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Marketing on the World Wide Web is

no doubt the wave of the future, if not the present. By establishing an expansive presence on the Web, you are sure to increase the success and profitability of your event. ■

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**Checklist** Food & Beverage Planning


# Come and Get It!


BY DANA LYNN BERNSTEIN


The meeting planning puzzle has many pieces—each bringing something different to the entire meeting picture. But that puzzle would not be complete without meticulous food and beverage planning. Your meeting might already have the traditional pieces in place, but the dining experience can add so much more. Here is a checklist to help you as you put together your menu:


 Decide what type of service is needed: buffet, different types of sit-down, or others.


 Request one water pitcher for every two people. Usually the servers will place one pitcher on each table, but there could be six or more people at combined tables, most of whom would need to reach over other attendees to quench their thirsts if there aren't enough pitchers.

 Request at least two or three vegetarian choices for each lunch and dinner function. Decide before the meeting what they will be.


 Ask the staff to provide lemon and lime wedges at each place setting. They will usually do this free of charge.


 Negotiate obtaining newspapers for breakfast functions.


 Indicate at what point the food needs to be preset before each function, in case the sessions end early. Make sure that salads do not wilt (a Caesar salad does not hold up if it is preset).


 Ask the facility to provide props and centerpieces for each food function. There may be a charge depending on the decoration—ask what exists in house at no charge. If you know that another group has nice floral centerpieces, you can ask to borrow them after they are finished; you can also offer to pay half the cost.


 Request that all buffets be dual sided so lines flow smoothly and there is a minimal wait for the food. A facility usually plans for 100 people per buffet line; if the setup is dual sided, the line moves more quickly. Make sure your room setup is conducive to the flow you need.

 Have meat cut into lean, small portions, and determine how it should be cooked.


 Request that signs be placed in front of all dishes at buffets. For all sit-down meals, a printed menu should be at each seat. You should approve the menu page that is set out. Ask if there is a charge.

 Tell the waiter to ask attendees for their drink preferences (sodas, coffee, wine, beer, etc.) if there is not a beverage selection.


 Ask for a beverage count for sodas, etc., at the beginning and the end of every function. Keep a tally of what is consumed.


 Indicate if the function is to be "non-alcoholic." If it is, ask the waiters to inform you if one of the attendees requests beer or wine with lunch—you can always make an allowance

if necessary. Be aware of the costs—if your lunch includes coffee service, make sure the waiters let you know if the attendee prefers another beverage and what the charge is.

 If there is an alcohol bar, number the bottles and get a count before and after the reception. This way, you'll be aware of how much is consumed, and how much you should pay for. Also, ask if the bottles can be "carried and married" (two, half bottles of the same alcoholic beverage can be poured into one).

 Request dual overlay cloth for all food function rounds—it is a fancier look. Find out what colors are on hand for the cloths. Also, ask if you can have fancy napkin folds.

 For coffee functions, request low-fat milk, regular milk, and cream.

 The planner should approve all banquet checks each day.

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