

# **Mistakes to Avoid in Your Catering Business**

**With Rob Martin**  
**Recovering Caterer and Business Consultant**



**Small Business  
Development Center**  
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# Understand your own ability

1. Providing a catered event is different than in your restaurant.
2. Know which type of catering you want to pursue.
  - a. Corporate events: conferences, cocktail parties, staff meetings
  - b. Social gatherings: weddings, galas, charity events, birthday celebrations
  - c. Personal uses: cooking a meal in someone's home for a small gathering or date night
3. Can you and your staff handle an event for 200? Be honest with yourself!
4. Do you have the equipment to handle keeping hot food hot and cold food cold?
5. Do I have adequate liability coverage for the event?
6. Do I and my team work well in stressful situation and can I quickly adapt to change?

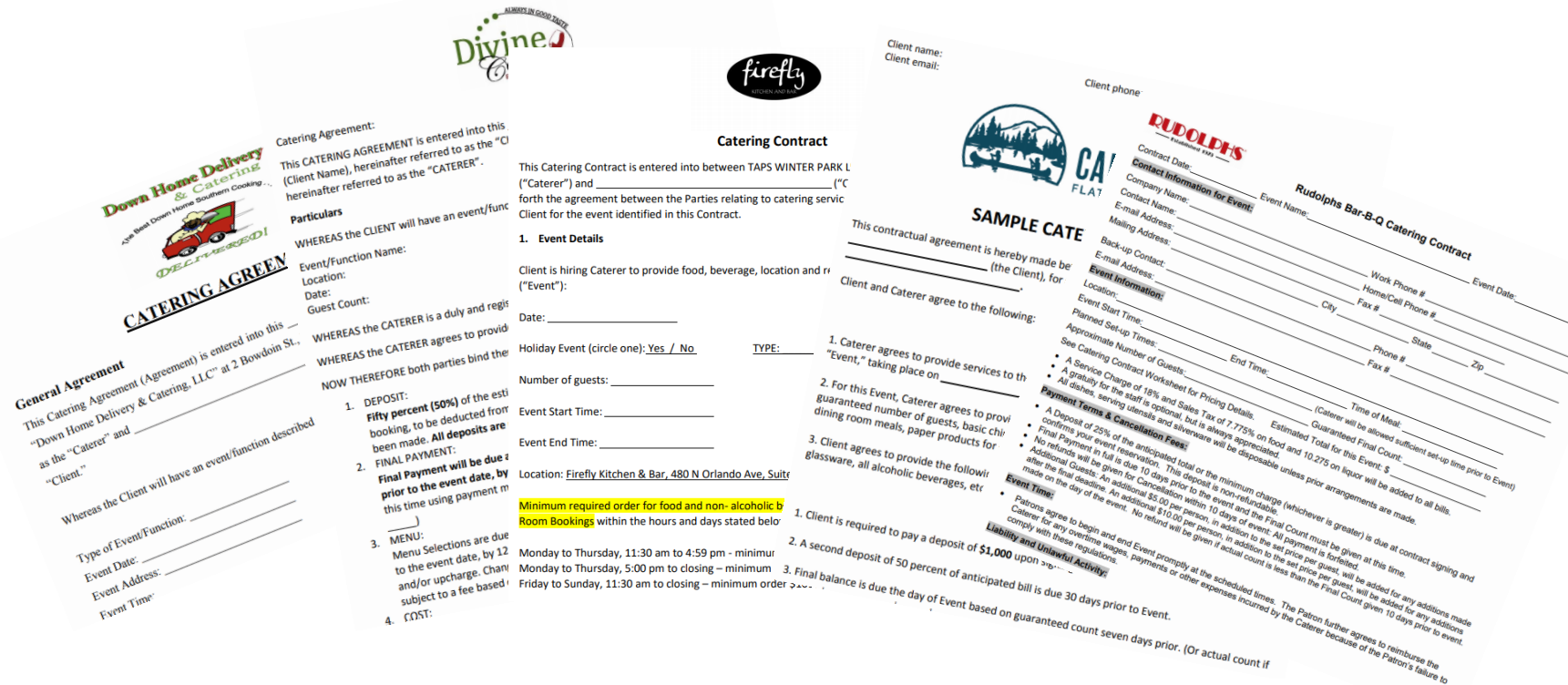


# Not having the a contract

1. This is for your protection and your clients.
2. Outline the details:
  - a. Menu – Be Specific
  - b. Cost for the catering
  - c. Date payments are due
  - d. Additional charges for people over the agreed number.
  - e. Timeline for service & Fees for going over
  - f. Damage deposit
  - g. The point really is cover yourself



# See what others are doing



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# COMMUNICATION

The key to contracting is to define the expectations of all the parties involved.

By clearly outlining the caterer's and the client's responsibilities, a good contract eliminates ambiguity, which in turn helps to avoid disputes. Catered events can be stressful for everyone, but if you start off with a good contract, customized to yours and your clients needs, you will be on the right track to success.



# Not Having a Plan

Failing to Plan is Planning to .....

1. Once I get that booking I spend a day mapping everything out.
  - a. Breaking out every item and recipe and generating a shopping & supply list.
  - b. Then I make sure that all of the recipes are written out in the batch sizes needed.
  - c. I detail out what can be done in advance 5 days out, 4 days out, etc.
  - d. Design layout of order, make the name plates, assign trays and equipment.
  - e. Recruit – What staff do I want and are they available.
  - f. Shopping day – What is coming from my Food Service Provider – Sam's – Grocery
  - g. Prep days and times
  - h. Day of event – Cooking times, transport, who needs to be where and when.
  - i. Execution orders
  - j. End of event and load out plan
  - k. Clean up

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# Sloppy Presentation



Your presentation and food is like an interactive advertisement for you. It markets your business to a captive audience so make it the best it can possibly be. By just being prepared and following some basics rules about always offering courtesy, quality and satisfaction you can build your catering business.

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Presentation isn't just in the Food!



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# Food Showing up Late

This is one of the unpardonable sins of catering!

1. Know where the event is.
2. Does everyone on the team have directions?
3. Do you have a checklist?
4. Are you using it?
5. Will there be unexpected delays? YES!



Download my checklist at:  
<https://www.georgiasbdc.org/afse-seminars/>

## Catering Event Delivery Checklist

Customer:	Date:
Contact person:	
Primary phone number:	Backup number:
Event Address:	

		Pre-load	Truck	Load			Pre-load	Truck	Load
		Qty	Check	Check			Qty	Check	Check
<b>Event Information</b>					<b>Food</b>				
Copy of contract		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Hot food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Directions/map		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Hot food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Special instructions		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Hot food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Invoice		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Hot food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Sharpies	2	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Hot food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Pens	5	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Hot food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Business cards	25	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Cold food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Square Reader	1	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Cold food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Brochures	20	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Cold food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Cold food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
<b>Paper Supplies</b>					[Cold food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Entrée plates		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Cold food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Bowls		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Cold food]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Dessert/appetizer plates		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	Rolls/bread		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Cold cups		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	Butter		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Hot cups		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Condiments]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Plastic packs		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Condiments]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Napkins		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Condiments]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Beverage napkins		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Dessert]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Forks		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[Dessert]		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Knives		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]					
Spoons		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	<b>Beverage</b>				
Toothpicks	Pack	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	Iced tea		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Trash bags	25	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	Lemonade		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	Water		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
		[ ]	[ ]	[ ]					

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[illegible][illegible]

Delivering the Order	Quantity	Completed by (initials)
Acknowledge client by name		
Client Name is: _____		
Check items against order ticket		
Review order with to them:		
<i>Any problems or shortages call office immediately!</i>		
Offer additional dressing/condiments		
Comment card or survey offer		
Leave Receipt		
<i>If a Pharm Order only leave with Pharm Rep. unless</i>		

# Not Asking for the Order

If they asked for a quote there's a pretty good chance you aren't the only one they asked.

1. Are you ready to reserve the date today?
2. If not, "Do you mind me asking why?"
3. Is there any additional questions that I can answer?
4. Would you like some referrals?
5. The quote is good for 30 days but my weekends fill pretty quickly?



# Not asking for and listening to feedback

Take time to learn from your mistakes and from your successes

After every catering you should debrief your team and review the following:

1. What did we do exceedingly well today?
2. What did we do wrong today?
3. What did we forget today?
4. What would have made the day better? Could be a tool or just extra silverware.
5. Was the customer happy? Why or why not?
6. What did we learn today?
7. Now, send this same questionnaire to your client, and follow up on it!



# Your Turn

# Q & A

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# Thank You for your time!

Rob Martin  
UGA SBDC – Business Consultant

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