

## Catering To Your Needs



*Henrique Valdovinos has been in the hospitality industry for over 30 Years. His experience in international cuisine includes work in Spain, Italy, France, Mexico, and Brazil. He and His wife Kathy are the proud owners of Glazed Hams and More, a European style deli with glazed hams and homemade chocolates and fudge. They also run the very successful catering company "WOW Factor," which serves some of the top businesses in the community.*

**H**osting an event, even for the most organized person, is a challenge. Thankfully, you can always leave the heavy lifting to the professionals. A lot of people believe that if they do it all themselves they will save money, this is one of the biggest myths I come across all the time. There are some very affordable ways to coordinate an event without emptying your pockets and killing yourself rushing to make it happen. Here are some catering ideas that will help your next event become a success and will not leave your bank account drained.

**Get Organized** - First define the type of event you are having and the results that you want to achieve. For example, if you want to have people over at your office for an open house and use this event also as a networking function, contact both your vendors and your client's. Your vendors can always help to offset the cost.

**Get a Caterer That Some of Your Friends Know** - Letting your fingers do the walking in the phone book is not always effective; a lot of caterers are Mom and Pop operations. While there is nothing wrong with that, remember that while a caterer works for you he represents you during the duration of your event. You want to be sure that the catering company is capable of representing you well.

**Get a Budget and Stick to it** - Calculate more or less how much you want to spend per person and get creative. Be realistic in your expectations of the service provided to you. In other words, don't expect to get caviar and champagne when you have a beer budget.

**Decide on What the Majority Will Like** - A lot of my clients order things that

I know very few people will eat, and they end up having an excess of that food left at the end of their event. Let your caterer be involved in choosing the menu for you... believe me they know what is popular and what people eat!

**Never Hire a Caterer That Charges Per Food Tray** - Always use someone that understands timing. Let's say you are going to have a party that will last two and a half hours, you want to be sure that you have enough food for the duration of the party. Of course sometimes there are certain items that are very popular and people will want more of it to keep coming, like shrimp and tenderloin. That's why it's important to have a good variety in your menu.

Catering a party is a stressful task, so use professionals anytime you can. When looking at a catering company keep in mind that the longer a catering company has been around the better they will be... most of the time. You can get packages from most of them starting at a reasonable price and try to always get between four and six items for your menu variety, including some sweets.

Being original is okay, but being well represented is better. People will remember the food and the service as a compliment to the event, not as the event itself. After all, the food and drinks are always part of the conversation at a certain point during the party.

