



Start Your Own *Highly Profitable* Home-Based Catering Service

By Cora Donnblue

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Introduction

Social caterers are one of the fastest-growing segments of today's restaurant industry, this according to the National Restaurant Association's forecast.

For instance, the countries phone books list in excess of 55,000 caterers. This includes off-premise, on-premise, and banquet facility caterers, excluding hotels, with their annual sales nearly ten billion dollars.

However, before you jump into your new catering business, you should realize that there are essential *skills* and *knowledge* that every caterer must have. Your chances of succeeding without these skills are slim.

To fully succeed as a caterer, you must; be an *organizer*, a *planner*, a *problem solver*, and an *excellent cook* with a flair for presentation.

Some catering skills are relatively easy to learn; all you need is practice, while others you should be born with. You must decide for yourself how many of those skills you already possess, where your weaknesses lie, and how you can conquer any problem areas.

Naturally, when you conduct a reasonably large catering business, you won't need to know how to do everything; as someone else on the team may have the skills you lack.

On the other hand, if you want to start a small operation, often doing all the work by yourself, be sure there are no weak spots in your business by the time you are ready to spread the word about your new catering service.

Of course, while you'll learn through trial and error and through the day-to-day experience of running your own business, it may take years before you can call yourself an expert.

On the other hand, as you're now considering catering as a profession, chances are good that you already have a number of the skills you'll need and can develop those you require through learning and experience.

I know this book will greatly aid you, if in fact, you truly have the ability and desire to go forward.

Good food and best fortune;

Cora Donnblue



Is Catering Your Calling!

As I mentioned in my introduction, before you decide to leap into the catering business, you should have a full grasp of the essential skills and knowledge that every caterer feels is second nature.

Believe me and be assured that, you can *learn and develop* these skills if you have the same desire and burning passion, I did.

Quite naturally, some catering skills are relatively easy to learn for all you need is continual practice, others must be a natural part your nature

Decide for yourself how many of those skills you already have, where your weaknesses lie, and how you can overcome these problem areas.

Honestly, take a good look at yourself realizing that when you operate a reasonably large catering business, you won't need to know how to do everything; someone else on the team may have those skills you lack.

Frankly, Ask Yourself:

- ✓ Are you an excellent cook and proficient in imaginative food presentation?
- ✓ Do you have some basic business knowledge and love working with people?
- ✓ Do you, have the cooking skills of a good gourmet cook?
- ✓ Do you already have a sizable repertoire of well-tried recipes?

Consider, not only will you have to know how to prepare all necessary items, you must also be able to present them in an appetizing, mouth-watering way.

Some issues to reflect on:

Presentation. You have got to become a master of presentation. At some locations, and especially for some clients, staging is everything.

When you cater a party, it is usually for a specific special event, such as a business, Christmas party, or wedding, and these *occasions* are special enough for the client to want to put on an event. Here the presentation of the food should *reflect* the importance of the occasion.

Visibly, the food and it's quality should indicate this. Bear in mind that while it may be true that most people eat with their eyes first, they eventually eat with their mouth and taste buds!

Planning and organizational skills? Some areas of catering demand only a modest amount of these skills, but if you're going to be doing *off premise* catering, you must fully plan and organize each event.

For example, the need for hot food to be *hot* and the cold food to be *icy cold* when served, is always essential. Additionally, you'll need to make sure, for instance, that someone in your staff did not miscount the silverware leaving you, say, one fork short.

In the catering world, each day and each event is different, making your organizational skills vital!

Efficiency and ability to deal with stress. As with any food industry business, efficiency in catering is important. Question yourself, do you work well under pressure, for each event is unique and catering can be more stressful than many professions.

It's not that most professions do not demand these skills, but in catering you not only have to deal with the stress, you also have to make sure that your customer never sees your stress.

You must remain calm and smile, no matter how you may feel inwardly. Notice, that once the guests taste your food and start "*ooh-ing and-ah-ing*" at your presentation, you can then relax.

Expect the unexpected. Anticipate that problems may arise and be ready to solve them, quickly and imaginatively.

You need to have good crisis-management and problem-solving skills in catering. For example, you'll have to deal with event site problems, serving the food at unfamiliar locations and trying to find delivery entrances and parking spots.

With catering you have to learn to live with the fact that you're in the public eye, especially, where there is always opportunity for errors.

Confidence and communication. Ask yourself, "Are you out-going?" Remember, it is *you* and not your company that is being hired. You must *personally* amaze your client, or else you are out of any future business from them.

Your *first* impression must be your *best* impression. Where you discover you have almost all the aforementioned assets and are deficient in this one, take some evening courses on public speaking, or just rent a couple of books and audio guides offering procedures to improve your relationships and presentation skills.

Bear in mind you are the salesperson. In due course, you may have salespeople working for you, but when you're starting out, *you'll be center stage*.

At times you'll be dealing with corporate executives, party planners and often nervous brides. You'll need to convince these future clients that you'll not only do you provide an outstanding feast, but that it'll be there on time, presented charmingly, and served discreetly!

You'll also need to come up with ways in which to attract business, and retain it, once you've been hired.

Developing Sidelines. Don't limit yourself - be creative! There are a number of options that will naturally spring from the catering business. For instance, you can act as a coordinator for, say; flowers, photography, ice sculptures, party locations, etc..

Let your menu *suggestions* be just that, allow your client to be your guide. And, don't hesitate, either when you see an opportunity to "bump-up" the bottom line, as you may be able to turn a simple barbecue into say, an Hawaiian luau complete with a roast pig.

Make every event a gathering to remember.

Types Of Catering?

One type of Catering can often be expressed as being a 'Personal chef.'

That is a person who offers meal preparation for busy couples and families, and often prepares them right in the clients homes. Meals that are tailored to the families; likes, dislikes, dietary needs, and allergies.

To put it briefly; a *personal chef* will go over the menu with their clients, do the grocery shopping, then arrive, usually, in the morning to begin cooking.

At the end of the day, a personal chef will have created one to two weeks worth of main dishes, and possible side dishes as well.

Being a personal chef is an ideal job for someone who does not want the stresses of a regular catering job.

Also, there is more room for flair in your cooking style when you are only cooking for two or four, as opposed to a catered event where a chef could easily be catering to several hundred guests.

Other Types of Catering

There are at least a dozen different types of catering *niches* or *styles*. Some are not exactly catering but they are closely related, and all of them deal with food and food preparation.

You must decide which type of catering best fits your personality, skill level, interest, expectations, and focus on that, at least in the beginning. For over time, as your learning increases you can expand into other areas without much effort, either slowly, gradually, or all at once.

While Caterers handle everything from birthday parties for children, breakfast in bed, and intimate candlelight dinners for two, to company dinner parties for 50 and wedding receptions involving a thousand or more guests, your clients can be divided into two general areas: company or corporate and social caterings.

Corporate catering

These functions are fairly routine, focusing on breakfasts, luncheons, and occasional dinners.

On the other hand, corporate receptions, are not standard and often are quite luxurious, permitting you to fully express your full artistic creativity with food presentations.

Social catering

Catering for private clients calls for every type of food service imaginable. Most of these events are receptions, breakfasts, luncheons, and dinners. The number of guests for full meals are relatively small, and receptions are not as large as corporate receptions.

A noticeable difference with these events is in your budget. Most corporations can be more lavish with their budgets. Yet, large private parties like weddings and bar mitzvahs may also have sizeable budgets and a large number of guests.

There is another area not so easy to classify, *institutional catering*. It includes off-premise catering for any institution, or for government agencies that really are not corporations, but the type of caterings requested by them is similar.

These includes schools, hospitals, various other public institutions, including government offices. In fact, most of these catering jobs are completed 'in-house,' but when the requirement is for better quality catering or the in-house staff are not familiarized with catering needs, an outside contractor, hopefully you, are requested.

The real distinction between institutional and corporate catering is the size of the budget, as the budget for institutional catering is usually lower, sometimes far lower, than for corporate catering.

Eventually almost all caterers sign up do both corporate and social caterings, although how much of each varies widely from business to business.

Even if you set out to work in corporate catering entirely and avoid marketing to social clients, you will find that guests attending the corporate events may request you for social events. You'll find these hard to refuse.

The same applies where you try to confine your business to private parties, as you'll quickly realize that the two types of groups make a pleasant blend, as both require a different approach and different types of service, while posing different problems which complement each other.

Ability Aside, What Separates Most Caterers:

Is the class of catering they choose to do. The field ranges from low-end to high-end, which is merely low-budget to high-budget, leaving a wide gamut in between.

Make your mind up as to your field, but a word of practical advice, never attempt to reach for the entire field.

While some large caterers may have a low-budget division along with their medium budget business, small caterers, however, should stick to a narrow band of the spectrum.

In the low-budget field - while you can expect much more business, much higher volume, at the same time as facing more competition, more production-line food preparation, as a result giving you little leeway for creativity.

Here you'll be more in demand, the factor being the economy. Concentrating on this area of business you can expect lower profit margins, higher volume, better overall profits, and *longer* working hours.

In high end catering, - you will have much more fun, less competition, possibly less work, with more exacting demands, and far more tension.

Here you'll find your clients will be much more fussy and expect more from you, nevertheless willing to pay what you ask to have those demands met.

Your business will be exposed to economic problems because *high-end* catering is cut quickly from both corporate and social budgets with events being held less frequent, yet if you price them right and watch your costs, they can still be very profitable.

Some Niche Areas

- Barbecues
- Picnics
- Subcontracting for large caterers
- Selling to retail outlets
- Subcontracting to hotels, banquet halls, etc.
- Kosher catering
- Fundraising
- Breakfasts and brunches
- Corporate gifts
- Office Coffee breaks, meeting breaks
- Only Catering for small groups
- Accept last-minute catering
- Create private-label food items

Basic Talents And Knowledge Needed

As touched on briefly in the beginning, there are certain crucial skills that are a must for running a catering service.

And, yes Virginia, character does count!

When starting small you must be able to control the business yourself without help, say, when your helper is ill, when no one is available on such short notice, or when that small business luncheon can only be cost-effective if you do it yourself.

No matter what the reason, you don't need the extra anxiety of not being able to execute every piece of the event proficiently.

Once again these are the indispensable skills and knowledge you must have or develop:

- A true aptitude in cooking and food preparation
- A capability to work well under pressure
- An artistic touch with food presentation
- A high degree of planning, with management skill and efficiency
- A talent for problem solving and crisis management
- Ability to deal with clients self-confidently and successfully

Cooking and food preparation

You must have a elevated degree of skill in cooking, as well as ease, efficiency, and speed in food preparation. These are by far, the most important nuts and bolts for a successful small caterer.

Your cooking skills should be far better than that of a good gourmet cook, and you should have an extensive repertoire of tried-true recipes.

Furthermore, you will need to be informed with most aspects of cooking, including the preparation of hors d'oeuvres, entrees, salads, side dishes, desserts, breads, and beverages.

The key is not only, do you have to know *how* to prepare the items, but you must also be able to present them in an appetizing, interesting way.

You may ask, "How will you acquire all that cooking skill and knowledge?"

With practice, more practice, and plenty of reading and research!

If you haven't had any formal training in cookery, get some, because you can have a great deal of pleasure and tasty fun doing it.

You don't need the entire catalog of a cooking school, or even the greater part of it. A small fraction will be quite sufficient for your catering business; which portion will depend on what type of catering you choose to begin with.

After all, you, your friends, and your family have to eat daily; so the place to practice is in your own kitchen with readily available and eager guinea pigs ready and willing.

Local cooking classes may or may not be a good idea for you. Try several offered in your area. If you are already a good cook, you may not learn anything new, but watch the instructor's techniques, this is where the lessons may payoff for you.

Also, videotapes and television cooking programs can help the same way. There are seminars and cooking camps for experienced chefs, too, on both cooking and presentation, though they don't come cheap.

Regardless of how you choose to learn, total awareness with cooking and cooking techniques for an extended period is what you should desire.

Keep on reading books on food and cooking and even simple cookbooks. No matter how inferior a cookbook is, chances are there is always *some* useful information in it.

Additionally, there is truly an astounding number of food and cooking-related Web sites on the Internet, although only a very small fraction of these are useful to a professional.

Some food and cooking chat rooms and discussion groups may be for you, and there are some designated for food professionals only. Unfortunately, I've found the bulk of these are filled with empty, useless chatter.

To it's credit the Internet is also filled with thousands and thousands of quality recipes, with most posted by just about anyone who feels like it. If you come across a good Web site that appears to have professional-type recipes, check them out regularly.

Learn to cook an entire *cross section* of dishes, but emphasize the ones you want to prepare in your catering business.

Next Your Planning and Organization

Very few professions dictate that you to possess such a high degree of skill in planning and organization as does, *off-premise* catering.

While some areas of catering demand only a modest amount of these skills, such as: industrial catering with a mobile kitchen, bulk-prepared food you sell to retailers, large-event catering, or even barbecues are relatively simple to conduct.

On the contrary, *off premise* catering compels you to plan and organize for each event, yet much of it can be learned on the job if you have a good dose of common sense.

Frankly, not everyone was born a good organizer and planner, so if you feel that you are inadequate at doing substantial planning and organization, you should *not* consider 'off-premise' catering. There are many other related fields where your interest in the kitchen can be exploited.

With off-premise catering, all food and equipment must be brought to the place of the event, and the food must be in first-class condition at the time of serving even though several hours may have passed from its leaving the kitchen.

The hot food must be hot and the cold food must be icy cold. The facilities at which you are serving may have no kitchen whatsoever, or may only have a tiny office kitchen. So you know that your equipment must be complete.

The answer at all times, is careful planning so that no disaster will take place. If it does, then you quickly switch to your next skill as a caterer, solving crises and emergencies.

You can improve these skills through conscientious effort and careful checklists. Review your first few events.

- Did you remember to take everything?
- Was planning adequate?
- Did what you anticipate what happened could happen?

It goes without saying, that planning for an event *must* be done well in advance of the date of execution. Even the smallest event demands some thinking four to five days ahead of the date in order to schedule the various phases of preparation, like defrosting food and ordering supplies.

Obviously, large events need even more advanced planning because you have to reserve staff time, rental items, and maybe additional subcontracting services.

Major Elements of Advanced Planning and Organization.

- Planning the event
- Your securing of supplies and rental items
- Scheduling food preparation
- Preparing equipment and invoices
- Reserving staff time

Throughout this book I'll expand on these aspects of planning in greater detail.

Your Overall Efficiency

Very few occupations do not benefit from efficiency, and in a quantity of fields, it is a vital skill to ensure success, food service is one of those fields.

The foods that the guests are waiting for *must* arrive at their table as quickly as possible, with preparation time kept to a minimum. Simply a high degree of efficiency can achieve this outcome.

You'll quickly discover what foods you can prepare well in advance, and what must be done at the last minute so that staff time is utilized economically.

So with careful planning, organization, and good *efficiency*, you'll pull it off with the minimum staff possible so as to protect your profit margin.

Then again, where you're not a very resourceful person and are unwilling or incapable of learning how to be one, you should hire a good catering or kitchen manager who has those abilities.

This way, you can focus on other aspects of your business, like; selling and marketing, food design and arrangement, or simply devote your attention to the job of loading and unloading.

Efficiency is necessary for several reasons. First, you must be able to transfer tons of raw material into gorgeous food in the shortest possible time. Next, many items can be prepared only at the last minute, while some foods hold well hot, yet every extra half hour of standing will lower their peak serving status.

Also, you'll find many foods don't like to stay chilled too long either, as salads and fruits lose their crispness. This involves meticulous preplanning so nothing goes wrong.

Many catering tricks you'll unearth along the way that will help you lessen the last minute rush and tension. What I am saying is that, if you have the desire, you'll learn how to handle, if not enjoy, all the pressures of this business.

You And Stress

As to tension, you know the very old saying, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of... etc." Well to be a caterer, you must be able to live with and work under pressure, and not display it.

On the surface, you must be remain; your *cool, smiling*, and your *confident* self, apparently doing your work with ease. While, inwardly you may have five different things to worry about, plus countless other budding minor disasters.

Know that nothing is predictable during an event. The guests in each situation are entirely different; they prefer diverse foods, eat different portions, and interact with you and your staff completely differently.

Once the guests and host or hostess are pleased, they will often close their eyes to any slight problem. On the other hand, when their not pleased from the beginning, even small errors will mature into gross carelessness in their view and with no clemency.

Your Crisis Management and Ability To Solve Problems

No matter how well-planned and organized, off-premise catering is guaranteed to have unexpected problems that occasionally present a crisis.

When there is so much equipment, food, drink, staff, and peripheral items that must be transported and set up for a complex event, problems can and will crop up from time to time.

Each event becomes a success, only where your client thinks it is flawless. They are the absolute judge! This is true even though you and your staff know of the little or big bumps that you successfully overcame.

To successfully solve problems you must at first expect them, for anticipation can be one your best abilities.

Introduce Your Artistic Magic

Food presentation is always extremely important, and with high-end catering the emphasis on staging greatly magnifies, while for fundraising projects with minimum budgets this aspect's importance diminishes

High-class presentations take time and money and you can only afford to concentrate on this if someone is willing to pay for it. Still that doesn't mean that a low-end caterer can get away with dumping food on cheap disposable platters.

Bear in mind, that foods can be presented nicely with minimal effort and cost; with small additional garnishes, and with a touch of *artistic* presentation.

Naturally, the necessity for *high-quality* food displays is greater in affluent, so-called 'sophisticated' areas of the country. In some places, presentation is so important that they may neglect food quality.

Just Keep It Uncomplicated

Even where you are not artistically inclined, you can learn the art of simple and tasteful garnishing.

There are many books on garnishes, read them, pick out a few ideas that appeal to you, and practice using them. Depending on your talents, you can be creative and try more elaborate garnishes.

Keep in mind, whether a prepared garnish, a simple radish rose or scallion flower, may take too much time, therefore you must weigh the time spent against the importance of the event, and more importantly your budget.

If you feel the time spent is justified, then do it, yet keeping it as simple as possible.

When the food arrives at the table, it is the entree that guests' eye. However, where the garnish is *too elaborate*, that is what guests see first. You don't want the guests to be so dazzled by small details that they miss the main attraction.

Make Good Ideas *Your* Ideas

Browse through recent food magazines, look at food ads and books with beautiful full-page photos. See what other professionals and food stylists are creating. Scale these ideas down, copy them and after a while you'll be devising your very own.

Eat at restaurants in which food presentation is emphasized and learn from the imagination of their chef's. Also, glance around the supermarket and see what is interesting in the produce department.

Make use of contrasting textures and colors to complement the food you are serving.

Garnishes and Decorations

Naturally, plate garnish can only be done when the meal is full-service. For self-service, the decoration is on the table *and* on the serving platters.

Where your clients preference is for something a little more casual, the touch of a real person *and not* computer created, then add your own more personal touch.

As for me, I like to use fruits and vegetables with unlike shapes, colors, and sizes which are scattered around the table, on all sides of the serving platters, but you don't want to overdo it!

A good supermarket's produce department has all kinds of interesting items. Look for things like an elephant garlic with its long stem topped with a flower. Or use common items like a fresh, shiny Japanese eggplant, or bright red and green chili's.

Another simple garnish, is fresh carrots with the green tops left on. Place them on the table in a loose wreath-like fashion or create a bouquet in a vase. Then again, a bouquet of combined vegetables is simple and effective.

Your Dishes and Utensils

Imagination is required for serving pieces, as well.

There are only a few points for you to bear in mind. First, whatever the serving piece is, it must not chemically react with or, in any way, discolor the food. Take special care when presenting acidic foods like salads, pickles, or marinated vegetables.

Serving pieces must also look appealing with food in it or on it. No matter how pretty a porcelain bidet is, or a brass spittoon, they are not suitable containers.

Also, highly polished silver is not used commonly anymore except for *very* formal, strictly traditional affairs.

Anything rustic and exotic is in: terracotta flower pots and saucers, rough wood and baskets, and old baskets. Clay, bricks, and stones all add a certain air to your table for informal catering.

Stockpile Special Props Ideal For Theme Festivities

Search for table decorations in second-hand shops, thrift stores, and at flea markets. You may want to start a collection of special props for catering to corporate clients.

Say you want to adorn the reception table for a construction company, why not buy small eye-catching toy tractors and bulldozers or some rusty old tools.

This way, your client and guests will remember that your table didn't have the same dull, standard look as dozens of their other catered parties.

It is a good marketing technique and is worth the extra expenditure and personal time.

When Dealing with Clients

As a small firm you will be dealing with your clients personally most of the time. From your first contact the deal will be determined mainly by *your* relationship with the client.

Always realize, that it will be your personal interaction that determines whether there will be any future business from that client.

I realize that making contact with strangers is frightening to many people, while others feel immediately comfortable with anyone. But even the most timid person can learn to be perfectly at ease when; meeting

potential new clients, introducing their business to them, and letting them know what you have to offer and at what price.

Courses on public speaking are popular and there are helpful books and audio guides that offer techniques for better communication and presentation skills.

Centered on your original introduction, the client will then and there, at least in their mind, decide if you are the right caterer.

After a friendly, but brief, warm-up introduction start selling yourself and your business. A great deal of your success depends on how well you can do just that.

Catering, above all small catering, is a very personal business. It is you and not your company that will be hired. Your reputation and recommendation from satisfied clients will help a great deal, but if you personally don't impress your potential client you may not have a deal.

I found that always being your true self works best in the long run and establishes strong relationships.



Thanks for reading these brief few pages, of one of the most successful and original career course manuals available on building your own home-based *Catering business*. Learning from an established professional is the best way to starting your own profitable home business.

If you'd like to consider the complete course, [click here...](#)

For information on our other career courses go to either anezbizz.com or ahow2.com

Note: To read another *sample edition* of our famous home study courses follow this link... [Learn](#)

Whatever, your decision may I talk this opportunity to wish you the best of good fortune, and remember, don't leave your future to *the whim of others*.

Your friend;

Joe Myna