



2025

**Workplace  
holiday  
party trends,  
wrapped  
and ready**



# Your holiday party playbook

Take a peek at what employees really want from workplace holiday parties.

Holiday parties spark strong opinions: Some employees eagerly mark their calendars for the big day. Others quietly count down until the party's over.

To uncover what can truly put workers in the holiday spirit, ezCater surveyed 1,002 full-time employees and 603 workplace decision-makers involved in party planning.



## Unwrap key predictions for 2025 workplace holiday parties, including:



**Turnouts trending up:** Why good food has become a secret ingredient behind higher attendance rates



**The RSVP factor:** Which invite details, like timing, location, and plus-one policies, inspire employees to say yes



**Gen Z jitters:** The top anxieties employees face, and how planners can ease party-day stress for younger workers



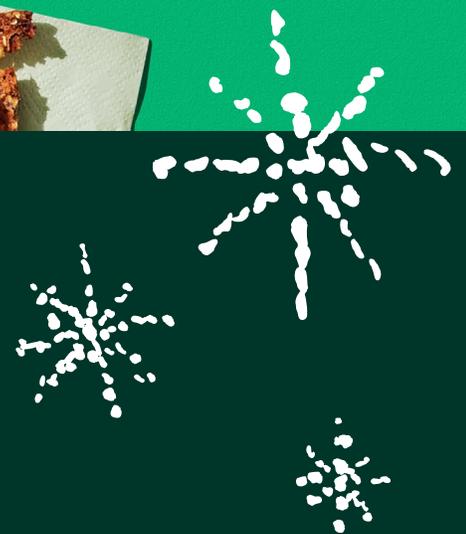
**From forced to festive:** Strategies for planning a holiday party your employees actually look forward to



## Section 1

# Catering to a season of connection in 2025

More employees are joining the celebration this year, and it's the promise of festive community and great food bringing them together. ezCater research shows that workers — especially those in hybrid environments — are craving opportunities to connect, build friendships, and enjoy a good meal.



# Party participation is picking up

The holiday party is back and bigger than ever, with more employees saying “yes” to the invitation this year.

# 82%

of surveyed workers plan to attend this year’s holiday party



Party planners estimate that **70% of employees** attended last year’s party



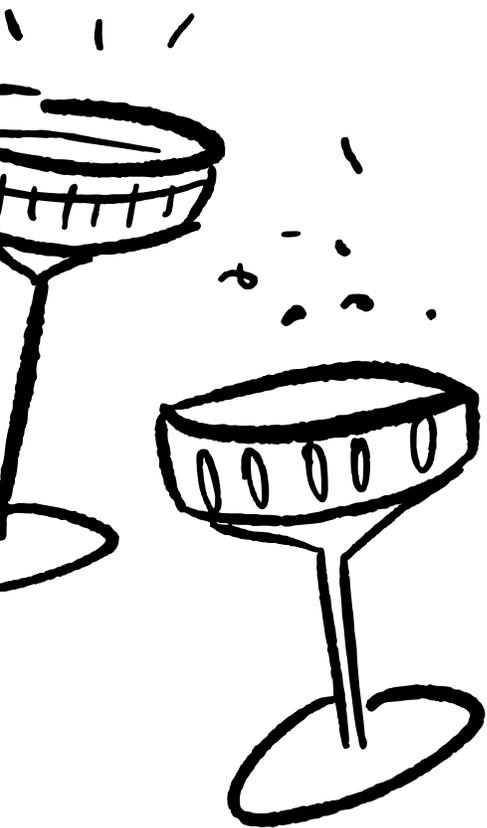
## Camaraderie is high on employee wishlists

Employees are RSVPing for the chance to connect and forge friendships with their colleagues.

# 83%

of workers say holiday parties help them bond with colleagues and develop friendships

Over half (**55%**) of employees look forward to camaraderie and socializing



## When teams are apart, parties bring them together

Holiday parties are a crucial connector for hybrid workers, and missing out can spark some serious FOMO.



Of the hybrid employees who have missed a holiday party in the past, **30% have had FOMO** from not attending



## Section 2

# Companies are serving up larger budgets

Companies are boosting their party budgets this year, increasing spending by 13% on average to make celebrations even more memorable for employees.



# Holiday party budgets on the rise

**92%**

of decision makers plan to spend the same or more on this year's holiday party

**51%**

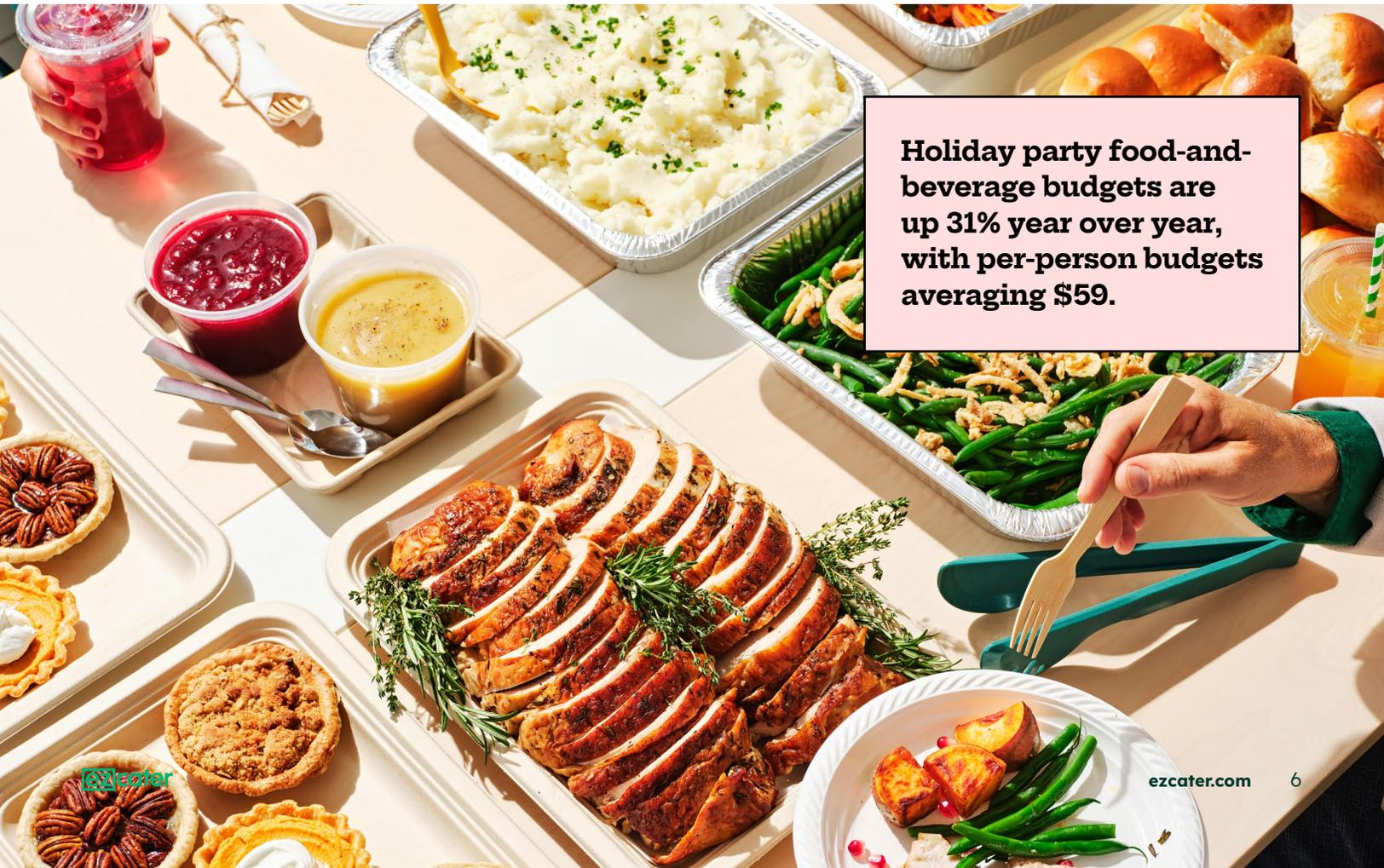
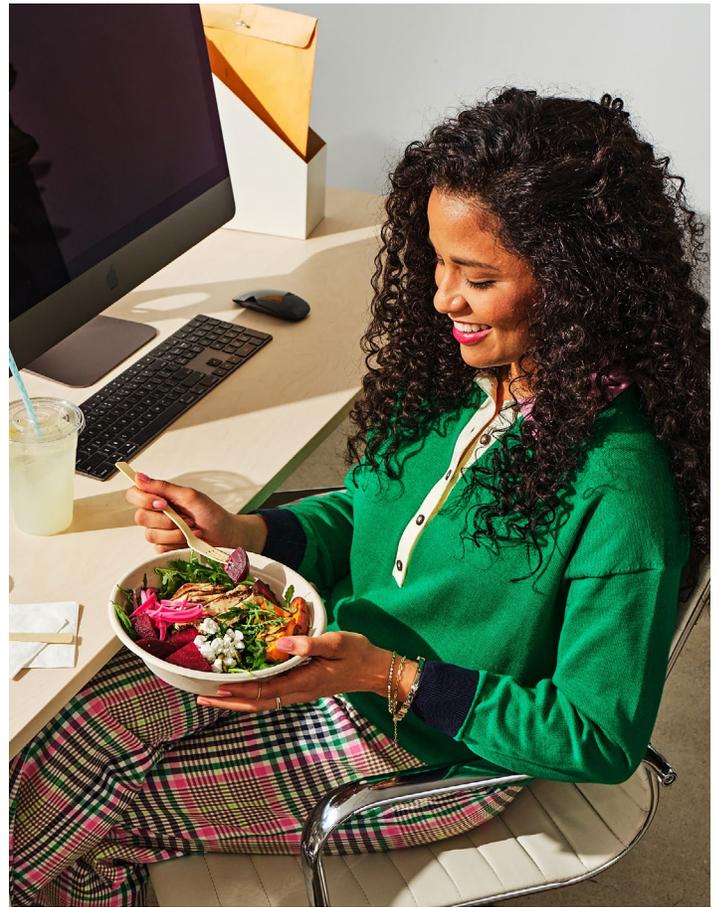
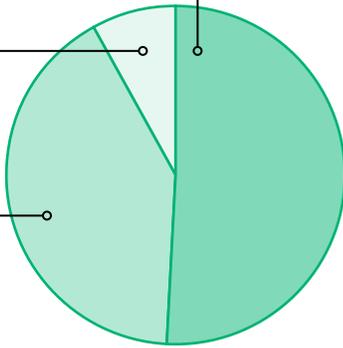
plan to spend more than last year

**8%**

plan to spend less than last year

**41%**

plan to spend the same amount as last year



**Holiday party food-and-beverage budgets are up 31% year over year, with per-person budgets averaging \$59.**



Section 3

# Food takes center stage

More than just a crowd-pleaser, food is the main reason half your employees RSVP in the first place. From sparking excitement to fostering connections, the right spread is the recipe for a can't-miss event.



# The menu is a deciding factor for RSVPs

Half of employees decide whether to attend based on what's being served — clear evidence that the menu directly drives attendance.



Food is a top draw

# 77%

of employees say food is the part of the party that they look forward to most

94% say the quality of food is critical to the overall enjoyment of the holiday party



Gen Z and millennial workers are **26% more likely** to be influenced by the food and drink options available



Hype starts with the menu

The right menu brings energy to the room, setting the tone for laughter, conversation, and lasting connections.

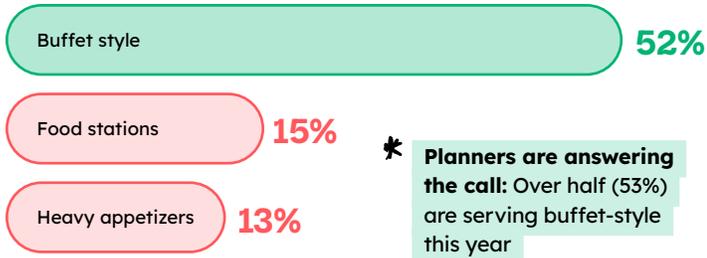
# 93%

say food drives social interaction at the holiday party

## What do employees want on the menu? Choice.

Let them pick their plates: 64% of employees prefer to select the meal or item they want to eat themselves at the holiday party.

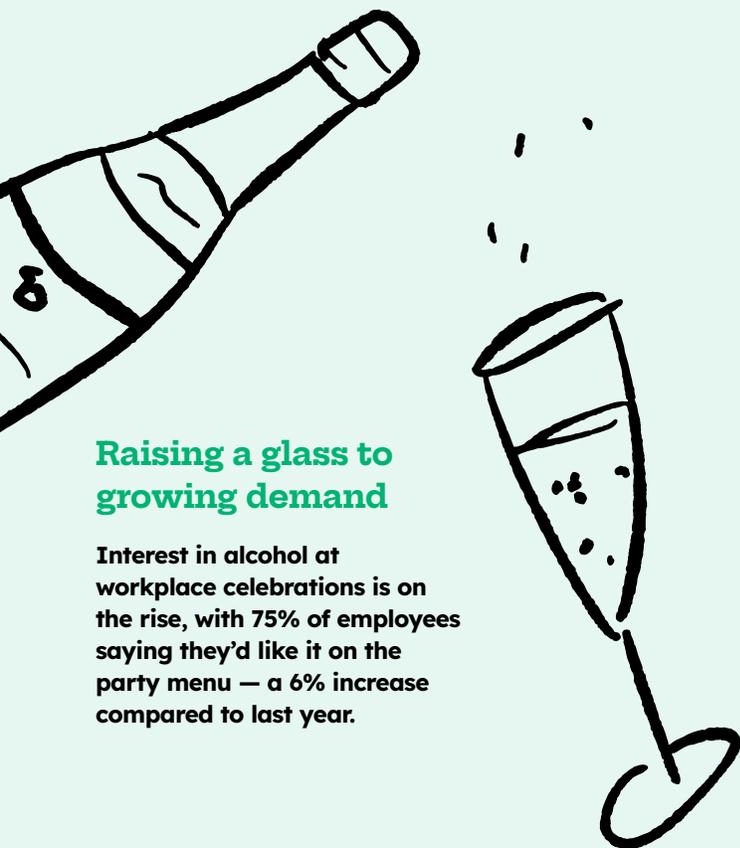
Today's workers are most excited about:



\* **Planners are answering the call:** Over half (53%) are serving buffet-style this year



## Serving alcohol



### Raising a glass to growing demand

Interest in alcohol at workplace celebrations is on the rise, with 75% of employees saying they'd like it on the party menu — a 6% increase compared to last year.

### Cheers to safe workplace celebrations

When alcohol is served, the majority of employees say they sip responsibly, and companies report few alcohol-infused headaches.

**87%** of employees say they avoid drinking too much at holiday parties

**82%** of party planners are comfortable serving alcohol at the holiday party

with 75% saying they've never had a negative experience serving alcohol at holiday parties in the past.



## Section 4

# Invitation details that increase RSVPs

What turns a workplace holiday party into a must-attend event? It's all in the details. These are the can't-miss must-haves topping employees' wishlists for holiday party invitations: when it's happening, where to go, what to wear, and who gets to come along.

# When

## December, by popular demand

EMPLOYEES PREFER

**86%**

of employees hope to celebrate in December

WHAT PLANNERS PLAN

**82%**

of planners are scheduling for December, while only 10% are planning to get a head start by celebrating in November

## Friday tops the wishlist

EMPLOYEES PREFER

**56%**

of employees want the party on a Friday

WHAT PLANNERS PLAN

Half of planners (50%) are preparing for a Friday party this year, with Saturday following as the next most popular choice (17%)

## Mid-day merriment preferred

EMPLOYEES PREFER

More than half of employees (53%) are hoping for an afternoon holiday party (noon to 5 p.m.), while 41% would rather celebrate in the evening

WHAT PLANNERS PLAN

Planners are taking note, with 47% scheduling afternoon festivities and 41% planning for evening events

# Where

## Event spaces lead the pack

Here's where party planners are hosting their celebrations this year:

Event spaces

**45%**

The workplace

**33%**

Outdoor or recreational venues

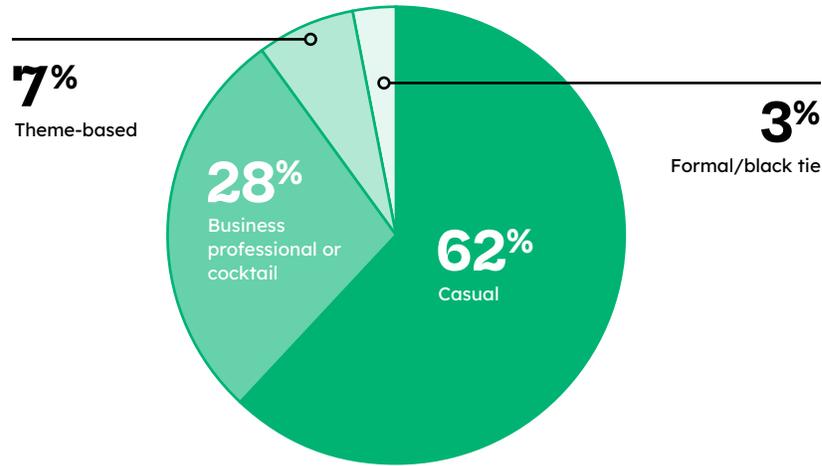
**14%**

Office celebrations remain more common among fully in person companies, with 39% planning to celebrate at the office, compared to just 27% of hybrid companies.

# Dress code

Casual comfort leads the way

Here's how employees want to dress this year:



# Plus-ones

The more the merrier

Employees value the opportunity to bring a plus-one — and more planners are making room for guests.

### EMPLOYEES PREFER

Nearly half (43%) of employees admit their decision to attend depends on whether a guest makes the list

### WHAT PLANNERS PLAN

So, it's no surprise that 77% of planners are now saying yes to guests, up 16% compared to last year



HOLIDAY 2025

## Section 5

# The not-so-jolly stressors of workplace holiday parties

While 96% of employees look forward to workplace holiday celebrations, nearly half (45%) still feel stressed about attending, especially the younger ones. From steering clear of hot topics to dodging awkward moments with coworkers, these worries can weigh on employees before the party even begins.

# Top triggers for party stress

Between tricky conversations and picky eaters, these factors can turn excitement into anxiety for some employees:



## Navigating hot topics

(gossip, politics, the economy)



## Not knowing many coworkers



## Uncertainty about the food



## Being around alcohol with management present

### Top 3 moments employees dread most

Whether it's standing alone or saying the wrong thing to the boss, these are the moments employees fear above all else:

- 1 Standing alone without knowing anyone
- 2 Getting stuck in an unwanted conversation
- 3 Saying something they'll regret to a manager



## Gen Z: The most anxious attendees

Today's youngest employees find themselves the most nervous compared to other generations.

Gen Z workers are:

# 42%

more likely than other generations to feel stressed about the party

# 15%

more likely to be concerned about liking the food

# 60%

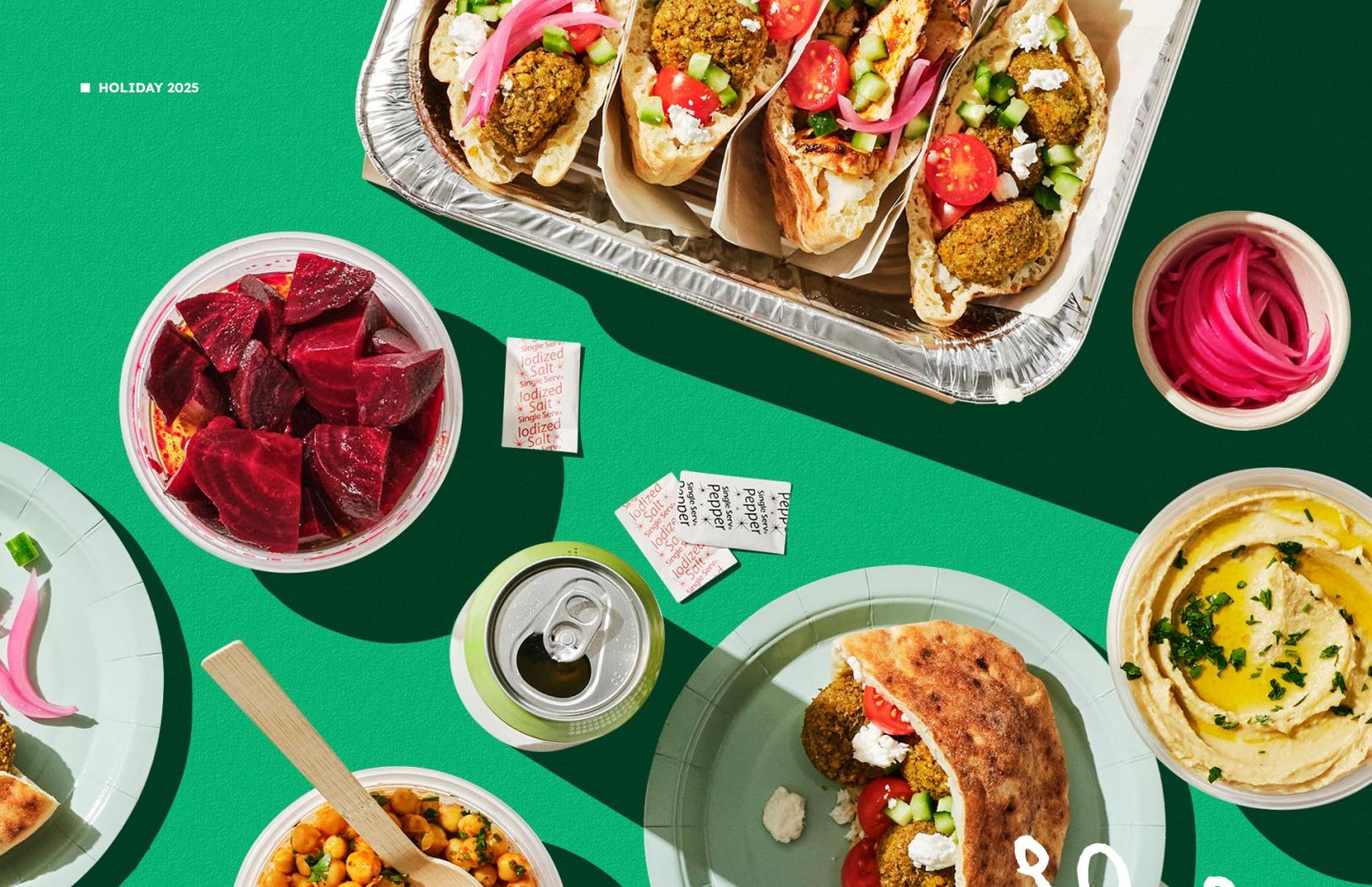
more likely to feel worried about standing alone

For most companies, pleasing every palate is the biggest stressor

# 9 out of 10

organizers say the most stressful part of planning a company holiday party is creating a menu that satisfies everyone's tastes and preferences.





## Section 6

# No cringe, all cheer: Tips for a holiday party that's memorable for all the right reasons

Leave the cringe-worthy traditions in the past. ezCater data reveals exactly what employees love — and loathe — at the annual holiday party, and how you can plan one they'll be excited to attend year after year.



TIP 1

Tap into team nostalgia

Nearly half of employees (47%) want to bring back the golden era of holiday parties: think live entertainment, festive dress codes, open bars, and a classic old-school vibe. This longing is even stronger among Gen Z and millennials, who are 45% more likely than other groups to crave a nostalgic party experience.



TIP 3

Don't take your party online

Virtual holiday parties simply don't cut it anymore. And don't just take our word for it: 66% of employees say they wouldn't even attend a virtual celebration. If budgets are tight, scale back and prioritize an in-person gathering to foster authentic connections. Even a simple catered lunch can make the holiday feel special.

TIP 2

Skip the stiff stuff

Nothing frosts the holiday spirit faster than the three most cringe-worthy moments employees wish they could avoid: forced icebreaker games, endless work talk, and a long, boring CEO speech. Instead, create an environment for organic interactions with buffet-style meals, group seating, and plenty of open space for relaxed mingling.



TIP 4

Pour, but don't pressure

Most employees hope to raise a glass this year, but more than 1 in 5 admit they feel uneasy drinking around managers. Keep the atmosphere festive — and comfortable — by offering a mix of alcoholic and non-alcoholic options, like trendy mocktails or artisan hot chocolate, while making sure no one feels obligated to partake.



TIP 5

Make food the main attraction

More than a quarter of employees (26%) say they show up just for the food and leave once they've had their fill. That means the right spread can not only inspire RSVPs, but also encourage guests to stick around for seconds. So, treat the menu as your party's headline act, not a side dish.

# Where festive flavors meet forward-thinking planning

No matter the size of your guest list or your budget, ezCater makes it simple to serve great food that spreads holiday cheer. With flexible menus and simplified ordering, you can host a celebration that's as joyful as the season itself — without the party-planning stress.

[Learn more about ezCater >](#)

