client Name: _____

Number of Guests: _____

1. Event Overview

- Type of Event: _____
- Theme or Style: _____
- Guest Count: Adults ____ | Children ____ | Special Diets ____
- Venue/Setup Notes: _____

2. Menu Planning by Course

Appetizers

Dish Name	Ingredients / Notes	Portions Needed	Special Diet Options	Prep Notes
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Main Course

Dish Name	Protein / Style	Side Pairings	Portions Needed	Prep Notes
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Side Dishes

Side Dish	Description	Serving Style (Buffet/Plated)	Notes
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Desserts

Dessert	Flavors	Portions Needed	Dietary Options	Notes
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Beverages

Drink	Alcoholic/Non-Alcoholic	Serving Size	Quantity Needed	Notes
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3. Dietary & Allergen Tracking

- Vegetarian Options: _____
- Vegan Options: _____
- Gluten-Free Options: _____
- Dairy-Free Options: _____
- Nut-Free Options: _____

4. Portion & Cost Estimator

Course	Portions per Guest	Total Portions Needed	Estimated Cost per Portion	Total Cost
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5. Shopping & Prep Timeline

1 Week Before Event: _____

3 Days Before Event: _____

Day of Event: _____

6. Final Notes

- Special Client Requests: _____
- Setup Notes (buffet stations, plated dinner, food trucks, etc.): _____
- Staffing Notes (servers, bartenders, cleanup crew): _____

🌟 **Pro Tip for Subscribers:** Duplicate this template in Google Docs for each new event. Keep a folder of completed planners so you can track costs, popular dishes, and client preferences over time.

✅ 30 Tips & Resources to Add to the Event Menu Planner Template

Menu Planning Tips

1. Always include at least **one vegetarian entrée** per event.
2. Build menus around **3–4 key ingredients** to simplify prep and reduce costs.

3. Offer **one signature dish** to differentiate your catering style.
4. Pair each main course with **2 complementary side dishes**.
5. Plan desserts that can be **prepped ahead** and served quickly.

Portion & Cost Control

6. Estimate **1.5 servings per guest** for appetizers (people eat more when mingling).
7. For buffets, plan **10–15% more portions** than the guest count to avoid shortages.
8. Use a **cost-per-plate formula**: $(\text{Ingredient Cost} + \text{Labor} + \text{Overhead}) \div \text{Guests}$.
9. Buy in bulk when possible, but avoid over-purchasing perishables.
10. Pre-portion proteins (like chicken or steak) to control both cost and consistency.

Event Execution

11. Create a **“tasting menu” version** for client consultations.
12. Choose dishes that **travel and hold well** if off-site.
13. Label buffet items clearly (especially dietary options).
14. Use **color-coded serving utensils** for allergen-sensitive dishes.
15. Always have a **backup menu option** in case of supply shortages.

Dietary & Allergen Management

16. Ask for **allergen info at booking**, not the week of the event.
17. Always prepare **at least one gluten-free dessert option**.
18. Make separate serving trays for vegan dishes to avoid cross-contamination.
19. Keep a **“dietary substitution list”** (e.g., almond milk for dairy, chickpeas for meat).

20. Have small cards with **allergen icons** (nuts, dairy, gluten, shellfish) to place near dishes.

Presentation & Upselling

21. Use **seasonal ingredients** to showcase freshness and justify premium pricing.
22. Offer **add-ons like late-night snacks, coffee bars, or candy tables** to upsell.
23. Design menu options that **fit the event theme** (rustic BBQ, elegant plated dinner, etc.).
24. Present plated dishes with a **3-color balance rule** (protein, starch, vegetable).
25. Always include a **signature drink or mocktail** as part of the menu package.

Business Growth Resources

26. Add a link to **free online cost calculators** (food cost %, plate pricing).
 27. Link to **FDA food safety guidelines** or your state's catering regulations.
 28. Share a **sample catering proposal** (mini version of what you'd upsell as a paid resource).
 29. Include a **basic staff scheduling template** (Google Docs or Sheets).
 30. Provide a link to a **social media content calendar template** for caterers.
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