



KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE

SO, YOU'RE ABOUT TO DECIDE ON YOUR CATERING OPTIONS, AND YOU'RE BAMBOOZLED BY THE RANGE OF MENU ITEMS ON OFFER. THE TEAM AT THE DIFFERENCE CATERING EXPLAIN YOUR OPTIONS AND HELP YOU WORK OUT WHAT WILL BE BEST TO SERVE TO YOUR GUESTS.

It's worth remembering these points before you get started:

- Provide a variety of foods to please all appetites and tastes.
- Check with guests regards food intolerances – do you need gluten free options?
- Try to provide a mix of hot and cold food.
- How long is your function and what time of day is it?
- Is your event formal or informal?

And remember – you are not in the kitchen at your own event, so preparation is a key ingredient.

The amount of food you require per person depends on how long your guests will be milling before the main meal, whether there is indeed a main meal to follow, and whether that main meal is light or more full. As a general guide allow 3-4 canapés per person for pre-dinner drinks of an hour's duration or four pieces of finger food per person per hour for a cocktail or standing event.

A popular option, if you do not have the time or space for a sit down meal, is to have a standing or grazing menu consisting of a combination of the following styles eaten over the duration. This allows guests to mingle, encouraging a fun and fluid atmosphere.

If you're planning a seated meal, stay tuned next issue when we'll walk you through your options.

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FINGER FOOD VS CANAPE

FINGER FOOD IS DESIGNED TO BE JUST THAT – EATEN WITH YOUR FINGERS. YOUR GUESTS WON'T NEED A KNIFE, FORK, SPOON OR CHOPSTICKS.

Finger foods often include miniature pies and burgers, spring rolls, petit, sandwiches, little pizzas or skewers, arancini, tarts etc.

They're generally fairly filling items, often around two to three bites, ensuring your guests feel like they've eaten rather than just nibbled.

If dinner and dessert aren't being served, you could include ice cream cones, small pastries, cookies or other sweet items to be served in the last 45 minutes of your event. This also helps to signal the winding down of your event – as does turning the lights up, music off and opening the front door.

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CANAPÉS

CANAPÉS ARE USUALLY MORE REFINED THAN FINGER FOODS, SMALLER AND MORE FORMAL.

Traditionally served on a toasted bread base, there are a huge range of bases that can be substituted – rice cracker, rosti, cucumber rounds or wonton crisp.

However, it is a single delicate bite where you can let your imagination run free. Use a small shot glass for soup sips, a Chinese spoon for a petit duck salad or a rosemary sprig to skewer prawns.

Because canapés are generally created as one-bite morsels, it's very easy for guests to indulge while still holding their glass of bubbly and a napkin.

Your canapé dishes could include little tartlets, delicate cigars, savoury cones, blinis, or a host of bite sized delicacies!

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BOWL - CARTON - FORK FOOD

BOWL FOOD IS NOT JUST SOUP. COMMONLY DESCRIBED IN THE INDUSTRY AS WALK-'N-TALK FOOD, THESE DISHES CAN BE SERVED IN BOWLS, BASKETS OR BOXES.

The dishes themselves are obviously more filling – they're mini meals – and guests will usually need some sort of utensil to eat them with, although something like fish and chips can be nibbled using the fingers.

Your bowl food dishes could include a salad, pasta or noodle options, soup or gazpacho, risotto or a variety of seafood dishes.

You can either individually portion these dishes as we would or, for ease of service, salads can be served on a large platter for guests to help themselves or a hot wet dish like curry or tagine can be placed on low setting in a slow cooker for self service.

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CARVERY STATION

A simple way to fill up later in the evening is a carvery station.

This can consist of a glazed ham, a roast sirloin or leg of lamb kept warm in a very low oven, then carved and served with warm rolls, salad fillings, accompaniments and chutneys.

To compliment the carvery, we often serve small salad cartons for the vegetarians, gluten free guests or those wanting a lighter option.

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