

# The Assistant's Guide to Food at the Office

An inside look at the latest food for work trends, plus expert strategies to make ordering easier and boost your hero status with the team



## ASSISTANTS:

# The Multi-tasking Super Hero of the Office

As an administrative professional, you're the lifeblood of your company—even to the point of making sure everyone is well-fed! If you've been at it a while, you've probably noticed that food for work has evolved along with other workplace trends like hybrid schedules and new employee expectations around health and safety.

But no matter the changes, there's no doubt that food at work is still a big deal—whether for a meeting, an event, or just an in-office celebration.

### In our recent survey of catering decision makers:

**62%**

said that food fosters employee collaboration and connection

**51%**

said food motivates employees to come to the office for in-person meetings

**78%**

of respondents report that they order food at least once a month

Considering that 73% of administrative professionals in the latest American Society of Administrative Professionals (ASAP) survey said they are responsible for planning meetings and events - listing it as one of their primary responsibilities - having a reliable and efficient way to order food can help admins like you manage your workload more effectively.

### That's where ezCater comes in.

We get it—you're super busy! We can't help you juggle multiple executive schedules or prep the conference room for a really important client (sorry!), but we can make the task of ordering food for your office a cinch—just as we've done for millions of other businesspeople.

Our office meal solutions can save you time, help you stay within budget, and—most importantly—help your teammates see you as the hero you are.

**"I don't have a typical day at work. I'm in the office, but I'm in the field too. I'm responsible for ordering lunch for the company. We order food for important client meetings, weekly team meetings, and sometimes I order food for summer and holiday parties or random get-togethers that we have here."**

Becca, Office Manager

# FEEDING YOUR TEAM: Start with the Basics

## What should I order?

Start by asking yourself a few questions:

**What is your team in the mood for—comfort food, something light, maybe something with a little kick?**

**What have they had recently that they might be tired of?** If it's been sandwiches in the last couple meetings, mix things up with Mediterranean dishes, pasta, or a sweet spread of BBQ.

**Will the meeting be formal or less formal?** Avoid potentially messy foods like BBQ or spaghetti if you're trying to impress a high-level prospect, or if there may be a lot of printouts on the table.



## ezCater's Top 10 Sure-to-Please Foods:



### [Sandwiches >](#)

Tons of variety, portable, and easy to manage while you're taking notes in a meeting



### [Mexican >](#)

Flavorful crowd pleaser that makes work feel like a party



### [Italian >](#)

Hearty and homey comfort food



### [BBQ >](#)

Spicy, savory, finger-lickin' sauces and rubs that add a little extra zip to the day



### [Mediterranean >](#)

Healthy fare that's also delicious and makes a beautiful presentation



### [Breakfast >](#)

The most important meal of the day and one of the tastiest



### [Food Trucks >](#)

Enjoy fun food experience on meals from a local food truck partner



### [Vegan-Friendly >](#)

Inclusive options to please all palates



### [Pizza >](#)

A perennial favorite that comes in so many styles and flavors and never fails to please



### [Sushi >](#)

Seafood lovers and avocado-roll aficionados alike enjoy sushi catering.

## Where should I order from?

We work with national chains, independent restaurants, and local food trucks to bring you a wide variety of catering options. Some of our top brands include:



**CARRABBA'S**  
ITALIAN GRILL



**ON THE BORDER**



To browse restaurants delivering near you, simply visit [ezcater.com](http://ezcater.com) and enter your zip code.

## How should I serve it?

There are a variety of serving options for office catering. Selecting the best option depends on the nature of your event, the type of food you're serving, and other considerations.

### INDIVIDUALLY PACKAGED MEALS

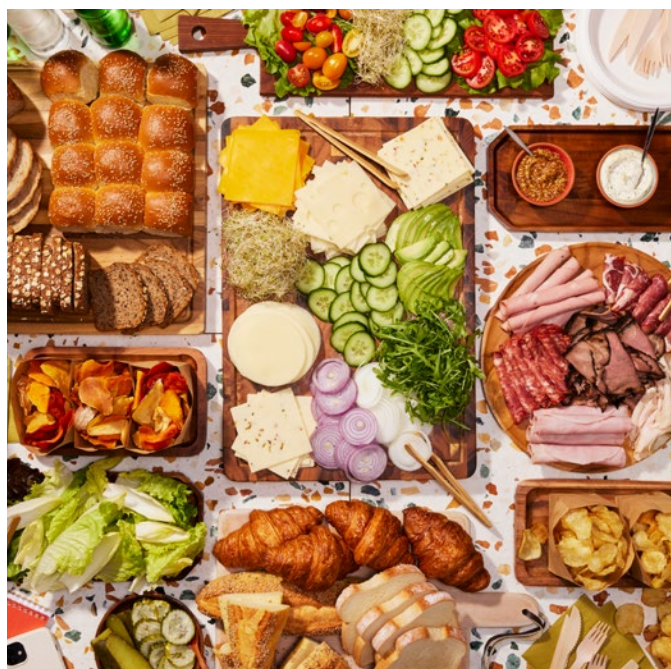
Individually packaged meals help eliminate food waste and take the guesswork out of how much you need to order. Plus, it's very convenient and makes for easy and fast meal distribution. Pro tip: our research shows that eaters prefer individually packaged meals.

### TRAY CATERING

While individually packaged meals have definitely been a great solution for hybrid teams that have fluctuating daily headcounts, traditional tray catering is still the go-to option for many organizations. Its economical, family-style approach allows employees to customize their meal according to their individual preferences.

### BAR OPTIONS

Taco bars, burger bars, and sundae bars offer a flexible build-your-own solution. Employees can customize their meals and portions, as well as manage their own dietary needs.



**Burger bars are the most popular way ezCater customers order burgers on our platform.**

# RELISH

BY ez cater

## Have you tried Relish by ezCater?

You set the schedule and budget. Employees get to pick out their own individually packaged meal. Everyone's order arrives at the same time. Success - hero status achieved! [Get Relish >](#)



## How much do I need?

One of the most important aspects of ordering food for work is figuring out how much food is enough. You never want anyone to be left hungry. You also don't want to end up with 20 pounds of leftovers. To help you get the order just right, here are three considerations to keep in mind:

### THE TYPE OF EVENT

Attendees at a seated lunch-and-learn or a social event that includes mingling will usually eat more than folks at a board meeting. Think about the dynamics of your event and whether food will play a starring or supporting role.

### THE LENGTH OF THE EVENT

The longer the event, the more of a chance people will go back for seconds, or even thirds. A lengthier meeting or training might simply require a greater volume of food, or you might consider offering a couple of different courses to refresh what's on offer.

### THE TYPE OF CUISINE

It won't surprise anyone that guests will fill up more quickly on hearty cuisines like Italian or Mexican than they will on, for instance, salads or other vegetarian dishes. Knowing this, you can adjust not only the volume of food, but also the number of side dishes.

## Catering calculations to keep in mind

General rule of thumb: Order one pound of an entree dish for every three to four people, and then add 4 oz. servings of side dishes or appetizers per person to complete the spread.

## By food type:



### Proteins like pulled pork or brisket:

4-5 ounces per person



### Fried chicken, ribs, or similar dishes:

3 pieces per person



### Skewers and kebabs:

2 per person



### Burritos:

1 per person



### Tacos:

2 per person



### Sushi:

8-10 pieces per person



### Salads:

3-4 ounces per person



### Sandwiches:

if ordered as an assortment, sandwich platter, or buffet, plan for 12 sandwiches for every 10 people.

# How Food Improves Office Life

Food makes everything better. Here are some ways you can add smiles (and more engaged attendees) to the most common types of work events.

## INTERNAL MEETINGS

Offering food at an internal meeting boosts attendance and helps keep everyone happy. For a [breakfast meeting](#), you might provide bagels, breakfast burritos, pancakes, or açai bowls. Lunch is easy with individually packaged catering and [boxed lunches](#).

## CLIENT MEETINGS

It's always important to put your best foot forward with prospects and clients. Having crowd-pleasing catering options in your back pocket is a crucial part of being the host with the most. Just like with employees, good food can boost a client's mood, strengthen relationships, and generally help create good vibes.

## EVERYDAY SNACKS

When people need to refresh and refuel, having grab-and-go items available can help them regain focus. It's also a fun way to have an impromptu chat with a colleague - which can often lead to creative collaboration - as you refill your coffee mug or snack on a granola bar.

## EVERYDAY LUNCHES

For some forward-thinking organizations, ordering in isn't just for special occasions, it's a routine part of the work day. We designed our Relish service to meet this exact need, providing an easy way to coordinate recurring employee meals that are flexible enough to accommodate hybrid office schedules and varying levels of company subsidy.

## REWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Who doesn't like being treated to a tray of delicious cupcakes? Or maybe a pizza party or taco bar is the right way to show appreciation for a job well done. Food has long been a much-loved way to say thank you, and the more creative you can get, the more memorable that reward will be. From sushi to ice cream sundae bars, curry to cake pops, and everything in between, there are hundreds of options to choose from, whether you want a meal or want to make a meal of dessert.

## TRAININGS, SPECIAL PROJECTS, AND PRESENTATIONS

If you want people to show up to an important training or presentation, let them know there's going to be food! Offering a full meal (like lunch) is a great way to encourage employees to attend training sessions. The same goes for special projects and presentations. Maybe you're trying to recruit folks for an internal task force, or maybe you're presenting to the sales team. Whatever the event, adding food will make your invitation more appealing.

## EMPLOYEE CELEBRATIONS

From birthdays to baby showers, retirement send-offs to work anniversaries, there's always something worth celebrating at work. And what's a celebration without food? These personal events are an excellent opportunity to show how much you care - not just about the work your employees do, but about their personal lives, too.

## HOLIDAY PARTIES

When the holidays arrive, everyone loves a little extra cheer, and it's a wonderful way to build team camaraderie. Beyond the year-end holidays, taking time to celebrate other events and traditions - from a Halloween party to a Summer Kickoff BBQ - can inject some flavorful fun into everyone's calendar.

## WEEKLY OFFICE FOOD DAYS

Create your own special weekly food customs. Maybe Monday is donut day or Thursday is cookie day. And, in addition to giving people something to look forward to, establishing these kinds of traditions is a great way to nurture company culture.

## FOOD-RELATED HOLIDAYS

If you need a little inspiration (or just an excuse to make the team smile), you can have some fun with the many national food holidays like bagel day, burrito day, and pretzel day, just to name a few. We've put together a [full calendar of food holidays](#) that you can download as a printable PDF so you never miss another chance to celebrate food!



# 6 in 10

office food orderers say  
they order for employee  
holiday parties

## PRO TIPS AND TRICKS:

# Because every detail matters

We know that ordering food is just one of a million things you do during your work day – and there are so many moving parts involved in creating stellar experiences. From finding dishes everyone will love, to ensuring the food arrives right on time, to managing all of the billing and invoicing, you've got your hands full. Here are some suggestions to help ensure that your food orders go smoothly and you solidify your superstar status.

1

### Be mindful of dietary needs and preferences.

From vegan to paleo, keto to kosher, American workplaces have a variety of dietary needs and preferences. For the person trying to order food for a big group, it can be challenging to accommodate everyone.



As many as 30% of Americans try to avoid gluten



1 in 10 Americans say they don't eat meat



More than 16 million American adults have a food allergy

Balancing all these needs and preferences can be overwhelming if you don't plan ahead, but these strategies can help:

- Collect dietary information from employees and part of their onboarding process. Add it to a master list that you can reference and update as needed.
- Advise your caterer of any food allergies or preferences when you place your order. They may have customizations you weren't aware of.
- Don't over order buffet entrees to address mixed dietary needs. Instead, see if proteins can be kept separate so everyone can customize their dish.
- Go beyond "checking the box." For example, ordering a plain green salad for the vegetarians in your group won't leave them very satisfied. But you can ask about hearty mix-ins like beans or tofu, or vegetarian-friendly quiches, casseroles, and pasta dishes.
- Take advantage of ezCater filters. You can search for restaurants that can fill specific dietary needs.

**"We have a really diverse population of vegetarians, vegans and people who are gluten-free. Having the ability to search by those requirements is really, really awesome and makes my life easier."**

Virginia, Human Resources Project Manager

Learn more about [how to navigate dietary needs](#) when planning office catering.



## 2

### Keep your budget in check.

When you're trying to stick to a budget, there are lots of [tips and tricks](#) you can use, like serving breakfast for lunch and choosing less expensive types of cuisines.

There are also plenty of cost-cutting strategies that apply no matter what you're serving. For instance, stick to one entree. If you offer two, most people will want to try a little of both, meaning you'll need to order more food overall.

Here are a few other guidelines that can help you keep spending under control:



#### Side Salads

When accompanied by entrees, order a side garden salad for just  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  of your headcount. If the entree is large or already includes sides, reduce the side salad even further. Of course, if some people are vegetarians, adjust accordingly.



#### Chips

Not everyone eats chips, but some people eat two bags. Order for at least 85% of your headcount. Pretzels or baked chips are often appreciated, but be aware that they can cost more.



#### Other Sides

When ordering pasta/broccoli/potato salads by the pound, remember that some foods are much more dense than others. A pound of potato salad will look much smaller than a pound of pasta salad, and it will not stretch as far.



#### Drinks

A gallon of tea or lemonade serves 10 people at lunch, except on the hottest summer days. At breakfast, a gallon of juice can serve 12 to 15 people.



#### Desserts

Most guests appreciate a treat, and many will thank you for offering smaller portions. Request that brownies, bars, or cookies be cut in half, and order half as many. For cakes and pies that serve "X-Y people," calculate based on the higher number.

ezCater makes it easy to set a per-headcount or total budget for your catering order, with the flexibility to include delivery fee and tip in the calculation.

Learn more in our full walkthrough, [Catering on a Budget: How to Set Spending Limits on Your ezCater Order](#).

## 3

### Set the mood with food.

From comfort foods we crave on a cold, rainy day to summertime picnic fare, think about the vibe that your planned menu might help create. Also, consider the effects of various foods from a nutritional standpoint. Morning meetings run on coffee, for instance, while an afternoon snack that's more protein based than sugar based can help increase energy levels and focus (and avoid a crash-and-burn situation).

## 4

### Pay attention to presentation.

You don't need lobsters and caviar for every meeting, but you do always want to make a nice presentation, especially when clients or prospects are involved. It's always important to make a good impression.

In addition to ordering great food that is beautifully presented, take care to maintain appearances by "dressing up" the table throughout your event.

Consolidate or otherwise refresh items as needed. Remove empty containers and clear used plates, utensils, cups, and napkins. In general, keep everything looking neat, tidy, and appetizing.

## 5

### Think about temperature control.

When you're feeding a large group over a longer period of time, you need to have a plan to keep hot foods warm for the duration. On a buffet table or other serving area, sternos and chafing dishes keep food warm for 30 to 60 minutes. Also, try choosing foods that hold their heat well, such as casserole-type dishes. Other types of cuisine (Chinese, for instance), reheat really well in a microwave.

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**If your guests will be eating in shifts over several hours, you may want to opt for menu choices that don't require temperature control.**

## 6

### Don't forget the extras.

Always double check that you have all the serving and dining accessories you need. While many meals – like boxed lunch sandwiches – don't require utensils, others may require both serving utensils and individual cutlery.

If you're ordering buffet or bar-style catering, do you have enough plates and/or bowls? If you're ordering beverages by the gallon instead of individual cans or bottles, do you have cups? Your caterer can usually provide whatever you need if you don't have it on hand. You just need to ask!

## 7

### Order locally and seasonally.

For the freshest meals possible, consider ordering from caterers close to your delivery location since that cuts down on travel time and the risk of traffic delays, meaning your food will arrive faster and in the best possible condition. In addition, many caterers offer seasonal specials depending on which types of produce and other ingredients are available.

## 8

### School yourself on tipping etiquette.

The first thing to know about tipping for office catering is that the delivery fee and the tip are two different things. Delivery fees are typically standardized fees to cover the business costs of gas, insurance, and other driver-related expenses. These fees go to the caterer, not the driver. Tips, on the other hand, are paid directly to the driver the same way you would tip your server at a restaurant.

These two fees can affect each other. A general rule of thumb is that if the delivery fee is less than \$1 per mile, the driver is relying on tips, especially with today's gas prices. In these cases, a tip of at least \$1 per mile is tremendously appreciated.

**While there are no hard-and-fast rules about how much to tip your delivery driver, there are some useful guidelines:**

**<\$50** | **>\$100**

For orders under \$50, tip 15 to 20%

For orders of \$100 or more, tip 10%



**And, no matter the dollar value of your order, many people believe that tipping anything less than \$5 is poor etiquette.**

Learn more about [how to calculate the most appropriate tip](#). It's not only the right thing to do, it will also ensure you get the best service.

# Keep Up with Food at Work Trends

When your office lunch goes off without a hitch, you're the hero of the day. To keep that momentum going, follow these steps:

- 1 Do some post-event analysis to determine how to make the next event even better.
- 2 Take a quick poll (formal or informal) to get a sense of what people liked, didn't like, and truly loved.
- 3 Review the ordering and delivery process to see if there's anything you could have done differently to streamline future orders.

Be proactive about staying up to date on how office catering is evolving and adapting. Hint: Visit our [Lunch Rush blog](#) for news and updates on the latest food at work ideas and trends.



# Ready to be the office hero?

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