

Choosing The Right Commercial Catering Equipment For Your Restaurant

Professional catering is not the same as throwing big parties, or even the same as running a restaurant. You must think about several points, serving staff, health department regulations, and logistics being among the most important. The last thing you want to think about is whether you have the right equipment. The second to last thing you don't want is to run out of anything, a common risk when you start catering before you're ready.

What kind of catering do you do?

Onsite catering, where you serve only one location, is very different from mobile catering. Indoor and outdoor catering have different needs, wedding caterers will do things differently from large event caterers, and high-class parties are really different from luaus and pig roasts.

* Your first consideration should be refrigeration, especially with mobile and outdoor events. You must be able to keep all your food at a proper, measurable temperature. If you are only catering at your restaurant or another fixed location, this isn't a big problem. For anything else, you need to have proper refrigeration installed in your catering van. For fixed-location catering, you may need to install additional refrigeration to hold pre-prepped foods.

* Your second consideration should be beverages, the most likely item to run out.

Do you have enough ice dispensers?

Are your ice and beverage dispensers mobile, if they need to be?

What is your backup plan?

Do you need additional refrigeration for your ice?

How about hot beverages like coffee, tea, or hot chocolate - do you have enough machines to make adequate amounts?

* If you are mobile, you need sanitary storage for dirty serving ware and you also need to have plenty of extras on hand in case of breakages or other problems. For a fixed-location caterer, this isn't a problem.

* Buffet and sit-down catering also have different requirements, and in some ways buffet catering is harder on the restaurant. With sit-downs, food levels and preparation is invisible to the guests.

When you're running a buffet, it's harder to predict what you'll run low on and how much space you need around the buffet. Be prepared to purchase additional buffet equipment if you're going to go this route, especially pans to hold pre-prepped foods for your steam table.

* Depending on what you're serving, you may need additional equipment. For instance, pizza is always better if cooked in an oven designed just for pizza, and fried chicken cooked in a pressure deep fryer is faster to prepare and superior to chicken that's been pan-fried. Baked goods will require a bakery cabinet to allow proper rising. Itemize your needs before creating your budget.

* In addition to all this, you'll need to think about all the incidental items: trolley tables, serving dishes, plates and silverware, furniture and accessories, tablecloths, napkins, and any decorative items.

Many of these items can be purchased easily and quickly at restaurant and party supply stores. But you should consider purchasing or leasing your larger equipment items online. The savings can be significant, and you'll be able to find everything you require there.

About the Author

Derek Rogers is a freelance writer who represents a number of UK businesses. For catering equipment, he recommends NTS, one of the UK's leading suppliers of [commercial catering equipment](#).

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