

Consulting, Planning, and Producing a Successful Catered Event

First Contact

Niagara Gourmet receives your phone call or email. We query you about your event to gather information for an overview of what you have in mind. Based on your responses, we gauge if production of your event is an active and realistic possibility for us. For example, you have selected a date and time that Niagara Gourmet is available to produce the event; you understand our price ranges; your event falls within the parameters of our requirements.

If someone other than Chef David receives your call, he or she may be able to answer general questions that you may have about our services. Regardless, your general event profile will most certainly make its way into Chef David's hands. He will return your call and/or email you appropriate information.

Initial Appointment

If you wish to meet with Chef David, an appointment is scheduled. The first meeting usually lasts one hour. At that point you may wish to reserve our services for your event. A deposit is collected, all the paperwork is completed, and an agreement is signed which determines how future situations will be handled if they occur. An Event file is created for your function.

Site Survey

If the function is in a home or unique location, Chef David will visit the location, do a survey, and sketch out or draft an Event Layout plan. Subsequently, you will usually check back with us, generally by phone or email with questions. Changing circumstances may also necessitate some modifications to your original plan so that you will need to contact us in a timely manner so that these can be facilitated and any challenges resolved.

One Month Before Your Event

You finalize your menu and event details. Niagara Gourmet will then move forward with the existing plans. We will confirm rental reservations such as linens, and any other rental items for the event.

One Week Before

Niagara Gourmet calls you to get the minimum guaranteed number of guests, so that we can move forward with our planning. This is the minimum number of guests for which you will be billed, even if the actual number of guests attending the day of the event is less than the guaranteed number.

If this is the first time you have used Niagara Gourmet's services, you may feel it necessary to call us again and review the event plan. However, rest assured you are in

capable hands and the day of your event you will find both our cuisine and our standards of service to be first class all the way. You may also call us to add more guests even the day before the event: we will do everything possible to accommodate your request after the week prior deadline day has passed.

All of your information is entered into computer, and two copies of the event sheet are printed. One goes to Chef David and one to the Operations Manager. Chef David and his Operations Manager hold a meeting to discuss the event and to identify any special needs or circumstances which require particular solutions. After the meeting, Niagara Gourmet contacts its well-trained staff and schedules the necessary personnel to ensure the success of your event.

This process of finalizing details with you, confirming rental reservations, meeting to finalize event details, and making arrangements for event staff takes several hours.

Three Days Before

Chef David analyzes each item selected from the menu and calculates the needed ingredients to prepare for the event. He must calculate a percentage over in the likely event of a last minute change in the number of guests expected. Either he or his Operations Manager takes a complete inventory of ingredients available in Niagara Gourmet's professional kitchen facility.

Then Chef David calculates the quantities of ingredients needed and contacts several suppliers to order the necessary items. Care is taken to find fresh local produce in season, and Chef David is likely to meet with these suppliers personally, as well as with local suppliers of other fine food specialty items, as required for your event.

Two Days Before

Delivery trucks arrive at Niagara Gourmet's kitchen facility various times with the various items ordered. Chef David must stop his work and check in each item to assure that the correct item has been delivered and that it is in excellent condition.

Kitchen staff must immediately move the items from the delivery area to the proper cooler, freezer, dry storage, linen room, small wares, or paper goods storage areas. Each item must be marked with a date. Care is taken to ensure accurate rotation of stock: staff must pull out existing items (e.g. ground pepper, fresh garlic, sour cream, frozen shrimp, cloth napkins) and then place the incoming item on the back of the shelf or on the bottom of a stack, and then replace the existing item in front or on top.

The Day Before the Event

Chef David produces prep lists for each item you have ordered. He assigns time schedules and prep lists for the kitchen prep staff. The prep staff goes to the proper storage area and pulls the ingredients listed. They slice, dice, mix, and follow strict

recipe procedures.

Each prepped pan of food is then labelled, dated and placed in the proper cooler or storage area. The kitchen is completely cleaned and sanitized. Floors are swept, sprayed, scrubbed, rinsed and mopped. The day is complete.

The Day of The Event

Chef David creates a timeline schedule to ensure food will be ready at the proper leave time. Tasks are assigned to each of the prep staff who places foods in state of the art equipment, and monitors precise temperatures to assure the food temperature is at a safe level for holding.

The Operations Manager reviews a detailed checklist to ensure that all necessary serving pieces, service ware, plates, glassware, silverware, and many more items too numerous to list here, have been pulled, packed, labelled, and moved to the staging area by the catering staff. All of these latter items are carefully loaded on the vans and rechecked. These items are then transported to the event venue. Depending on the magnitude of your event, usually some of the event staff will travel in the vans and the rest will drive in other vehicles to the venue.

The event staff unloads the items from the vans, and carries each item to a staging area inside the venue. Depending upon the event, the staff may be required to place linens on tables and set the tables with silverware, napkins, glassware several hours before the event so the decorator can finish the tables. They cover the buffet tables with professionally cleaned linens, and place each service piece in a pre-designed format. They fill the chafing pans with water and place sterno devices under each.

Meanwhile in the kitchen area, trays are garnished and finished. Pans of food are labelled, placed in an insulated storage box, placed on wheels, and moved to the staging area. The culinary staff loads and carefully checks to ensure all food and remaining items are loaded on the van which is then transported to the event venue. At the venue, the event staff, in contact with culinary staff who are in transit, light the sternos just before the food arrives.

At the venue both culinary and event staff unload the items from the vans and carry it to a staging area inside the venue. The food is placed on the buffet. Chef David oversees, properly garnishes, and finishes the buffet. The service staff completes several tasks.

Now we wait. Sometimes guests arrive at the appointed time, sometimes early, sometimes late. Everyone must be in uniform and ready to begin. We must pay our staff from the time they arrive and throughout the event, even while waiting.

As guests arrive, the culinary staff attends to the buffet ensuring it is full and appealing.

The event staff pours and refills beverages, removes plates and attends to the guests.

The event is over? Hardly, now it's clean up time!

Dishes are rinsed and repacked. Silverware, glassware, linens are packed and moved to staging area. Buffet is cleared. Chaffing pans are extinguished, cleaned, sanitized, repacked and moved to staging area. All items are carefully loaded on the vans and transported back to the kitchen.

At Niagara Gourmet's kitchen, all dinnerware must be washed, sanitize and dried before sorting, wrapping and returned to their proper storage location. The vans are swept and cleaned. The hot storage containers, ice coolers and any other platters, trays or props are cleaned, sanitized and returned to storage. The kitchen equipment and surfaces are sanitized. Floors are swept, sprayed, and mopped. The employees clock out and go home after a job very well done!

In our price, there is a lot more than food you are getting. Many things happen before, during and after an event about which most people are not aware. In addition to extensive and detailed planning on the part of Chef David, Niagara Gourmet's staff of trained professionals will set up, serve, and clean up. Staff credentials include Food Safe Handling Certification from the regional public health unit, Smart Serve Certification (alcohol beverage service training) and Professional Banquet Server Certification.

There will also be many types of specialty equipment, which must be pulled, loaded, transported to reception, unloaded, set up, reloaded, transported back, unloaded, cleaned, sanitized and restocked. These specialty items had to be purchased, must be maintained, and will have to be replaced after a number of uses – either because of general wear and tear, or because of damage or breakage.

Catering in general requires long hours, hard work, weekends away from family, and serving people who are sometimes less than cordial. Niagara Gourmet takes catering to the next level, setting the standard for excellence in both the quality of the cuisine and the service we offer.