

## **OUTDOOR CATERING OPERATIONS: AN OVERVIEW ON CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Pranav Bhargava, Teaching Assistant, Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management, Bundelkhand University,  
Jhansi-284128, UP, Mobile no.: 9839114054, E-mail – pranav\_bhargava2000@yahoo.com*

### **ABSTRACT**

This article offers an overview of the current state of outdoor catering operations and some recommendations for the future development of the field. Outdoor catering operation is service of cooked food away from the location of the caterer's base camp. Outdoor catering operations require high set of skills as many occasions provides single chance of presentation. Operations like weddings, receptions, farewells and many more occurs once in a lifetime. Other than these operations, some operations may be scheduled monthly, quarterly, and half yearly or on annually basis, where a caterer can prove himself, if once he was not succeeded in any of his operations to meet out the satisfaction level of customer or his own.

Performing in outdoor catering is not a joke until or unless it has been experienced, things may be disastrous also. Recognizing the volatile situation before turning to be a problem is not a easy job, many learns when face the disaster and realize it later that would have done earlier.

One good example of this type of facility is a base kitchen of IRCTC, this is a kitchen used for the preparation of the food exclusively to be served away from the location of the operation. Some other may include hotel, restaurants and club kitchens. In most of the cases kitchen facility does not exists on location of the operation or where the food has to be served. Single – operation catering is provided by the caterers, but every time everything is not equal.

Key words: Outdoor catering operations, base kitchen, skills,

### **INTRODUCTION**

Outdoor catering operations meet the all set requirements of all segments existing in the modern market, from lower – lower class customer looking for the quantity and quality both at the affordable price, to the one who can afford anything at any price for the highest level of service, quality of food and exclusive crystal stemware, silver – plated flatware, finest linens. Similarly the midscale segment is one which exists between these two extremes, who call for quality than the lower class customer sector, but less than the higher class group and ready to compromise or bargain to fulfill their needs.

Outdoor catering operations are an art and a science both. The catering is an art as creating foods and moods of the customer are not an easy task, to turn virtual into real is not only the job of caterer it requires the effort from the customer too. The business of assessing money, manpower, material, market and marketing is purely science. To hold a successful outdoor catering it's equally important to observe both the aspects—art and science. Creativity and financial existence needs to be worked together.

1. Party food caterers type supply only the food for an occasion. They provide cold food and leave last – minute preparations only, along with the service and cleaning to others.

2. Caterers who provide Hot Buffet deliver food in the insulated containers from their commissaries. Sometimes service personnel may also be provided at an extra charge.

3. Full – service caterers are called for when extended type of service is required. On – site cooking, service personnel, necessary equipments – chinaware, glassware, flatware, tables, chairs, tent and so on are make available as per requirement. Other services like décor, music, floral may also be arranged. A full – service caterer can said to be as a complete operation planner, not just a one to serve food only.

Outdoor caterer can serve thousand of lunch boxes to a group of people; barbecue for fans, serving elegant meals on luxury yacht, food, staff and equipment for formal dinners with hundreds of gusts may also be arranged. If has to rated on the scale of one to ten on a “degree of difficulty”, where one means “easy” and ten means “most challenging” – outdoor catering operation would result in ten in comparison to indoor catering at two.

Playing away from your home ground is a good example for outdoor catering units as they don't have anything that may go in their favor, they believe on their luck and have to trust their skills and knowledge to perform in different conditions. As in home ground team gets the advantage, similarly working within the premises is no doubt beneficial all time. There could be numerous problems which may arise just before the actual service or operation. Some examples of “One Trouble on top of another”:

- **Already running out of time and stuck in the traffic jam**
- **Single elevator in a high rise building and that too adhere for guests**
- **Wrong food on wrong site**
- **Charge of negligence at the end of the operations**
- **After flawless service and consumption of food facing the charge of unhygienic and unhealthy food preparation**

The trend of becoming an outdoor caterer is emerging as a great profession. Even after having so many potential problems more than 1 lac caterers are operating in India. Young generation is crazy to learn and study the same through different level of education system i.e. universities, colleges, institutes and many more. They are running different types of courses to make them professional in this field. Almost every day new enterprises are setup by an individual or company, risking life time savings to fulfill their dreams of being a successful caterer. There could be many reasons:

- **Love for the adventure**
- **Pleasure of meeting new people**
- **Excitement of working at new place**
- **Becoming a trend setter**
- **Love the myriad challenges**
- **Boss of your own**

Operating in your own style is every ones dream. Becoming boss of your own self gives you wings to fly to your utmost, you don't have to answer anyone except customer. Whatever you earn at the end of day is your asset whether its satisfaction or drilling by the

customer. Everything would give you exposure towards industry and learning experience for future operations.

### **CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE**

Most of the time customers fail to understand that it's not at all easy for the caterers to provide the services without some essentials i.e. tent, tables, chairs, décor, linens, tableware and others. According to them all would come in the same price what they actually pay for the food only. Engaging the caterers may be more expensive at certain times, considering the type of service caterer would require the equipments, similarly cost of transportation, labor cost, need of tentage and décor. Every time customers want something new, they ask for improvisation from last time, uniqueness among all which would definitely cost them on higher side. Customers may save their money by organizing the operations in their home but dealing with leftover is not an easy job for them. They even can save by hiring down grade caterer or operation organizer on the cost of defaming their own credentials and worth of operations.

### **CATERER PERSPECTIVE**

Menu plays an important role in almost all outdoor catering operations, therefore it's essential for caterer pay due regards while planning any operations. Menu should be planned in such a manner that all the dishes could be prepared on site. Success of the operation very much depends upon the type of menu and the type of service to be delivered as an accompaniment to match the food.

Indoor catering operations are comparatively easier than that of outdoor catering operations as caterer having the cushion of familiar facilities within the premises. Outdoor catering could be tougher in terms of seeking potential problem of backup supplies. Supplying at distant locations with perfection and estimated stipulated time needs great skills.

Outdoor catering operations is full of uncertainties and these only give birth to opportunities. This industry offers to work in variety of locations, with different goal, lesser boredom, and more excitement as every day is a new day and it gives you more freedom to prove yourself. People looking for unlimited challenges, along with glamour and rewards, must opt outdoor catering operations as a profession.

### **Elements of successful outdoor catering operations**

Outdoor catering operations solicit many essentials i.e. experience, attitude, personality, aptitude, creativity and many more each enables the caterer to perform in given situation.

- **Work Experience:** The very first requirement in catering or food service industry is experience. Experience only enables the caterer to perform back-of-the-house or front-of-the-house, from preparation of the food to its service. It also helps the caterer to understand the needs and demand of the customer. Relation between the two develops with time; one must know the basics of both. If caterer is good in kitchen handling should come in front and those who are sound in service must gain knowledge of the kitchen or vice-a-versa.
- **Passion:** Professionals are passionate, and when it comes about outdoor catering profession caterer need more of perfection and all-around professionalism. Passionate professionals love their work and live their life for profession. Customers and staff can easily detect the lack of passion within caterer and this attitude would cost their business and dedicated staff. It would be better for any person belonging to any profession should quit their existing business and try something else.
- **An Entrepreneurial Nature:** Entrepreneurial trait is always required being an outdoor caterer. This trait itself describes the nature of a caterer, to be dedicated to their work and full of energy to spend extraordinary time to make their operations successful. They need to have an inherent quality to take the right decisions instantly when ever required.

Focusing on single aspect is not desired they have to be multidimensional. Becoming financially independent should be their principal motive and should respond to the circumstances for the same. What they do, way do perform must have a confident conduct towards their operations.

- **Basic Operation Knowledge:**

- Bookkeeping skills and accounting are basic necessity for a caterer to understand the aspects of finance to run an outdoor catering operation. This ability equips them to prepare their financial statement by their own.
- Learning is an endless practice; similarly for caterer doing their work on computers requires the knowledge of computers. Menu planning to budgeting, preparing bills, settling accounts, managing website and handling e-mails can be done by simple one click using special computer programs.
- Knowledge of legal aspects of catering industry plays an important role in running over all operations. Caterer must be aware of licenses required to run business, labor law, contracts, liabilities, and ability to embrace the operations within the law.
- Requirement of operational staff and knowledge of management of human resource skill is must to run any operation, especially in outdoor catering operations. Skilled and learned staff solves half of the problems of the caterer. Knowledge to recruit, motivate, train, brief, and manage the staff is an additional benefit to caterer.
- Caterers must be aware to implement their marketing strategies accordingly. Up keeping the skills to develop and implement the strategies according to market segment and requirement helps the business to flourish.
- **Ability to Plan, Organize, Execute, and Control:** Four basic functions of management are planning, organizing, executing and controlling, in catering industry all four plays important role to make an operation successful. Planning is to visualize all the aspects in advance by the caterer, so that documents and approvals required on the behalf of customer or caterer can be produced on time. It also enables the customer, caterer and staff to understand and execute the plan easily. Breaking down the operation into simple groups to get things done is effective organizing. This would ensure the efficiency and responsibility of each group. Implementation is execution of operations and job to be performed as planned. In the last but not least controlling is the supervisory act, which is a required at all well planned, organized and executed operation. The adage “the way you sight, the way you perform”.

- **Ability to communicate with customers and staff:** Communication is an ability of caterer to attest the presence in the market. Listening and speaking with attentiveness and confidently respectively is key feature of good communication. Outdoor caterers are ought to be an outstanding listener to respond to customers need and demand. Caterer must have aptitude to perceive more in less, this talent enables to perform even in complicated situations. These days market demands for astute caterers, who may respond to customer’s request and gain their confidence instantly.

While communicating with staff caterer needs to have different aptitude i.e. the spoken, caterer should communicate as much as possible with staff so that they can understand the plan and execute in the same manner. The entire focus of caterer should remain on the feedback and outcome as in problem or proper execution of the operation. Effective communications ensures the successful operations with confidence and motivation to perform in future.

- **Willingness to take calculated risks:** Outdoor catering operations are always known for their risk. This business is not made for feather hearted, who afraid to enter into grey tasks. Catering operations are full of uncertainties i.e. risk of payments, whether conditions, scarcity of skilled staff, unavailability of resources and many more which always lead to

doubtful demonstration of operations and caterer remains off sure of successful ending. Calculated and deliberated risks have to be taken by the caterer to make the operation occur; the rate of succession depends on the customer's acceptability and caterer's experience.

- **Sound body and mind:** As discussed earlier outdoor catering operations solicits for long working hours that too without rest. Overburden of operations in seasons, movement from one site to another with heavy equipments and to perform within time creates immense pressure on caterers. Good physique with high will power could be a key feature to overcome this situation. High energy level and positive attitude to deal with circumstances are added benefits in off seasons or when there is zero operation.
- **Creativity:** Capability of caterer to craft customer's vision into reality is inherent quality what they possess known as creativity. Presenting prophecy of menu, design, décor, look, feel, theme, service and ambiance into the world of recognition is a feature needed indeed in every caterer. If it's not there employ someone or better to learn the art.
- **Dependability:** Delivering to the extent of expectation is a major requirement of every customer. Caterer has to serve the best, whatever the circumstances are, whether its customer fault, natural calamity or negligence of caterer.
- **Open – Mindedness:** Accepting the trends and incorporating due changes in the working style are always appreciated. Open – minded caterers remain updated and ready to learn about new trends, work styles, trending recipes and menus to prosper their business. Presentation of innovative themes, diverse menus including new tested recipes among the customers with an outlook to satisfy their request should be every ones first preference.
- **Ability to meet the needs of customers:** Its moral responsibility of every caterer to serve the customer as per the needs. Caterers have to identify the needs of the customers so that in their every act they may bestow to customer's preference. Outdoor catering operations itself suggest that services should in relative accordance to customer's demand. Satisfying own needs of money, equipment and greater self-esteem leads to unsuccessful operations. Caterers must remember that their primary goal is to serve and satisfy the customers need because this would automatically pay back them as revenues, profits, publicity and positive feedback, to fulfill their needs.
- **Ability to project a favorable image:** Generally caterers are selected by the customers on the basis of their prevailing image and credit value in the market. This states that caterers have to sell them rather than their services. In outdoor catering operations caterers need to project their favorable image among the customers, which accord the expectations of the customer. Caterers having image as sophisticated and expensive caterer would find difficult to sell their service to those possessing low budget. It would be better for caterers to project their image as in accordance to their targeted market to convene the desire of customers.
- **Sense of humor:** Laughter is the remedy of all sorrow. Good humor even at bad times provides relief from stress and tension. Outdoor catering operations are always subjected as stressful industry; long working hours, deadlines, work pressure, magnitude of undertakings put caterer and staff under tremendous trauma. Sense of humor and fun would definitely rejuvenate the caterer and staff, and let them to perform their job with boosted energy.



## **CUSTOMER FOCUSED MANAGEMENT**

### **Administrative Decision Making**

Outdoor catering operations chiefs must settle on choices that keep their tasks running easily. They understand that a few choices will be superior to other people, that there is no ideal answer for each issue, and that the best dynamic objective is to locate the most ideal arrangement with minimal number of downsides.

### **Administration**

There are significant contrasts between the individuals who lead and the individuals who oversee. Providing food organizations need the two sorts of administrators, and some who can do both. On the off chance that a providing food organization is procuring seven and eight-figure yearly incomes, it is without a doubt being driven by individuals with initiative aptitudes. Pioneers can get individuals to do things they don't really prefer to do, yet they do them and even appreciate them.

### **Polished methodology and Common Business Courtesy**

Outdoor catering chefs who are not proficient in their strategic approaches will ever arrive at the zenith of accomplishment in the field. Before we address the specialized parts of providing food in the succeeding sections, it is of most extreme significance that we characterize polished methodology.

### **Dress expertly.**

Make the most of your work as an outdoor catering chef. At the point when work stops to be agreeable, the time has come to stop and locate another profession.

### **Morals in Management**

There are times when a chef is given a free hand in arranging a menu. Maybe a lamenting customer calls for food after the burial service of a friend or family member, saying, "If you don't mind send over nourishment for 50 visitor's tomorrow evening. You realize what we like!" The moral chef won't exploit this circumstance by either giving an excessive amount of food or cheating the customer.

### **Isolating Yourself from the Competition**

Extraordinary chefs accomplish more than emulate—they enhance. There are particular points of interest for the individuals who offer a one of a kind menu, an extraordinary help, or maybe a remarkable area. They may fabricate and enhance another person's idea, yet they endeavor to take the plan to the following level. Instead of impersonating another's prosperity, they engrave their own mark on their menus. To delineate, we should investigate two straightforward, self-administration squashed potato bars:

### **Individual Management**

Outdoor caterer must figure out how to manage standards of stress the board, time the board, and individual association in the event that they are to oversee at top proficiency. Time is our most valuable ware, and to squander it in light of being overemphasized or disarranged will definitely bring about not exactly attractive outcomes.

### **Stress Management**

Stress originates from communication with others, and from fulfilling time constraints. A specific measure of pressure and strain is important to accomplish the best outcomes—the individuals who are too laid back by and large don't amplify their latent capacity—however an excessive amount of pressure causes constant weariness, touchiness, criticism, aggression, firmness, and trouble in intuition plainly. Outdoor caterer's who are overemphasized can't perform at most extreme capacity.

### **Time Management**

There are just 168 hours in every week, and the best rewards go to the individuals who achieve the most important things during this fixed measure of time. Outdoor catering

food operators understand that in the event that they can achieve increasingly important creation in less time, they will possess more energy for things other than work. They likewise understand that working more efficiently, through the viable utilization of time will deliver more prominent outcomes.

One of the greatest time squanderers for a caterer is additionally the wellspring of much business—the forthcoming customer who calls to pose inquiries—so it's an interference that can't be disregarded, yet can be controlled. Whoever picks up the telephone at your business ought to consistently qualify the approaching call by inquiring:

- The date of the occasion
- The area of the occasion
- The quantity of visitors
- The financial plan for the occasion

Why? Most importantly, time can be squandered discussing an occasion before you ask the date and find you're not ready to do it in any case in view of a booking struggle. Maybe the quantity of visitors is excessively little or excessively huge for your specific organization, the spending plan is deficient, or the proposed area is as of now reserved for another occasion.

### **Getting Organized**

At the point when ventures, assignments, providing food kitchens, and workplaces are sorted out, things run significantly more easily and proficiently. The time spent searching for things and bouncing from occupation to work is sat around that could be put an excessive amount of better use. Numerous outdoor catering food providers have discovered different strategies that work for them:

- Build up a recording framework utilizing hanging organizers and manila envelopes. Classifications can incorporate up and coming occasions, tasks to do, and extends pending. Records ought to be put away vertically, as opposed to stacked on each other, for more prominent availability.
- Take a tip from occasion organizers who start a different note pad for every occasion they are chipping away at. Into this three-ring fastener go all notes, contracts, outlines, shading tests—anything for that specific occupation.
- Consider recruiting an expert coordinator to go to your office and set up a documenting and record-keeping framework that works for your business.
- Keep those things that are utilized every now and again close by.
- Concentrate on each venture in turn, instead of bouncing starting with one thing then onto the next.

### **THE SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL CATERERS**

How the caterer look at some extra procedures, ways of thinking, and genuine approaches to be effective in the difficult field of outdoor catering operations.

Propensities are things we do consequently, such as brushing our teeth, brushing our hair, or fixing a decorative liner that is lopsided. We scarcely consider them, we simply do them. Stephen R. Bunch composed *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, which has been a smash hit for a considerable length of time—you should understand it on the off chance that you haven't as of now. In any case, what are a few propensities that mark fruitful chefs? What isolates star entertainers from the remainder of the group? With a gesture to Mr. Group, here are seven key qualities.

#### **Ability to Take Calculated Risks**

One of our preferred truisms is, "A turtle goes no place until it sticks its neck out." In request to succeed, we should be consistently developing and improving, and the best way to do this is to leave our customary ranges of familiarity—and stick our necks out! In case you're correct given, you feel very great composition with your correct hand.

Take a stab at composing with your left hand. You're certainly out of your customary range of familiarity. Be that as it may, sooner or later, you'll see you can really compose with either hand. Effective chefs get things going by facing determined challenges, regardless of whether it is attempting new menu things, new smorgasbord show ideas, or tolerating a vocation in another and testing outdoor catering area. Chefs who will not face challenges neglect to develop and learn are abandoned.

### **True Concern for Others**

No one cares the amount you know until they realize the amount you give it a second thought. Sympathy and veritable worry for your customer and staff are foremost to long haul achievement.

What are their needs, wishes, and wants? What are their interests and their "hot catches"? By placing ourselves in their positions, we can start to show worry for other people and get them. At the point when we do this, we create important connections and, not fortuitously, reliability. We give them what they need, and we get what we need.

### **Staying aware of Current Trends**

It's not simply an issue of food and introduction of trends. Caterer's who are not wired to work together online through the Internet and email are passing up immense chances.

Individuals do search for providing food on the web, and the organizations that lead the way have top notch sites and determinedly answer to messaged demands in an ideal way.

Outdoor caterer's need to start reacting to email correspondence at the earliest opportunity, just as giving messaged recommendations to those customers who like to work together through their PCs. Occasion organizers who book food providers for their customer love accepting messaged proposition, since they are anything but difficult to reorder into their own recommendations.

In case you're not prone to work on the web, you're obsolete.

### **Superb Priorities and Time Management**

You get 20 percent of your deals and benefits from 80 percent of your customer, and 80 percent of your deals and benefits from 20 percent of your customer. None of us ever return home around evening time imagining that all the work is done—it never is. It's essentially an issue of what's generally significant, just as what's generally dire.

Critical things are never actually an issue. Doubtlessly that on the other hand the caterer have a provided food occasion today, it will complete. In any case, what's most pressing isn't really what's generally significant. You should comprehend the distinction.

For example, you could experience a day cooking three little social affairs for 25 guests each, yet fall behind on setting up a suggestion for another movement, in a fourth of a year, for 500 guests—and lose it to a competitor whose recommendation was basically submitted on time. Effective food providers invest their energy in those zones that produce the greatest compensations as far as cash, quality, and different prizes. They make a propensity for arranging their days, allowing for the most significant, just as the direst. Toward the beginning of every day they set up a plan that subtleties both momentary targets and long haul objectives.

### **Quality before Quantity**

There's nothing is wrong with building deals if quality doesn't suffer. More business implies more hours at work. What's more, specialists will reveal to you they've never met a man or lady who, on a deathbed, communicated a desire that the individual in question had invested more energy at work.

On the other hand caterer can develop their own organizations with no unfriendly consequences for the nature of own lives or own items, at that point we ought to let it all



out! Yet, in the event that we discover benefits slipping and customer griping, and we need a letter of presentation when we stagger home at 3:00 A.M., at that point something's exceptionally off-base.

We have to make of propensity for persistently asking ourselves whether we may be in an ideal situation with not so much business but rather more an ideal opportunity for ourselves and for our families. We have to constantly analyze the nature of our work to guarantee that it's not slipping in light of the fact that we've permitted ourselves to take on something over the top.

### **Being Detail Oriented**

Do you make it a propensity to constantly search for the easily overlooked details? A decent food provider isn't nitpicky, yet is everlastingly seeing something that needs as changed, balanced, revamped, or improved—easily overlooked details that most customers won't notice, yet that significantly sway the general polished skill of an occasion. Monitoring the subtleties in flavors, looks, fragrances, and orderliness isolates the normal chefs from the whizzes. Furthermore, definitely, check the spelling, sentence structure, and accentuation in the entirety of your composed materials, from pamphlets to agreements—or recruit somebody to do it. Once more, the objective is to introduce an expert picture. Keep in mind? The overlooked details are the main problem.

### **Setting High Standards**

On the other hand that you will not acknowledge anything besides the absolute best, you all the time gets the best. Effective outdoor catering units set their principles high and anticipate greatness from themselves and their staff individuals. They're perpetually discontent with business as usual, continually endeavoring to make each gathering, wedding, or occasion superior to the last. They question after an occasion, approaching staff for information and upgrades. They realize that in the event that they neglect to improve, they're welcoming their rivals to catch a decent customer or a bigger portion of the market.

Effective caterer's likewise making a propensity for long lasting learning. They're perpetually perusing, going to career expos, and investigating territories that will assist them with improving their own organizations with new thoughts. They challenge and prize their staff individuals for having a similar demeanor.

Vince Lombardi, the late NFL mentor, who during his vocation instructed the principal group to ever win the Super Bowl, put it along these lines: "The nature of an individual's life is in direct extent to their responsibility to greatness, paying little heed to their picked field of try."

### **CONCLUSION**

By perusing and analyzing the content, will increase the careful comprehension of how every one of these components consolidate to create a fruitful outdoor catering occasion on account of an expert food provider.

This provides the fundamental data to the individuals who are propelled to begin their own organizations or to build up an outdoor catering division of a current foodservice activity.

Providing food isn't a particularly simple approach to get by. Yet, it is a very fulfilling and fascinating field that joins relational and hierarchical aptitudes, cultural patterns, and money related discernment. In the event that you do it well, your customer won't be the main ones celebrating at your occasions!

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