



# Feeding Athletes

At Home and On The Road





**If you're a coach, director of operations or team nutritionist, you know how hard it can be to find healthy food on the road. You want to keep your athletes fueled up and at the top of their game, but often you're stuck with poor nutritional options like grab-and-go meals and fast food restaurants.**



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At ezCater, feeding people — wherever they are — is our game. And feeding athletes in particular is something we know a thing or two about. If you're struggling to find easy, convenient and healthy ways to keep your team fueled on the road, we've put together six strategies for feeding your team when they're far from home.

STRATEGY 1

# Scope out the catering field

When tasked with finding restaurants out of their comfort zone, coaches and nutritionists tell us they have these three main challenges:

- 1 Unfamiliarity with the area
- 2 Lack of confidence in reliable food & delivery
- 3 Not enough time to research local food options

It's hard enough to find the right kind of food for your entire team when you're close to home, but when you've got to research unfamiliar restaurants that can cater to a hungry team, often with unpredictable game or tournament start and end times, that's an additional challenge.

And if your team managers and coordinators are already stretched thin, doing research and contacting eateries in advance and keeping track of food deliveries can be a job in and of itself.



**I can always trust that my order is going to show up on time and as ordered because we get updates from ezCater that they confirmed our order with the restaurant."**

**Courtney Gallagher**

Assistant Director of Performance Nutrition,  
Athletics Department, Texas A&M University

## TEAM SPOTLIGHT

### Texas A&M Baseball

Texas A&M's baseball team plays a lot of away tournaments, which means it's tough to predict when games will begin and end. When game times change at a moment's notice, last-minute food wrangling can create high-stress scenarios if orders arrive late — or not at all. Teams sometimes resort to grabbing snack stand food or drive-through grub on the bus back to the hotel.

Having a game plan for tournaments has vastly improved since Texas A&M began working with ezCater. The team's nutritionist can browse restaurants in the towns where they're traveling in advance, plan meals for 60+ players and staff, and contact ezCater to push back or move up an order if games finish early or run late.

"It's just so easy from a logistical standpoint," says Courtney Gallagher, MS, RD, CSSD, LD, Assistant Director of Performance Nutrition, Athletics Department, Texas A&M University.

"Plus, I can always trust that my order is going to show up on time and as ordered, because we get updates from ezCater that they confirmed our order with the restaurant."

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**ezCater's marketplace has over 100,000 restaurants across the country, with an exceptional customer service team dedicated to making sure your food arrives as ordered, when you need it to arrive.**



**Reliably feed athletes and team staff**

[Learn more >](#)

STRATEGY 2

# Get a feel for dietary restrictions

**✕ PRO TIP**

Use ezCater to filter by dietary need to find vegan, gluten-free, kosher and other food preferences.

Sitting down with your players and talking to them about their dietary restrictions and preferences before the season gets underway can make it easier to coordinate menu options that are appealing to everyone, and safer for those with allergies or sensitivities.

Plus, when you work with a catering partner like ezCater, you can filter by dietary restrictions to find local restaurants with vegan, gluten-free or even kosher or other cultural or religious dietary needs.

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**Our program is small from a resources standpoint. It's just me and one other full-time coach.”**

**Matthew Boone**

Head coach, Jacksonville State University Track & Field

**TEAM SPOTLIGHT**

## Jacksonville State University

After Matthew Boone took over as head coach of Jacksonville State University's Track & Field program, he became focused on ensuring his team was fueled with healthy, fresh food at home and on the road. "Our program is small from a resource standpoint," he says. "It's just me and one other full-time coach."

Boone doesn't have the operational staff of a larger program to manage food ordering, so he's had to wear that hat in addition to his coaching duties. But with ezCater, he's been able to meet the needs of his entire team, even ones with special dietary needs.

Last spring, Boone was able to accommodate Catholic team members who abstain from eating meat on Fridays during Lent. "We can easily do that through ezCater rather than just looking and seeing what's on the side of the road," says Boone.

### 3 steps for building the best bus meal



- 1 Order individually boxed meals for easy handing out and cleaning up
- 2 Offer easily customizable handheld foods like sandwiches, wraps, burgers, burritos or pitas, or big bowl meals like protein-packed salads or poke
- 3 Let players customize their proteins and flavors so everyone gets what they love, and there are no worries about allergies





STRATEGY 3

# Keep dining options open

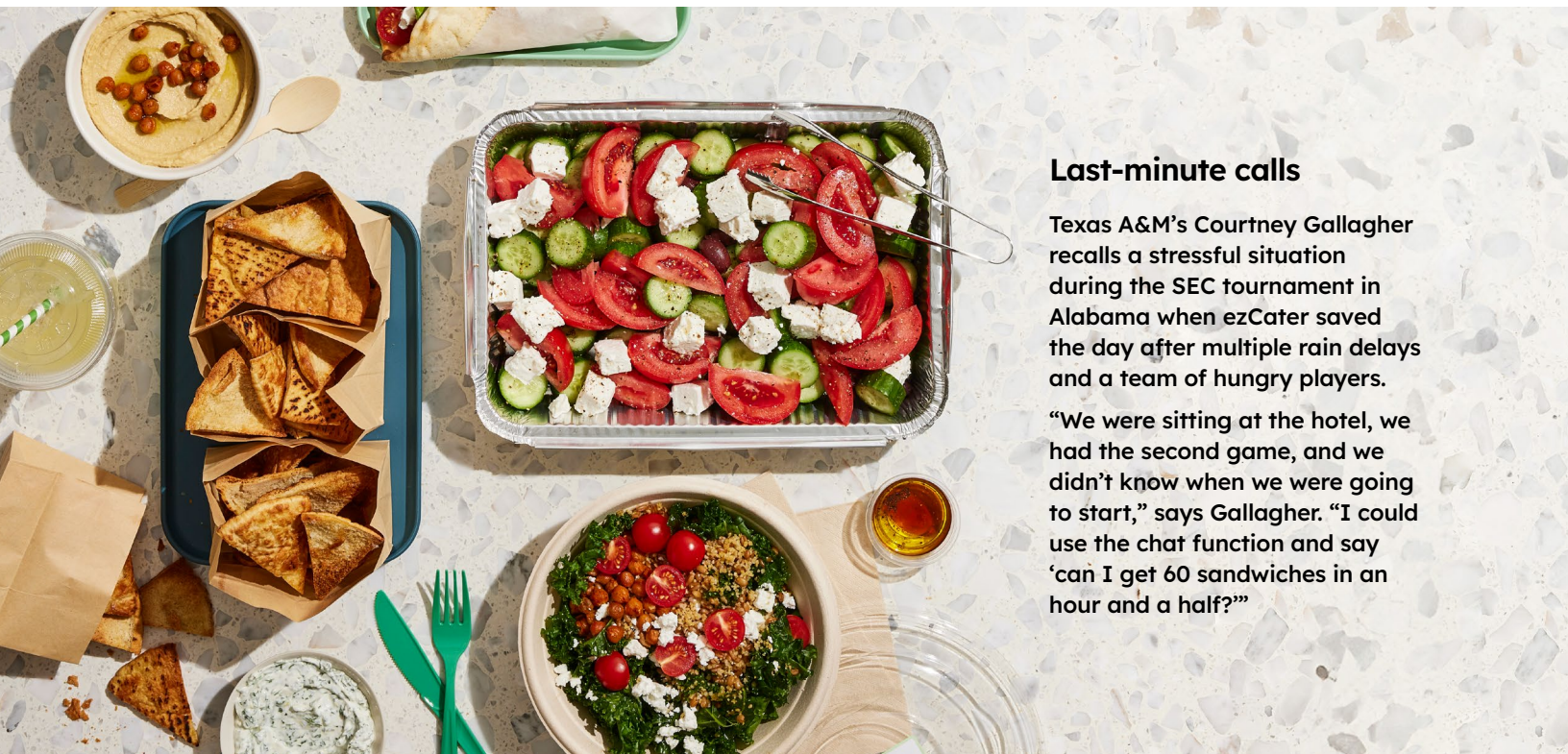
A team that does a lot of travel can quickly grow tired of fast casual fare — and in most cases, it's not the best for them nutritionally. Being able to vary dining options can not only provide athletes with better choices, but also help them to enjoy some meals together, rather than chowing down solo with earbuds on and phones out.

ezCater can help accommodate and elevate a variety of dining options including:

**In transit:** For longer trips, like the 8 hours it takes the Jacksonville team to go from Florida to Alabama, the easiest solution is to find a place the team can stop with the bus to pick up a meal. ezCater's huge network of restaurants means you're never far from a reliable food option.

**Delivery to fields or hotels:** When games or tournaments run long, and you need food delivered wherever the team happens to be, we can make that happen. And if things change mid-stream, our customer service team is there to help with last minute delivery needs.

**Finding reliable restaurants:** Randomly stopping at or calling a restaurant and hoping they have the resources to feed a big group on the spot may not always work out. ezCater can help ensure that the restaurants you're choosing can accommodate your team's size, dietary needs and delivery locations.



## Last-minute calls

Texas A&M's Courtney Gallagher recalls a stressful situation during the SEC tournament in Alabama when ezCater saved the day after multiple rain delays and a team of hungry players.

"We were sitting at the hotel, we had the second game, and we didn't know when we were going to start," says Gallagher. "I could use the chat function and say 'can I get 60 sandwiches in an hour and a half?'"

STRATEGY 4

# Focus on fuel, flavor and variety



## Breakfasts, Lunches and Dinners of Champions

Looking for a fan favorite? Our coaches say tacos are the best team pleasers and are also great fuel, with the ability to add or remove proteins based on players' specific needs.



**On any given day, we'll have eight meals going on, with six games per week. Before ezCater, I did a lot of research and reaching out to local caterers using search engines."**

**Adam Rodrigues**

Coordinator of Minor League Nutrition, San Francisco Giants

Keeping athletes fueled up with healthy options beyond fast food, while incorporating some variety, is the goal of most coaches and sports nutritionists. But hitting all of those targets can be tough.

Adam Rodrigues, Coordinator of Minor League Nutrition for the San Francisco Giants, knows all too well the challenges of feeding teams on the road and trying to satisfy a number of players' palates.

"On any given day, we'll have eight meals going on, with six games per week," Rodrigues says. "Before ezCater, I did a lot of research and reaching out to local caterers using search engines."

With over 100,000 restaurants to choose from, the ezCater marketplace was a home run for the Giants. Rather than serving the same types of food over and over again, Rodrigues was easily able to provide new and exciting meals each day — something the athletes enjoy as well.

"Variety is tough to achieve, especially in some of the towns that don't necessarily have all of these options," Rodrigues says. "In smaller cities and towns, you really have to dig around looking for stuff. Using ezCater has been a good way to streamline some of those options and put them in one condensed location. It's almost like your own search engine to see what food is available," he says.

"I believe we're able to provide really good quality catering for the athletes," he says. "Good quality, good variety, and I think overall, they appreciate what we're able to provide for them."

Jacksonville State Track & Field's head coach Matthew Boone says his team also gave rave reviews to some of the on-the-road meals they've eaten. He recalls one memorable team meal in Birmingham, Alabama where the team used a caterer that provided the option of roasted chicken with vegetables or lasagna. "I remember hearing someone say that was the best dinner they had had. It was a real meal at the end of the day," says Boone.



STRATEGY 5

# Don't get bogged down by receipts and tax-exempt paperwork

A big part of food planning doesn't just involve the meals, but it means working within a budget, giving players a per diem, keeping track of receipts and invoices, and for many colleges, finding restaurants to work with you on tax exemptions.

Streamlining the accounting aspects of feeding your team is another way that ezCater steps in for the win. All food orders are rolled up into a single invoice, so if you have multiple teams you need to feed, there's just one account to manage.

You can use digital receipts and manage the budget all from one platform. If needed, admins can upload tax-exempt certificates to ezCater where they remain on file, automatically saving the team money on

all eligible orders. That means you only need to upload that tax ID form once, for all 100,000+ restaurants.

Jacksonville State's Matthew Boone appreciates the way ezCater has helped reduce the paperwork part of his job.

"I don't like to hold onto paper receipts and get in trouble for not turning them in," Boone says. "ezCater has e-receipts and having that pdf is way better than a crumpled receipt."

Plus, when the team's on the road, Boone estimates that using ezCater saves him at least 30 minutes per meal. "So if we're eating five meals, that's 2.5 hours," he says.

**✗ PRO TIP**

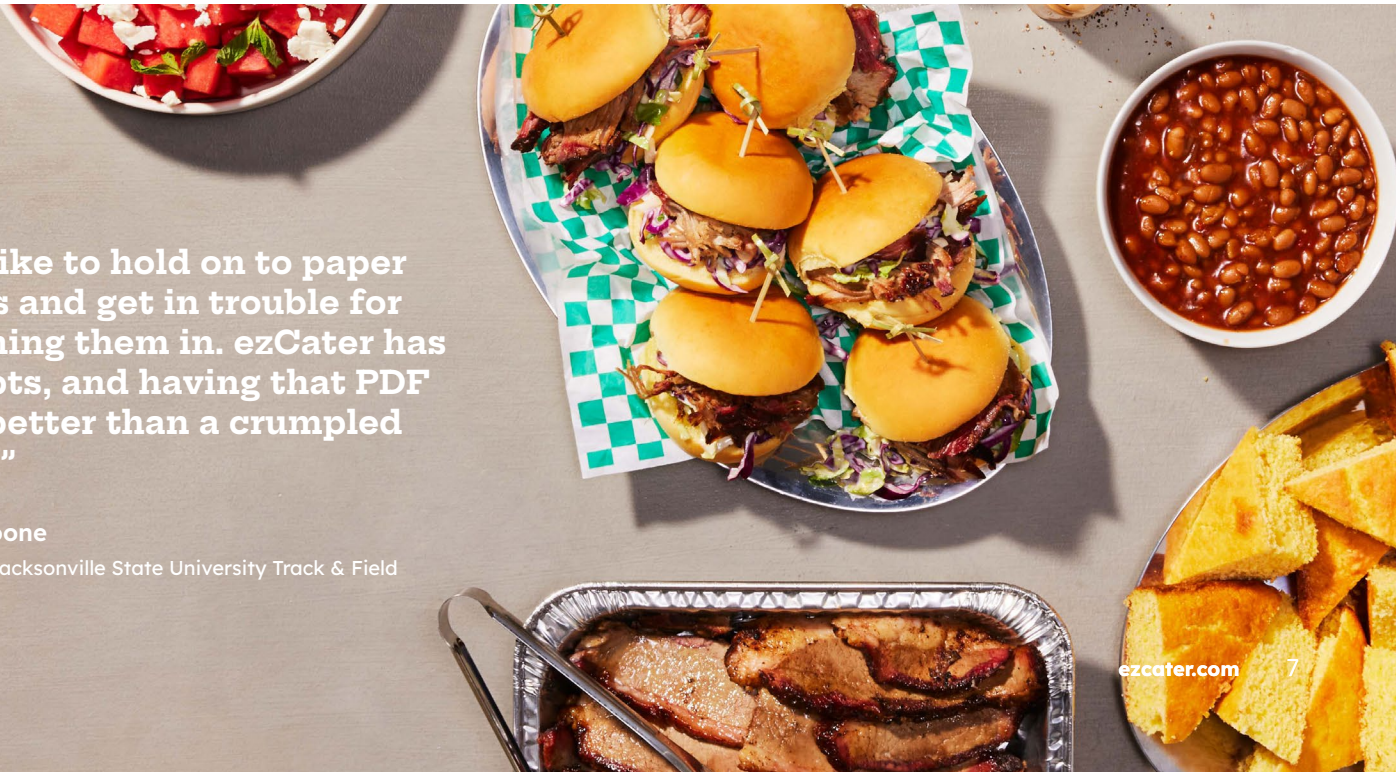
**If you're part of a tax-exempt organization, upload your tax certificate once and use at over 100,000 restaurants on ezCater.**

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Head coach, Jacksonville State University Track & Field



STRATEGY 6

# Order just-right portions to prevent food (and budget) waste

**✕ PRO TIP**

**Want to see what your entire organization is ordering and spending? ezCater's dashboard gives full transparency into orders and spend for tracking and budgeting purposes.**

It's sometimes hard to predict the right amount to order when relying on buffets and trays of catered food to feed big groups, which can lead to teams ordering too much — or not enough.

This goes for teams on the road as well as back home. There are so many occasions where teams gather to unite or even celebrate — think banquets and awards dinners — and while traditional tray catering is often the default, individually packaged meals can help prevent food waste and cut costs.

Individually packaged meals are also very popular at the corporate offices of professional sports organizations — especially as many shift to hybrid schedules. That became a challenge for the San Francisco 49ers organization, which has varying numbers of people in person from day to day.

**TEAM SPOTLIGHT**

## San Francisco 49ers

Harpreet Basran, Vice President of Human Resources for the San Francisco 49ers, began using Relish by ezCater for its ability to customize and individualize meals for the exact number of employees each day.

“I'm saving on a lot of costs because I'm only paying for what's ordered,” she says. “Previously, we were paying for bulk orders and we didn't know how many people were going to come so we just either were wasting a lot of food or not ordering enough.”

What's more, being able to provide on-site delivery eliminates the hassle of leaving the office and standing in line for food, which cuts into the lunch hour. And, as an added bonus, Relish is an opportunity for the 49ers to support local restaurants — many of which are minority-owned — in the community.

“ezCater's Relish makes ordering food at our company very easy because it provides us with a solution that's customizable and accommodates all of our employees and their individual needs,” Basran says.

Relish can be a great choice for traveling teams as well, thanks to its individually boxed meals. Not only does it allow individuals to customize their food, but it makes for easy cleanup, especially since some meals are eaten on buses or planes, or the players may take the meals with them back to their rooms.



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**Harpreet Basran**

Vice President of Human Resources for the San Francisco 49ers



# Reliably feed athletes and team staff

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