

# 8

## Event catering

### Learning objectives

On completion of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Explain various approaches to catering in the events industry
- Understand key issues associated with menu design
- Explain the various phases of catering operations
- Recognise the importance of sustainability in an event catering context
- Understand various approaches to sustainability in an event catering context
- Perform a hazard analysis to ensure food safety
- Provide an overview of approaches and processes associated with the elimination or reduction of food wastage
- Discuss procurement issues and challenges, as well as issues associated with the safe and secure storage of food
- Understand key principles of food and beverage matching.

Food is not only essential for our sustenance and survival but often defines a culture. It is in fact, a central feature of most cultures and lifestyles around the world. Cultural elements that can be expressed through the food that people eat, the way in which it is prepared, and the knowledge, skills and rituals that surround gastronomic traditions, are useful and effective ways of communicating and sustaining a national culture. As a result, food represents a particularly important element at cultural festivals and events.



*What cultures that you are familiar with have recognisably different traditions in terms of the food that is eaten and the way in which it is prepared and presented?*

Food is a key element in the successful staging of most festivals and events. It can represent an incredibly positive and engaging approach to enhancing and enriching an otherwise standard event. The broad array of food types, food presentations, and approaches to food service, can add colour and appeal, making the event appealing, memorable and significant.



*What events have you recently attended in which food has added significantly to the colour, excitement, and impact of the event?*



**Image 8.1:** Photo by Kelly Jean on Unsplash

While the importance of event catering varies between events, there are few if any events that can afford to ignore the provision of some form of food or beverage. Even for events of relatively short duration or in which food and beverages are not a key focus, catering will generally need to be considered. In fact, even a two-hour meeting is likely to conclude with some food and/or beverages that facilitate social engagement, discussion, and perhaps the development of contacts. The impact of F&B service can be facilitated by event caterers through sound procurement practices, skilful and well-thought-out menu design, and creative catering practices.

## The event catering process

The process of event catering varies depending on whether it is managed in-house or contracted out to external caterers. However, in general, event catering follows a three-phase process that commences with set-up, followed by the food and beverage (F&B) service, and finally, clean-up.

- **Set-up** involves getting the venue ready for F&B service. This may require the transportation of supplies to the venue. The venue may or may not have cooking facilities. If it does, other equipment, such as

pots, pans and serving trays may need to be taken and unloaded at the venue, along with tables, chairs, and other furniture. Front of house set-up involves laying out tables and chairs according to a floor plan. For outdoor events, tents are generally divided into two staging areas, one for food service and the other, a temporary kitchen for cooking.

### Case study 8.1: Setting up a food stall at a festival

The caterer would need to apply for a permit in order to participate at a festival. Consideration needs to be given on the lead planning time – is it three months or less? Can the caterer physically procure the food and recruit staff? What facilities are nearby? This information is usually obtained beforehand upon which permits are granted. Consider the layout of the site, water supply, proximity to the road and supply of electricity.

- **The service** involves a number of staff which generally includes:
  - Catering co-ordinator
  - Supervisor
  - Waiters
  - Stewards
  - Buffet attendants
  - Bartenders
  - Kitchen manager.



**Image 8.2:** Photo by Marian Kroell on Unsplash

- **Clean-up** involves the cleaning of everything including equipment, and the packing and return of equipment and furniture. Supplies such as glassware, dishes and silver need to be thoroughly washed. All rented