



HOME OF YANKEE BBQ

TIPS TO FINDING THE RIGHT CATERER FOR YOUR SPECIAL EVENT

1. Sample The Food Before The Event Whenever Possible

You would be surprised how many people call up a caterer and book an event without tasting the food. This is critical. What happens if the food is not what you expect? You leave yourself open to looking bad in front of all your guests.

2. Look for Recommendations

Ask your friends and family who they have been happy with in the past. Check a potential candidate's website. Are there reviews or recommendation letters posted? Other people's experiences and feedback can go a long way to giving you an idea of what you can expect.

3. Have A Budget And "Goal" In Mind

You know the importance of setting goals. Goals are a focal point to rally your family around. The vision of attaining these goals is what keeps everyone motivated and on course. A catered event is no different.

Have a vision of the end result. Do you picture a Polynesian Luau with all of the trimmings and a Tiki Bar, or would you prefer to see your guests casually enjoying a traditional backyard BBQ with all the fun?

The second part of the equation is your budget. Knowing in advance how much money you have to spend will save you time in exploring options. There is nothing more frustrating than having a specific meal in mind without the budget to see it through.

4. Don't Base Your Decision On Price Alone

The old saying, "You get what you pay for" rings truer today than ever. Competition is such that one caterer cannot afford to over-price their service. Most caterers should be within 5% - 10% of each other for similar menus and levels of service. You'll find someone offering a rock bottom price is cutting corners somewhere. You need to make sure and compare apples to apples. Is clean up included in the price? Is the food cooked fresh or reheated? Are the side dishes prepared from scratch or from a bucket? What about portion size? What is the quality of the serving ware and utensils? What is the gratuity or service charge? What happens if the caterer runs out of food? Do you expect homemade recipes or product from a foodservice distributor? Ribs for example come in many different cuts, sizes and levels of quality. From Domestic Pork Babybacks to Danish Pork Babybacks, Pork Spare Ribs or St Louis Style, then there are Beef Ribs. How are they cooked or prepared? Dry Rubbed and Smoked or Steamed. The list goes on and on. You see all caterers are not created equally. You owe it to yourself to make sure you know what you are paying for. This will help you avoid any unpleasant surprises.

5. Find Out What "Service" Is Included

As mentioned earlier, you get what you pay for. This includes service. Find out exactly what the caterer does as part of his service. Will they stay till the end and clean the entire area or just through the meal? Who is responsible for the trash? Does the caterer plan on setting up and serving the meal, or will the guest serve themselves? You need to be aware of what you are getting for your money. This allows you to receive the service you expect and prevents any unexpected surprises for you before, during or after your event.

6. Explore All Possible "Options"

The price of two cars with different options can vary as much as \$5000. Caterings are no different in the fact options can add to the price tag. The opposite can also ring true. If you are willing to forgo certain items or extras, you might be able to negotiate a lower price. Make sure you ask about the "base model" catering if you are on a tight budget. Most caterers will work with you. If you have a larger budget be sure to ask about the extras. You might have enough to add a full service bar, passed hors d'oeuvres, themed table decorations etc.

7. Look for a Legitimate Operation.

How many years of experience does the caterer have? Ask for proof. What is the size of their operation? How many events does that caterer take on for one day? Who will they be sending to run your event? Professionals or just "kids" Are they insured? Will they have the proper equipment?

Do they probe into your expectations? Do they ask logistical questions? This is a sign that the caterer been around the block and knows that clarity is key for the success of all involved.

Especially if the caterer will be traveling to your location, let them know where they will be setting up. What facilities will be available to them? Is there coverage from the elements if it is an outside event? Will they be working with other companies who they might need to coordinate with? For example: other food suppliers (including family favorites), rental companies, event planners, ice delivery, decorators, DJ/MC's, beverage suppliers etc.

Remember: Information = Preparation and preparation increases the chances for a successful event that will go off without a hitch.