



R.W. SMITH

Buffet Guide

Whether you're hosting a breakfast buffet in your hotel lobby, a special buffet for Mother's Day or catering an event for a few hundred guests, a well-executed buffet is key to keeping guests satisfied.

Read on for tips and insights to keep you organized no matter if you're doing a buffet for the first time or hundredth time.

Checklist for Your Buffet

Every buffet will vary slightly in what they need depending on what types of food are being served and how many people the buffet will be feeding. Below is a checklist of the basics to get you started.

Table Settings

- [Flatware](#)
Dinner Forks, Salad Forks, Tablespoons, Knives, Teaspoons
- [Plates](#)
Salad, Dinner, Bread
- Tablecloths
- Napkins
- [Ramekins](#)
- Centerpieces / [Table Lighting](#)
- [Wine Glasses](#)
- [Water Glasses](#)
- [Sugar Holders](#)
- [Salt & Pepper Shakers](#)

Beverage / Bar

- Glasses
For [Water](#) and [Soft Drinks](#)
- [Pitchers](#)
- [Coffee Cups](#)
- Ice Tubs
For Canned or Bottled Beverages
- Straws
- Stirrers
- [Milk Carafes](#)
- [Baskets](#)
For Teas and Sugar Packets
- [Tabletop Trash Cans](#)
- Napkins
- [Juice Dispensers](#)
- [Creamers](#)
- [Signs & Labels](#)

Serving Supplies

- [Bus Bins](#)
- [Serving Trays](#)
- [Water Pitchers](#)
- [Coffee Servers](#)

Buffet Equipment

- [Tongs](#)
For Salads and Breads
- [Chafing Dishes](#), [Portable Butane Stoves](#) or Induction Units
- [Fuel](#)
For Chafing Dishes, Portable Butane Stoves or Induction Units
- Matches or Lighter
- Plates, *if you aren't supplying them at the tables*
- [Serving Baskets](#)
- Rolled Silverware, *if you aren't supplying flatware at the tables*
- [Cutting Boards](#)
- [Carving Knives](#)
- [Serving Utensils](#)
- [Risers & Display Stands](#)
- [Trays](#)
- [Bowls & Platters](#)





Transportation Tips



Avoid food-borne illnesses; keep guests safe and food hot with these transportation tips.

Invest in Insulated Carriers

You need to be able to trust your transportation equipment will keep food out of the Temperature Danger Zone (41°F-135°F). Your carriers should keep cold food lower than 41°F and hot food warmer than 135°F. Use food [thermometers](#) to closely monitor temperatures.

Keep Time

If you don't want to only rely on thermometers to ensure your food is safe, time how long the food has been out and discard after four hours. Be sure to label it so your staff knows when to discard it.

Bring Extras

Have at least one serving spoon for each food item to avoid cross-contamination. These extra pieces will keep you from having to watch and sanitize utensils when swapping out the food after four hours.

Properly Seal

Avert cross-contamination by correctly sealing foods before traveling.

Reheat Foods to 165°F

Any hot foods that were cooked off-site need to be reheated to an internal temperature of 165°F, and held at that temperature for 15 seconds after transportation.





Organizing Your Staff

Whether putting on a buffet for the weekend or catering a wedding, it's important to have the right amount of staff for your event to ensure everything runs smoothly. For buffets taking place in a restaurant, you may need additional staff to keep the trays and chafers stocked and make sure the dishes are washed. Read on for staffing tips for large catered events.

Take Inventory

Depending on the size and event, the amount and types of staff you bring will fluctuate. When determining how many and who to bring, ask yourself the following questions:

- How many guests will there be?
- Does the location provide set up staff or do you need to bring your own?
- Is there an open bar?
- Are there action stations with chefs cooking?
- Is it a buffet or sit down meal?
- How long is the event?

Stay Organized

Ensure everyone knows their responsibilities and communicate it out to your team. Assign a team lead so you have a key person to go to and speak with should a problem arise. Responsibilities can include:

- Serving tables
- Cooking
- Bartending
- Filling up drinks
- Bussing tables
- Set up/tear down

Get Motivated

Round up your staff before and after an event to go over last minute details as well as debrief the event. Above all remember to pump up your team to create the best and most enjoyable experience for the guests.





Action Stations



While some spaces are ideal for a traditionally arranged buffet (i.e. A long table with two lines on either side), more and more special events are participating in action stations. Action stations are a great way to provide entertainment as well as maintain shorter lines. They can be a bigger financial investment because they need a chef to man the station as well as need equipment to use at the station. See below for different action station ideas you can incorporate into the next event.

Omelet Bar

Use a portable butane stove or induction station and have a chef cook personalized omelets for diners. Be sure to have all toppings and fillings chopped and prepped ahead of time so the chef can easily add them on the spot.

Carving Station

Whether serving roast beef, prime rib, tri-tip or another hearty protein, having a chef available to carve the perfect piece is a great way to ensure each person gets the right size and cut.

Beverage Bar

From Bloody Mary's to Mimosas to Coffee, create a fun fix-it-yourself station for guests. Set out glasses or mugs and all the toppings for diners. Don't forget to include serving utensils for each topping and garnish as well as a small waste basket to keep the area as clean as possible.

