

Catering & Event Planning Checklist

Your complete timeline and task list for stress-free event hosting

6–8 Weeks Before

- Define event type, date, and estimated guest count
- Set budget with 10–15% contingency
- Book venue or confirm home setup layout
- Create initial menu plan
- Send save-the-date notices (for large events)

4–5 Weeks Before

- Finalize guest list and send invitations
- Confirm menu and calculate quantities per guest
- Order rental equipment (chafing dishes, tables, linens)
- Plan buffet layout and traffic flow
- Hire or confirm help (servers, bartenders)

2–3 Weeks Before

- Collect RSVPs and adjust quantities
- Create detailed shopping list
- Plan cooking timeline (what can be made ahead)
- Arrange equipment setup: chafing dishes, fuel, serving utensils
- Prepare labels for dishes (include allergen info)

1 Week Before

- Shop for non-perishable items
- Prepare make-ahead dishes (marinades, sauces, dressings)
- Test chafing dish setup and fuel supply

- Confirm delivery/pickup for rental items
- Prepare emergency kit: extra fuel, serving utensils, napkins

Day Before

- Shop for perishable items
- Set up buffet tables and chafing dish frames
- Prepare dishes that hold overnight (salads, dips, desserts)
- Chill beverages
- Do a walkthrough of the entire setup

Day Of Event

- Final cooking and food preparation
- Set up chafing dishes: water pans, fuel, food pans
- Arrange food with proper serving utensils
- Light fuel 20 minutes before guests arrive
- Set up drink station and dessert area
- Enjoy your event!