

MEAL PLANNING FOR EVENTS

TO BEGIN

- Type of program, purpose, desired ambiance
- Number of attendees
- Type of food service
- Decor and entertainment

NEGOTIATING

- Consider how you want to be charged (signed guarantee, attendees or quantities consumed).
- Determine percentage above guarantees the facility will supply and incremental price, if any, for latecomers.
- Negotiate beverages by the gallon and bottle.
- Discuss the minimum number of servers and bartenders.
- Ask about other charges (ice, corkage, setup, taxes & gratuities).
- Be sure all agreements and details, including payment schedule, are detailed in the contract.

DURING THE EVENT

Assign staff to handle the following tasks on-site.

- Coordinate attendance and consumption revisions with catering department.
- Inventory control
- Distribute seating lists, place cards, menus and programs.

BUDGETING

Consider the following costs.

- Room rental fees
- Food and beverage expenses
- Service/labor costs, including taxes, gratuities and union-mandated minimums
- Entertainment costs
- Equipment rental
- Awards, gifts and giveaways
- Decor

QUESTIONS FOR THE CATERER

- Customized menus
- What size portions are served?
- Can you handle special dietary requirements?
- How much time should be allowed for the meal?
- What is the waiter-to-attendee ratio?
- What percentage is overset?
- What is sales tax? Gratuity? Is gratuity taxed?
- What time can planners get in to set up?

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AFTER THE PROGRAM

- Distribute tips (if not included on catering bill or if service warrants extra).
- Review billing, accounting and check out procedures with facility staff.

CHECK HISTORY

Review records from previous programs.

- Projected vs. actual attendance
- Menus, including alternatives for those with special dietary restrictions
- Quantity and type of drinks served for meals and receptions
- Budget, including guarantee, deposit and gratuity amounts
- Room sizes and setups