

# FUNCTION CATERING

## Introduction:

Function catering may be described as the service of food and beverages at a specific time and place, to a given number of people, to an agreed menu and price. This form of catering may also be described as banqueting, although the term function catering is generally regarded as the wider terminology as not all functions may be called banquets. Examples of function catering include social functions, such as wedding buffets and dinner dances, business function such as conference meetings and working lunches, and those functions that are organized for both social and business reasons such as outdoor catering at a show or exhibition.

The variety of function events ranges from providing a bar in a reception area where delegates for a conference are able to assemble before their meeting, to large formal banquets of over 100 where 6 - 8 course of meals are served. Function catering is found in the commercial and non-commercial sectors of the catering industry, and in both of these sectors the nature of function facilities available will vary considerably from one establishment to another. There are those types of functions that are not easily assigned to either of the above sectors and may therefore be described as belonging to the semi-commercial sector. In this sector of the function market the majority of events are organized on a non-profit basis. The function season is more noticeable in certain types of establishments, particularly those organizations whose sole purpose is function catering, and those that offer purpose built facilities such as hotels. In other establishments such as public houses, department store restaurants, industrial cafeterias, etc., the function season is not so evident, as existing dining facilities are usually adapted for function events rather than specific facilities being available; however, even these types of operations are still likely to experience peak periods during the year when the function facilities are in greater demand than at other times. This characteristic fluctuating of demand associated with function catering has implications for such establishments basic policy decisions, and these are discussed below.

## Basic policies - financial, marketing and catering:

Policy decisions relating to function catering are largely determined by a number of characteristics inherent in this type of catering. The first is the season. Usually, the hotel banqueting season extends from October to May, a peak business trading period of eight months. The second is the concentration of events during these months, which are mainly at weekends, particularly Friday and Saturday events, during which time an operation must seek to maximize its sales potential. Third, a considerable amount of information is available to the caterer in advance of the organized functions; this includes the number of guests to be catered for and for which meal periods, for example lunch or dinner; their time of arrival and departure; the menu they are to be given; and the price being paid per guest. This large amount of pre-event information enables the organization of functions to be pre-planned to considerable detail, including the profit levels to be achieved. This in turn aids in the control of functions as the standards set before the event may be used as yardsticks against which the performance of a function may be measured.

The basic policies relating to function catering are usually quite specific to this form of catering. If function trade is an establishment's only source of business then the policies laid down will only relate to this type of trade. In other establishments, however, such as hotels, the function facilities may be one of a number of catering outlets, although even in these organizations the banqueting department will often have policy decisions relating specifically to this department.

### INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL CONVENTION LUNCH BOX MENU

Field Mushroom & Pesto Tart with Tomato & Asparagus Salsa

Grilled Salmon Bois Boudran  
Grilled Mediterranean Vegetables Salad  
Minted Cous Cous

Roll & Butter  
Mandarin Gateau with Apricot Coulis

### INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS ANNUAL CONVENTION VEGETARIAN LUNCH BOX MENU

Roast Asparagus, Leek and Plum Tomato Salad with Balsamic Dressing

Field Mushroom and Pesto Tart with Mesculum Salad  
Grilled Mediterranean Vegetable Salad  
Minted Cous Cous

Roll & Butter  
Mandarin gateau with Apricot Coulis

## Financial Considerations:

Function catering is most commonly associated with the commercially orientated sector of the catering industry and this is reflected in the financial policies of function catering establishments, which are mainly profit-oriented. Such aspects as the gross profit levels to be achieved would be contained in the financial policies. Generally speaking the gross profit percentage achieved in function catering is higher than that achieved by other catering outlets, such as coffee shops or haute cuisine restaurants. In function catering a gross profit percentage of between 65% and 75% may be required depending on the type of establishment, the average spending power of customers, the standard of food and beverage and the level of service offered, etc.

The financial policy will also determine the pricing structures for the different types of functions offered by the establishment. For example, the operation may not make a separate charge for the hire of the function room or banqueting suite, but include this in a set price per head for the meal. Other establishments may have a set price per guest and, in addition, make a separate charge for the hire of the room. Where a guest wishes to hire a function room and does not require any other services of the establishment, the client would be charged for the room hire; if, however, a customer requests a bar to be available in the room, or purchases some other service from the organization, the policy decision may be not to charge for the hire of the room. A flexible pricing policy is advocated in order to maintain a competitive edge and to obtain a high level of business throughout the year.

## Marketing Considerations:

The marketing policy of a function establishment will determine the different markets at which the facilities may be aimed, and how best to market any special characteristics of the establishment. By marketing an establishment's function facilities the other services offered by the same establishment may also benefit from an increase in trade. An organization offering function facilities may either be catering to a resident or a non resident market. The resident market would consist of those guests who are staying at the establishment, such as at a hotel for a conference and are usually on demi-pension or en pension terms. The non-resident market would consist of those guests coming to the establishment for a specific function, for example a wedding reception but not requiring overnight accommodation.

A marketing plan (that is, the interpretation of the marketing policy into a plan of action for a specific period, for example one year, five years) for a large city hotel could include such headings as:

1. Finance - this would give the targets of turnover and profits set for the period.
2. Productivity - this would set the targets of productivity and performance by the sales staff.
3. Promotions
  - a) General - this may state to increase business in all established areas by, for example, 10%. The plan also details how this is to be achieved.

- b) Special - this may state the specific forms of promotion to be undertaken this period, for example aimed at the local ethnic community, aimed at local / national sporting clubs, etc.
  - c) Facilities - this may be aimed at marketing certain facilities which are new, or have been recently refurbished or which in the past period have had a low occupancy record.
  - d) Development - this may be the development and promotion of a new package plan, for example a new package for business meeting rooms together with special rate meals; or bargain break weekends for guests attending a function in the hotel over a weekend period.
4. Research - this could be the collection, analysis and evaluation of data relevant to competitors' business.

**A function 'folder' often colour-coded for easy reference by the client, would most likely be composed of the following:**

1. An employee type folder with the company's logo, title and address clearly displayed.
2. A personal letter from the function/banqueting manager to the client.
3. A list of function rooms together with details of the numbers that could be accommodated for different types of functions, for example a formal lunch or dinner, a dinner dance, a buffet type reception, a theatre-style conference / meeting, etc.
4. Plans of the room with basic dimensions, position of power points, telephone points, ceiling heights, etc.
5. Sample menus for lunch, dinner, buffets, meetings etc.
6. Details of audio-visual equipment available for meetings, for example lecterns, microphones, overhead projectors, screens, etc.
7. Details of accommodation facilities available, often at special rates for guests attending a function / meeting.
8. Coloured postcards of the hotel / function rooms.
9. Relevant simple maps and parking arrangements where necessary.

**An example of the general terms and conditions required by hotels for clients using hotels function facilities**

**ABC HOTELS LTD**  
**General terms & conditions: functions**

1. If the hotel is prevented from performing its obligations in respect of any booking for any cause outside of its control, it shall be entitled to cancel any such booking without liability but, if so requested, the hotel will use reasonable endeavors to transfer the booking to another of the hotel establishments satisfactory to the client.
2. In the event of cancellation of any booking by a client, the client shall pay to the hotel a cancellation fee for each day (or part of a day) and for each suite or room in respect of which the booking was made, calculated at the room hire rate appertaining at the time of cancellation, provided always that the amount of cancellation fees payable may be waived or reduced by the hotel in respect of the same period or part of a period, such waiver of the amount of any reduction to be at the sole discretion of the hotel.
3. The hotel reserves the right to require payment of a deposit at any time prior to the holding of a function, the amount of which will be determined by the hotel. Should the customer fail to pay such deposit within seven days of being requested to do so, the hotel may treat the booking as having been cancelled by the client.
4. Final numbers attending functions should be notified to the function office 24 hours prior to the commencement of a function. This number will be the minimum figure charged.
5. Accounts for all functions must be paid within 7 days of the receipt of the account.
6. The hotel accepts no responsibility for loss or damage to any item of equipment, furniture, stock or any other property brought on to the premises by the client or persons authorized by the client.
7. The hotel shall make no alteration of any sort to the accommodation and shall, at his own expense, make good any and all damage arising in any way from this hiring whether damage is to the suite or room or to the hotel, however such damage be caused and by whosoever it is caused.
8. The client shall be responsible for the orderly conduct of the function and shall ensure that nothing shall be done which will constitute a breach of the law or in any way cause a nuisance or be an infringement of or occasion or render possible a forfeiture or endorsement of the license for the sale of wine, beer, spirits or for music and dancing. In particular, the client shall ensure that there is no illegal betting or gaming.
9. The hotel reserves the right to approve any person engaged by the client to perform any duty of any sort or to entertain at the function, such approval not to be unreasonably withheld.
10. No food, wine, beer or spirits may be brought into the hotel by the customer or the customer's guests for consumption on the premises, unless the prior consent of the hotel has been obtained and, if the hotel so requires, an additional charge paid.
11. All meetings must terminate within 30 minutes of the finishing time stipulated in any booking.
12. The correspondence between the hotel and client shall be taken as confirmation of the customer's agreement with and acceptance of the foregoing terms and conditions. An exchange of letters constitutes a contract.

**Catering Considerations**

Based on the guidelines laid down in the financial and marketing policies, the different types of menus to be offered by a function organization would be contained in the establishment's catering policy. Suggested function menus and packages are often compiled by establishments which can be sent to prospective clients. These set menus will usually achieve a pre-determined gross profit percentage and therefore any alterations to such menus, such as to accommodate specific customer requirements, must be carefully considered so as to ensure the required gross profit percentage is maintained. There are some few more factors which are directly related to the catering considerations and those are

**1. Type of Customer**

Guests attending a function are usually there for a specific occasion - a businessman luncheon, a dinner dance, a wedding reception or whatever. In this respect function guests differ from customers frequenting other catering facilities, such as restaurants, who may not be eating out for a specific occasion but perhaps to only fulfil some more basic need. The average spending power of customers at a function will depend mainly on the nature of the event. The cost of the function per head will have been decided upon in advance by the function organizer in conjunction with the caterer. At some functions this cost may not only include the meal itself, but also pre-dinner drinks, after dinner liqueurs, coffees, etc.; examples of functions organized on this basis include conference lunches and dinners and wedding receptions.

**2. Type of Product / Menu**

The type of menu offered by an establishment specializing in function catering will depend on a number of factors including the market level being aimed at and the pricing structure adopted. In some establishments a relatively narrow market may be catered for, while in others a wide range of menus may be offered for different levels of markets. In the industrial sector for example where large firms employ several thousand employees, a wide variety of function menus may be offered at the senior management level; for the majority of employees less varied 3 & 4 course set menus may be available at cheaper prices.

**3. Food Production Styles**

The conventional method of food production is still the most widely used method in function catering; it is employed in the small establishments catering for fifty guests and the larger operations catering for over 500. Where the conventional method of food production is used the kitchen is divided

into parties each producing specific items for the menu. If plated food service is being used the guests' meals are pre plated in the kitchen and served directly to the table in the dining area. The silver service method is however more widely used in function catering; for this style of service the kitchen is required to arrange portions of food, usually of 10 or 12, on to platters and dishes which may then be taken to the guests' tables and served onto their plates. Each party is therefore responsible for preparing certain food items which are assembled at the servery area before being taken by the food service staff. From a management point of view, however, the cook-chill and sous vide methods of food production must be more tightly controlled and supervised as a threat of possible bacteria contamination is more real than with other food production styles; also, due to large numbers of guests usually being catered for at functions, it could be the source of a potentially large food poisoning outbreak. Special attention must therefore be given to the temperature of chilled food (between 0°C to 3°C) and to the general standards of hygiene in the production area.

#### 4. Food Service Styles

There are essentially 2 styles of food service used at functions. The first is the buffet arrangement where the guests will usually serve themselves from a display of food and beverage items. The second is the more formal 'Sit-Down' function where guests are served at their tables by food service staff; this latter style may be further subdivided into those functions where plated meals are served and those at which silver service is used.

#### 5. Organization and Staffing

Staffing organization in function catering is governed by a number of factors which include the size of the establishment and hence the number of staff permanently employed, and the numbers to be catered for at any one function which may involve additional staff being employed. In an establishment dealing specifically with function catering, or a large hotel with a banqueting department, a function manager would be employed who is responsible for the organization of functions. In smaller establishments such as a hotel of 30 bedrooms offering a small private room for functions, the owner or proprietor of the hotel may work in conjunction with the food and beverage manager/assistant manager or the restaurant manager to organize function events.

## ABC HOTELS LTD

### Function Prospectus

Name Surrey Gundog Association Function Type Dinner Dance  
 Organizer Tammy Davis No. Expected 350  
 Address 244, Wiltshire Street, Milford, Surrey, United Kingdom Starting Time 19.30hrs. Serving Time 20.00hrs.  
 Deposit Required £1000  
 Tel. No. Milford 121234 Date Deposit Paid 24/08/2004  
 Taken By Bernard Smith Total Price Per Cover £40 VAT Ex VAT  
 Date of Function 05/10/2004 VAT 15%  
 Room Ballroom Date of Enquiry 05/07/2004

Menu @		Charge		Charge
<u>Consommé Double en Tasse</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Hire of Room	<u>N/C</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Menu Printing	<u>£40.00</u>
<u>Paillettes Dorées</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Flowers	<u>35 X £6</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Table Plan & Cards	<u>N/C</u>
<u>Supreme de Turbotin Walewska</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Candelabra	<u>N/C</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Board & Easel	<u>—</u>
<u>Fillet de Boeuf en Croûte</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Toastmaster	<u>—</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Lectern	<u>—</u>
<u>Sauce Perigourdine</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Spotlights	<u>N/C</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Projector	<u>—</u>
<u>Pommes Parisienne</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Bands	<u>£500</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Photographer	<u>N/C</u>
<u>Haricot Verte au Beurre</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Band Supper	<u>8 X £10</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Changing Rooms	<u>N/C</u>
<u>Ananas Frais au Kirsch</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tape	<u>—</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> VAT	<u>15%</u>
<u>Çafé</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Microphone	<u>N/C</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Invoice No.	<u>A001256</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cabaret	<u>£570</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Piano	<u>N/C</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cake	<u>—</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Platform	<u>N/C</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Stand & Knife	<u>—</u>		

#### SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Coffee  
 Tea All beverages and tobacco to be paid cash by individual guests.  
 Wines  
 Liqueurs  
 Cigarettes  
 Cigars

Extension of Licence to 01.00hrs.

No top table

35 X 10 covers

4 vegetarians, table no. and guests' name to be notified

Accounts Instruction

Guest (2)  
 General Manager  
 Asst. Manager  
 F & B Manager  
 Purchasing Manager  
 Control Officer  
 Executive Chef  
 Front Office  
 Head Porter

This is your confirmation & contract for your forthcoming function.  
 A guaranteed number of guests for meals must be given not later than 48 hours prior to the function.

**PAYMENT IS DUE WITHIN 14 DAYS AFTER THE FUNCTION**

Please sign and return one copy

(Authorized Signature)

## Control & Performance Measurement

As with other types of catering outlet, the size and ownership of the establishment in which catering events are held will determine to what extent basic policy decisions exist. Generally speaking, the larger the operation, or if it is a purpose-built function establishment, the more likely it is that policy decisions relating to this form of catering will be contained in a formalized document. Where such policies do exist, the performance of the function facilities can be measured against the standards contained in them.

The booking of a function event may begin in very much the same way as a client may book a restaurant table. The host or organizer contacts the catering facility and ascertains whether a certain number of guests can be accommodated at the establishment on a particular day at a specified time. After this initial enquiry, however, the similarity between these two types of catering outlets becomes less evident. By its very nature a function event involves considerably more detailed and critical organization than does a restaurant meal. It involves the development of a series of logical procedures and timings which must be precisely executed if the function is to be a success. Taking a simple example, if a menu item is not available in a restaurant for a particular meal period, the guest may choose an alternative dish; at a function, however, where all the different aspects of the event have been organized specifically for that occasion, it is not a simple matter to make last minute alternative arrangements, particularly because of the large numbers usually involved. The strict planning and organization for function catering must therefore encompass all aspects of the operation and this begins with the initial customer enquiry.

## **OUTDOOR CATERING**

Outdoor catering is a specialized form of function catering and may be organized in several ways. It may either be offered by hotel and restaurants as an additional service to the operation's main function or it may be the organization's raison d'être. In the first instance a hotel or restaurant may organize such events as luncheons, wedding receptions, afternoon teas at a local show, etc. The type of product and service offered would be limited to the knowledge and capabilities of the in-house catering team and the equipment and staff available. The potential pitfalls of this type of outdoor catering are numerous in terms of staff limitations, transportation and correct handling of the food and beverages, additional equipment needed and correct costings for the total event and finally the overall control of the operation away from the establishment's everyday management and control procedures. For these reasons this type of outdoor catering is usually limited to the smaller or more local events which do not overstretch a hotel or restaurant's resources and capabilities.

Secondly, outdoor catering may be organized by specialist organizations who operate by far the largest number of outdoor catering events in this sector of the catering industry. Some of these professional outdoor caterers are individuals who may only have a refrigerated van and employ one or two extra staff for specific events; the range of products and services they can offer are limited. At the other end of the scale, large specialist outdoor caterers such as Ring & Brymer may cater for thousands of customers over several days at national events, for example, Wimbledon, Royal Ascot and the Royal Horticulture Show. The organization and management needed by these companies are very similar to a banqueting department in a large hotel or a conference center and in addition would have to take into account a number of factors specific to outdoor catering.

- The location of the event, whether a semi-permanent site is being used where limited services are already in situ in terms of water, sanitation, heating and lighting, or whether a marquee is to be erected and these essential services brought in.
- The transportation of the food and beverage items, the distances involved and whether heated or chilled trucks are needed.
- The additional hygiene problems associated with food being transported and held at the correct temperatures and the added worry of possible power failures on a temporary site; the losses and pilferage that can occur at any stage during transportation and the setting up and the difficulties of ensuring back up facilities and supplies and staffing miles away from the organization's main base.

The additional cost involved in supplying outdoor food and beverage facilities are reflected in the cost of outdoor events which by their very nature must be higher than supplying the same or similar product in an organization's banqueting hall or restaurant. Further, the additional management time and control needed must also be included in the costings and is critical to the success of an outdoor catering event.

### **CARRIAGES**

#### SWINGING 50s HOGMANAY PARTY

#### **MENU**

Potted Hock with toasted plain bread

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Oeuf Sur la Plat

Baked Eggs cooked with Smoked haddock and Arbroath Smokie Cream topped with Hollandaise Sauce

○○○○

Haggis with Neeps and Tattie Bridie finished with Whisky and Chive Sauce

○○○○

Braised stuffed Rump of Orkney Beef finished with Claret Sauce, steamed Leek Dumpling and braised Cabbage balls

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Strawberry Milk Shake Bavoise with candied Fruit Tartlet and Marshmallow Sauce finished with Candy Floss

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Coffee and Gob Stoppers

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Dress - Lounge Suits or 50s

Cocktails at 7.30 pm

£65.00 - non residential

£130.00 - residential

The price indicated above is for one guest and includes Swinging 50s Dinner Dance, overnight accommodation (sharing a twin or double room) and full Scottish breakfast on New Year's Day 1997 and VAT.

**DECORATED BUFFET**

**MENU ARAN**

Chilled and Dressed Lobster Mayonnaise  
Caledonian Smoked Salmon and Cream Cheese  
Baskets of Seasonal Melon filled with fresh Berries  
Barbary Duck and Foie Gras Terrine stuffed with preserved Walnuts  
❄️❄️  
Whole decorated Scottish Salmon served with Lemon Mayonnaise and poached Asparagus  
Honey Roasted and decorated Gammon served with Cranberries and Pineapple Chutney  
Roast Brown of Angus Beef carved on and off the bone served with Horseradish Mousse  
Galantine of Orange glazed Turkey stuffed with Vegetables and Sage  
❄️❄️  
Celeriac Swiss Cheese and Apple Salad  
Cherry Tomato and Pinenut Salad dressed with Basil  
Cucumber and Dill Salad marinated in Yoghurt and Garlic  
Potato, Ham and Shallot Salad with Chives  
Asparagus and young Sweetcorn Salad dressed with Olive Oil  
Radichio Salad  
Cos Lettuce Salad  
Crisp Iceberg  
Oak Leaf and Lollo Rosso Salad  
❄️❄️  
Steamed new Potato with Mint  
Buttered baby Barrelled Vegetables  
Scottish Salmon Kouloubiac served with Lobster Butter Sauce  
Roast Sirloin of Angus Beef served with Traditional Roast Gravy  
❄️❄️  
Caledonian Hotel Grand Chocolate Torte  
Traditional Croquem Bouche with Caramel and Dipped Fruits  
Fresh and preserved Fruits flavoured with Alcohol and Syru  
Selection of Pompadour Charlottes and Pastries  
Specially Selected French and Local Scottish Cheese  
displayed with Fresh Fruit and Home Baked Bread  
❄️❄️  
Coffee  
❄️-----❄️

**£48.00**

This menu is available for 50 or more guests  
a supplement may be required for less.

One ice carving is also displayed on this buffet.  
The purchase of additional ice carvings are available on request.

This menu is a full traditional decorated display buffet  
with all reasonable refinements.

## NEW YEAR'S DAY BRUNCH

Wake up! - the party is not over, join us for a dazzling Jazz Brunch. We will keep you entertained with our Grad Finale to the celebrations.

### Menu

Selected Juices Served on Ice  
Honeydew Melon with Fresh Figs  
Half Ogen Melon with Strawberries  
Selection of Fresh Fruit and Berries  
Preserved and Poached Fruit Compotes

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Oak Smoked Salmon and Chicken  
Honey Cured Duck Breast  
Smoked and Preserved Scottish Fish and Meats

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From the Baker  
Fruit, Plain and Coconut Scones, Pancakes,  
Danish Pastries, Croissants and Batch Rolls  
A Selection of Continental Breads

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Scrambled Eggs and Smoked Salmon  
Lyonnais Potatoes  
Sautéed Black Pudding with apple  
Grilled Tomatoes, Hash Browns  
Bubble & Squeak

Grilled Lamb Chops, Grilled Bacon  
Caledonian Bangers & Mash  
Pan Fried Minute Steak

Cabbie-claw of Sole  
Haggis with Neeps and Tatties  
Steak and Mushroom Pie

Selection of Vegetables and Potatoes

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Sticky Toffee Pudding with Caramel Sauce  
Fresh Fruit Salad, Caledonian Cloutie Dumpling  
Whisky Trifle, Selection of Sorbets and Ice Creams

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Scottish & Continental Cheese

£30.00 per guest  
under 14 - £18.00  
1100 am - 3.0 pm  
Live Jaz