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# catersource®

## *From Field* TO FORK



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# The Recipe for Elevating Food & Service in a Catered Environment

Creating a successful restaurant experience in a catered environment requires a delicate blend of culinary artistry and exquisite service. The dining landscape has evolved, and today's catering clients demand not only delectable dishes but also unforgettable experiences. We are pushed daily to create newness and to elevate what we did yesterday.

I say it all the time, but what we do in the catering world is much like creating a Broadway show. You need to set the stage and in our case it's a culinary stage. There's a beginning, a middle, and an end, and as those moments unfold, they must surprise and delight your client and their guests.

## Step 1: The food

We've found that the first element in this successful recipe is that everything hinges on the quality of the food offerings. We need to establish a strong culinary identity and must curate a menu that reflects our expertise, creativity, and commitment to fresh, seasonal ingredients. Our dishes should be thoughtfully designed, showcasing a balance of flavors, textures, and a stunning presentation. This may sound simple but it's pretty complex. We recognize that it takes a ton of training to have a culinary team see things the way they are designed. As an example, even with a photo to guide them, the way that they see things is often not the way I personally design them. I am an A-personality creative that pays attention to every detail. Not everyone sees what I see and the way that I see

it. Taking the time to train the eyes of your team is a must, as the execution is critical to the success of this recipe to create an elevated restaurant experience at a catered event.

## Step 2: The experience

The second step in the recipe is elevating your client and guests' dining experience which actually extends beyond the plate. Attention to ambience, décor, and music creates an immersive atmosphere that complements the cuisine and sets the stage that you are creating. Aesthetic considerations should align with the concept, whether it's elegant fine dining or even a cozy family-style setup.

## Step 3: The staff

The third step in the recipe, which is the heartbeat of any catered event, is the staff. Staff members must be trained to embody warmth, professionalism, and attentiveness. Timely service, addressing dietary restrictions, and anticipating needs contribute to an exceptional customer experience. Seamless coordination between the kitchen and the front of house ensures that your client and their guests receive a

flawless experience. Never forget that your event team is a direct reflection of your brand. Make sure that they embody your company mission, the core values of your company, and everything that is important to you. They need to speak your language. We recognize this wholeheartedly and therefore put a tremendous amount of time, effort, love, and training into our team. You must remember the adage that you are only as good as your last event. We never take that for granted and neither should you.

Our job is to create delicious memories for our clients and their guests. It's all about the way that we make people feel. At the end of the day, if we accomplish making them feel special, valued, heard, and accommodated, we have done our jobs.

## Step 4: The personal touch

The next ingredient in the recipe here is personalization and customization. We cater to a diverse clientele, each with their preferences and dietary requirements. Providing customization allows your client and their guests to feel valued and accommodated. Whether it's offering gluten-free, dairy-free, nut-free, and vegan alternatives, or tailoring dishes to suit individual tastes, personalization enhances the overall experience. Having multiple menu options that embody all of the potential dietary requirements sets us up for success at every event. To be more specific, we always have vegan,



Attention to ambience, décor, and music creates an immersive atmosphere that complements the cuisine and helps set the stage. Photo courtesy Roey Yohai Studios

dairy-, gluten-, and nut-free menu items at every “act” of our events.


### Step 5: The innovation

When creating restaurant experiences in a catered environment, another critical ingredient is staying relevant, embracing innovation, and being adaptable. The culinary world requires continuous innovation. We should be open to experimenting with new flavors, cooking techniques, and global culinary trends. Regular menu updates can intrigue clients and will attract new ones, making the dining experience a dynamic journey for your clients and their guests.

### Step 6: The sourcing

Sustainability and ethical sourcing are the next ingredient. Our clients (social, corporate, and nonprofit) increasingly prioritize sustainability and ethical sourcing. Partnering

with local farmers, utilizing seasonal ingredients, and minimizing food waste not only resonates with the eco-conscious client but also contributes to the overall quality of the food. The taste of the food produced with fresher, local, and sustainable ingredients is far better in so many ways; while more expensive to source, the freshness factor will 100% elevate your dishes and the guest experience when they enjoy your culinary creations. On a personal level, and as a mother of 20-something-year-old twins, being thoughtful of this is of utmost importance to me, as I am constantly thinking of the future for them too... just saying!

Creating a luxurious restaurant dining experience in a catered environment is an art that intertwines the culinary mastery of the kitchen with the grace and precision of an awesome service team. A successful company revolves around quality food that tantalizes the taste buds, creates an inviting ambience that captivates the senses, and service that makes clients and their guests feel truly cherished. By embracing innovation, personalization, sustainability, and a commitment to excellence, caterers can ensure their events become a beacon of culinary delight and exceptional hospitality one bite at a time. 



**Robin Selden** is the Managing Partner & Executive Chef of Marcia Selden Catering & Events and Naked Fig Catering, where she oversees the culinary and marketing operations for her family’s multimillion-dollar company. In October 2019, Robin was honored to be named to the BizBash1000 celebrating the top 1,000 event professionals in the USA in 2019 and to the BizBash 500 celebrating the top 500 event professionals in 2020 in the United States. Selden is in the President’s Council as a past President of the International Caterers Association and won their Chef of the Year award. She’s a past Innovative Chef of the Year and a current Ambassador Chef for the Greenwich Wine & Food Festival.