

Food and Beverage Tips

Catering managers will not establish firm menu prices until six months out. But you can still get them to negotiate 12 months out by agreeing on a percentage of increase for the future. If the prices drop in the interim, you can cover yourself by stipulating in the contract that you will pay whichever is less, the current costs or the ceiling price you established.

If the menu prices are too high for your budget, you can work with the catering manager to create a meal that fits your budget.

You can negotiate a fixed percentage off the printed menu. You can negotiate to have the previous year's prices apply to your meeting. You can attach the current banquet menus to the contract and negotiate that the prices won't increase by more than a certain percentage.

You may be able to choose the same menu as another in-house group and save the hotel time and money by not having to create an entirely different preparation. If you do this, schedule your dinner to start just before the other group's dinner so that your function won't be affected if the kitchen runs out of food.

The first step in food and beverage negotiations, is to gather all of your facts and figures. Using your post-convention reports to calculate how much your meeting is worth to the hotel in terms of food and beverage revenue. Remember to include revenues from affiliated groups, hospitality suites, individual room service, exhibit floor concessions, and on-site restaurants and lounges. Meeting managers are under pressure to submit realistic budgets and hotels look at the meetings food and beverage as a significant revenue center.

The payroll costs can account for as much as one-third of a meal function's total price. Hotels are reducing the number of servers at group events. So be sure to negotiate service ratios and spell them out in your contract. For a sit-down or plated meal, you need one waiter for every 25 guests at breakfast and one for every 20 at lunch and dinner. For a buffet meal, the preferred ratio is one server to 40 guests. For breakfast you need one server to 30 for lunch and dinner. You should specify that there will be no extra labor or service charges for these ratios. One cocktail server is recommended for each 50 attendees, one wine steward for every five tables where wine service accompanies dinner. Should ask for the service charges, labor charges, and bartenders fees to be waived. Or service charge on the total dollar amount spent on the function. For large hosted bars you should not be required to pay a bartender fee. All the specifics that you negotiate with the catering manager should be spelled out in your contract. If you don't get it in writing it does not exist.

FORMALS FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICE

1 GALLON OF COFFEE	=20 CUPS
1 QUART JUICE	= 5 cups
1 Bottle of wine/champagne	=5 glasses
1 KEG OF BEER	=7 cases

FOOD SERVING TIPS

- One hour afternoon reception estimate 8 pieces of food per person
- Evening reception estimate 10-12 pieces of food per person
- One hour bar estimate 2 drinks per person, standard weekday reception estimate one drink for each additional hour.
- Holiday parties/evening social events estimate 2.5 drinks per person for the first hour, 1.5 for each additional hour.

Food Consumption Tips

8-10 pieces per person with plates

6-8 pieces per person with napkins.

TIPS FOR MANAGING BEVERAGE BREAKS

1. It is more economical to purchase coffee by the gallon and pastries by the dozen..
2. Avoid per-person or per-drink charges,
3. Liquor consumption by the bottle is more economical than per drink even at the hotels high bottle cost
4. One bartender will be able serve 100 attendees
5. When you request cocktail or wine service, negotiate the labor fees in advance. One cocktail server can serve 50 attendees, one wine steward can serve five table where wine service accompanies dinner.
6. Select the liquor brands for bar stock and the wine choices, if you select house brands you can save lots of money.
7. Verify the beginning and ending bar inventories with the beverage manager
8. When you use ticket for your attendees to attend a event, ask the hotel to return the stub to you for verification.

BEVERAGE SERVICE

1. Check the liquor laws in the state
2. Check the hotel policies
3. Check the local regulation
4. Ask about the hotel corkage charge
5. Ask for the liquor requisitions list from the facility used for your event, this will provide you with a history on liquor consumption

Beverage Service Tips:

- 90 percent of a.m. attendees drink hot beverages.
- 60 percent of p.m. attendees drink cold beverages.
- Outdoor breaks increase cold drink consumption by 10 percent and decrease hot drink consumption by 10 percent.
- Coffee can be purchased by the gallon or half-gallon.
- There are 20 cups per gallon.
- Soft drinks are always ordered on a consumption basis pay for what is consumed
- Ask the hotel provide signage specifying that the break is for your group.

Beverage Breaks: Serve food items that can be ordered on a consumption basis. This would include food like fruit, cookies, bags of peanuts, granola bars, and candy bars.

Beverage Set Up:

- One beverage station for every 75 to 100 guests.
- Separate soft drink stations for groups of 100 or more.
- Place beverage break away from meeting room doors to prevent bottleneaking
- In large break areas, place beverage stations farthest from the meeting room doors
- Placing coffee cups at the end of the table closest to the meeting room doors, followed by regular coffee, decaf, tea bags, hot water for tea, spoons, and a receptacle for used tea bags. Identify hot beverage with a sign
- Condiments should be placed at the end of the station.
- Soft drink service glasses should be place at the end of the table closest to the meeting room doors, followed by ice, soft drinks
- Store extra soft drinks and glasses under the station for replenishment

Soda Inventory Control:

- Take a inventory at the time of setup and do it with a banquet person present.
- Get the banquet person to initial the count
- Ask the hotel staff to preventing other groups from taking your break items. If another group breaks early, request a banquet staff person to guard your break.
- Do not sign a bill until after the break.
- Inventory as soon as the break
- Take a inventory with a banquet person present and have them sign your final count
- Take the inventory is done and then leave the area, the sodas are no longer your responsibility.

Selecting a Liquor Plan: The per person, unlimited consumption plan is for a agreed-upon time frame. The hotel provides all the liquor and you pay one price regardless of actual consumption. This is the most expensive way to pay for a hosted bar. When you purchase liquor on an unlimited consumption basis, the hotel sets a price and they take into consider the worst-case scenario. You will end up spending more than if you had purchased it by the bottle or by the drink.

Per Drink Plan: The hotel set a set price, each alcoholic drink. After the event, the hotel measures what was actually consumed and bills you for all of those drinks at the

Per Bottle Plan: The hotel establishes the cost of each full bottle of liquor, and you pay for every bottle that's opened.. There will be half full at the end of the evening. Send these bottles to your hospitality suites

Inventory Bars: Take an inventory when the bars are set up in the function Count the number of bottles of each type of liquor and make sure that all of the seals on the bottles are uncracked. Write down the figures on an inventory sheet and ask the bartender to initial it.

Instruction for the bartenders:

- Not to discard any empty liquor or wine bottles.
- Do not allow empties bottle to be used as water bottles, they can be confused with the actual liquor you're paying for
- Do not allow bartender to serve any liquor or wine by the bottle.
- Do not allow them to restock bar without your permission

Liquor Consumption will be less when:

- the event is held on the evening of the arrival day.
- the event is before 5 p.m.
- there are hors d'oeuvres served.
- the event is after 8 p.m.
- there are activities in the reception area.
- the event is on the recreation day and follows the conclusion of the activities by two or more hours.
- there is a cash bar.
- the group is predominately female.

Average per person consumption increase when:

- the event is on the final night of the meeting.
- the event is scheduled between 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.
- the event is outdoors in a warm weather
- the event is held during any major sports event where there is a large video screen in use.
- when dry salted snacks are served
- there is a hosted bar.
- the group is predominantly male.

Controlling Liquor Pour: Do not allow bartenders to free pour. Require bartenders to use one ounce jiggers

TIPS TO CONTROL COST FOR MEETINGS. There are systems that will allow meeting managers to control cost when planning for meetings and conventions.

1. Tickets all events so that you can provide accurate counts for food functions. This will also let you know how many to expect in the classrooms so that you can set your rooms precisely.
2. Put contracts out for bids for expositions companies, audio visuals, catering. This will allow you to compare companies on prices and compels the companies to be competitive
3. Negotiate trade offs. You can trade your mailing labels for another organization mailing labels. Think about what you can trade to save money.
4. Develop a speaker reimbursement policy and write contracts with the speakers which spells out the speaker fees and what expenses will be covered, define what type of airfare is allowed, how many nights in the hotel will be paid, and if a per diem is provide.
5. Use local talent for entertainment can save money. Local talent is usually less expensive and you do not have to pay travel expenses.
6. Food and Beverage Menu planning. Have the hotel develop a menu that will fix your budget. Tell the hotel how much you want to spend per person and find out what they can provide for that amount of money. You do not have to select from the hotel preprinted menus.

LOCAL AND STATE SALES TAXES

1. Know in advance and budget accordingly what items are affected by local and state sales taxes.
2. Insure that service charge (gratuities) are levied on food and beverage only.

ROOM SETUP TIPS

- U-Shaped seating you need 26 square feet per person
- Conference seating you need 22 square feet per person
- Classroom seating you need 16 square feet per person
- Theater seating you need 8.6 square feet per person

NEGOTIATING COMPLIMENTARY ITEMS: If your group is hosting a large, ask the hotel to provide complimentary hors d'oeuvres, a glass of wine, a dessert, or perhaps an up grade of one of your courses. You can negotiate a continental breakfast for your board meeting; a reception or dinner for the executive board; decorative items such as props, votive candles for centerpieces, ice carvings, or themed backdrops. You can ask for one complimentary meal for every 50 served. If you don't ask for complimentary items you will not get them.

HOTEL GUARANTEE HEAD COUNT: Many hotels are requiring a 72 hours guarantee for your meals. You can still negotiate a 48 hour guarantee.

Tips on Guarantees: If attendees will be attending a late night reception, they may not make it to breakfast the next morning if it is scheduled early in the morning. You can reduce your meal guarantee given to the hotel. Lunches that are scheduled late in the afternoon at resort destination, may have a decrease attendees because attendees will decide to play golf or some other resort activity.

Determine how you will be charged for the functions..

- A. Signed guarantee
- B. Tickets collected
- C. Quantities Consumed
- D. Agree on a final cutoff date for guarantee
- E. Gratuities vary at facilities...some site will negotiate the gratuity

TYPES OF BANQUET SERVICE

1. **FRENCH SERVICE:** Waiter bring each course in succession, placing each item individually on the diner's plate. French service involves the use of elegant servicing pieces and the food is serviced on heated plates.
2. **RUSSIAN SERVICE:** Diners help themselves to food from trays held by waiters
3. **PLATE SERVICE:** Waiter bring the complete assembled plates straight from the kitchen, containing the entire entree and serves it to the guest
4. **Butler Service:** similar to Russian the difference is the guest help themselves from the tray the server is holding.
5. **English Service:** Food is brought to the table on a tray and the tray is presented to the host, who serves it or allows the server to serve it.
6. **American Service:** food is plated in the kitchen and placed before the guest.

HOTEL OVERSET: The majority of hotels overset meals by 5 percent. This means the property will set up seating for 5 percent more than the guaranteed number of guests.

It is possible to negotiate a higher oversight percentage if you have a good piece of business

LABOR COSTS: payroll costs Account for one-third of a meal function's total price. It is advisable to not to order items that require a lot of time preparing. Stay away from items that are stuffed, wrapped in puff pastry, or baked in parchment because they take more time. Stay away from elaborate vegetable garnishes and sauces painted on plates.

FOOD THAT STAY FRESH: Order foods that will remain moist and flavorful such as chicken, filet mignon, medallions of beef, roasted potatoes, rice, green beans, and steamed carrots.

Schedule: Take into consideration what your attendees will be doing immediately before and after the meal. If they're coming from a function at which heavy, filling hors d'oeuvres were served, the meal should be lighter. If they're coming from a liquor-only reception, the meal should be heavier.

Regional Food: The facility may have meal specialty that high the local food dishes. Ask the facility for the menu for these specialties.

Beverage Breaks: You can offer coffee, tea and soft drinks, lemonade, iced tea, or bottled water.

Plate Size: The size of the plates used on a buffet table also will impact the attendees' consumption. Salad plates are commonly used for receptions. When your budget is small you should eliminate plates and use napkins only.

Distractions: Consumption drops when attendees are distracted by music, entertainment, dancing, or slide shows. If they're on the dance floor they are less likely to concentrate on the food.

Table and chair: Making chairs and tables available will encourage people to sit and eat rather than mix and mingle. This will result in increased consumption.

Controlling Reception:

Time of Event: If the reception is scheduled for 5 p.m. or 6 p.m., attendees assume that it is intended to take the place of dinner. If reception is scheduled for 7 p.m. or 8 p.m., the attendees will consider it to be dinner and they will eat more.

Tips for ordering:

Dry snacks order 1 ounce per person

Anchor foods like cheese and vegetables order enough for 1/3 of attendees

Craving station order enough for 1/2 to 2/3 of attendees

Passed hors d'oeuvres 1 of each for all attendees

Dessert and coffee order enough for 1/3 to 1/2 of attendees

When budget is an issue a reception can replace a dinner for your event

Buffets: The buffet provides easy access to food, and increasing consumption.

Billing Surprises: Minimize your final bill by communicating your replenishment requirements. Reorder for refreshment should be only upon approval of authorized signature. You should inventory sodas prior to each break and at the end of each break.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE EVENTS: You should only agree to pay for lost profit when you cancel a meal function. If you are forced to cancel a meal function you should not agree to pay the entire cost of the canceled meals. The facility will not have the expense of ordering the food or hiring staff to serve the meal. The only thing you should agree to reimburse the hotel for is the profit they expected from the function. The average percentage of profit earned on food events is 35%.

CANCELLATION OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE: Should cancellation occur by the organization for food and beverage events the organization agrees to pay the hotel 35% of the total revenue anticipated for the food and beverage event canceled. This food and beverage cancellation clause covers events canceled prior to the guarantee count.

