

## How to find best caterer?

Anyone who knows me can tell you that I love throwing parties. And not just small intimate gatherings either. I'm talking big time affairs with lots of food, plenty of booze and full on decorations. In short, I go all out when it comes to entertaining.

Let me give you an idea of what I'm talking about. A few years ago, I was in charge of planning a luncheon for the people I worked with at a local CBS television affiliate. It just happened the date of luncheon fell during the same week the network was airing a brand new Elvis Presley mini-series. As soon as I made the connection, the ideas started flowing like water from the faucet.

Thinking back to all those Elvis movies I watched as a kid, I chose the theme from my favorite of all time, Blue Hawaii. After choosing the theme, I worked out the menu. I went ahead and ordered two large pineapple baked hams, a few roasted chickens and a half a dozen pineapples. This was a good start to our feast.

When it came to decorations, I went crazy buying dozens of cheap grass skirts, covering all the tables in green and yellow linens. I even hand crafted a Paper Mache pig which I had turning over a fake spit. That was awesome.

But here's where things went sour, at least for me. In the two hours before the luncheon, I was crazy busy. I decorated the outdoor patio and moved everything into place.

And that's not all. Because everything was fresh from the oven, I ended up having to slice the ham and carve the chickens myself. Not to mention, preparing the pineapples and mixing together the salads. And to make things worse, I forgot ice. I didn't even get to eat because I didn't have time.

While I got high marks for the party, I decided that when the next luncheon comes around things would be done differently. I would put the stress of the party on someone else. That's when I started looking into catering services.

As it turns out, I could have hired someone to do all the work for about the same amount of money that I spent doing it myself. While I did like the planning and preparing aspects, it was just way too much to do while trying to do while completing my other daily job tasks.

But there are a few things to consider when choosing a catering professional.

You've got to plan ahead and plan early. Based on my experience, it's best to start the ball rolling a few months early (if possible).

Next, decide on the details. You'll want to have all the details for your event worked out. You'll need to the date, time, location and number of expected guests.

If you don't have a regular caterer, it's a good idea to ask around. Trust me, your friends and co-workers have been to enough catered events to know the difference between getting the job done and doing it right.

Doing a little research is always a good idea. That means find out how long your potential caterer has been in business, what kind of affairs they have catered in the past. And if you are a real detective, you'll want to check with the local health department. They'll have records of any problems or health violations filed against the business. Trust me, that's really good information these days.

Once you decide on a caterer, make sure you set up a face to face meeting where you can discuss menus, get to know the caterer and try some samples. And remember to seal your deal with a contract that includes every imaginable cost. At this point, you'll likely have to put down a 50% deposit. That's pretty standard.

In the weeks before your event, stay in contact with your caterer. They need to stay informed of any changes with the venue, the guest list or the theme.

And in the days before the event, plan a meeting with your caterer to go over final details including their arrival times and set up times. It's also a good idea of finalize your guest list with any additions or subtractions.

Although these tips sound pretty basic, they can help insure that you enjoy your next party as much as your guests. Take care.

## About the Author

Eddie Cadena is an Emmy and Telly Award winning writer working for Netricks, Inc., a Fresno-based web design firm. His interests include Fresno [catering](#) and entertaining. He is a frequent guest at the most exclusive Fresno [banquets](#), but still thinks his mom is the world's best chef.

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