

Catering Services

- In-house Catering
- Outsourced Catering
- Sustainable Suppliers
- Food Wastage

Issues

- Understanding your firms catering needs and how best to manage the supply of catering services.
- We only have a finite supply of food available to us so it is important to know that we are using sustainable food supplies as much as possible.
- Food supplies can be transported to us as close as the local market down the road or they can be flown or shipped in from interstate or overseas. It is important to be aware of the carbon emissions involved in the transport of your food supplies.
- How is your food packaged when received?
- Food wastage is a global issue, especially within the corporate sector. Are you doing everything you can to minimise your food wastage and therefore managing your catering spend better?

Considerations

1. Identify Requirement

- We will always have a need to provide catering for our staff and clients, be it internally or outsourced. Do you have a centralised and controlled method of ordering your catering or is this decentralised within your firm?
- Identify what type of catering do you need to provide - basic amenities, morning teas, sandwiches, fine dining, buffet style, cocktail food?
- Do you have the appropriate kitchen facilities on-site to prepare and cook your own food using internal chefs / cooks or do you have to rely on outsourced providers for some or all of your catering needs?
- Do you rely on various suppliers or do you have national / international contracts as part of your procurement management?

2. Plan

- Like many areas within an office environment, if not managed properly catering can easily be a source of excessive expenditure. It is best to appoint a key person(s) to oversee and coordinate the catering procurement - this may be a Catering Manager or somebody within your catering area but could also be a Receptionist or a central secretary / administrative role. If you have many different people ordering their own catering then this is very inefficient in controlling cost, quality and quantity.
- Set up simple grounds rules for your catering procurement. Centralise your ordering if possible. Set realistic budgets for catering expenditure for each team or department. Ensure meetings are not held unnecessarily in the early morning or at lunch times so that you can manage the expectation of providing staff with a 'free feed'. Ask staff to bring their own food if necessary.

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- Make sure you are providing the right quality of food to match the occasion. Your morning tea for staff should be basic catering (which will maintain costs) whereby if you are trying to impress clients then consider more appropriate food quality and cost.
- If planning an event then allow for a slight drop off in numbers so that you don't over cater.
- Consider 'donating' any left over food to organisations such as SecondBite. SecondBite help identify opportunities of collecting surplus fresh food and produce and facilitate its safe and timely collection and distribution to agencies and people in need.

3. Select

- Review your current suppliers and be prepared to ask them questions about their food supply chain - then be prepared to make decisions based on the following criteria;
 - is it locally sourced? This reduces carbon emissions and supports local businesses
 - is it seasonal? Many foods are now produced all year round which means the use of heating and cooling methods which increases carbon emissions
 - is the food sustainably caught? For example certain fish stocks are now very low globally. Try and use certified fishing practices such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
 - is the food GM free? All organic foods are GM free.
 - how is the food packaged when supplied? Is the packaging bio-degradable
- Consider purchasing the following;
 - Fair Trade goods
 - Organic food or food from good farm management practices
 - Free range poultry and eggs

4. Manage

- Ask your suppliers questions and make decisions based on their answers - don't be afraid to challenge or change your suppliers if you feel this is necessary.
- Manage your food waste proactively - the best way to manage waste is to avoid having any in the first place
- Small steps - change can take time so be patient
- Communicate and promote any changes to staff and highlight the reasons why the changes were made. Seek any feedback from them also.

Further Information

<http://www.sustainablefood.com/promote/index.php?page=audit>

<http://www.fta.org.au/>

<http://www.secondbite.org/>