



ON THE ROAD

by Michael Rosman

Holiday catering season

It can be more than two weeks in December!

Raise your hand if you’ve ever said, “We should’ve finalized and begun marketing our holiday catering menu(s) sooner.” Welcome to the majority. In a survey of 400 of our clients, almost 70% “raised their hands.”

Raise your hand if you’ve ever said, “Corporate holiday catering occurs for about two weeks in December. We lose a week of business between Christmas and New Years, so it ends up being a good, but not a great month.” Over 80% of our surveyed clients again, raised their hands. Misery loves company.

There *is* good news: As you are reading this, there is ample time *not* to raise your hand this year.

Here’s another good piece of news: Holiday corporate catering should also include the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving. There is a lot of money lying at your feet between November 11 through 26 this year. Are you ready to pick it up?

There are three components of successful holiday business development.

- 1 Offering a crowd-pleasing menu(s) at a reasonable price
- 2 Create a marketing calendar and stick to it
- 3 Plan in advance

Start with turkey

If you are thinking, “Does a company want to order a ‘Thanksgiving Warm-Up Lunch’ (or dinner) a week before, or even a few days before the real deal?” The answer is YES!

Below is a sample guideline. Your menu, pricing, minimums, and fine print will vary, of course.

Note: All dates correspond to the current 2019 calendar.

Thanksgiving Warm-Up Menu

Available from Monday, Nov. 11 through Tuesday, Nov. 26

- ~
- Home-Roasted Turkey Breast with Gravy
- Chef’s Stuffing
- Sweet Potatoes
- Buttered Green Beans
- Homemade Cranberry Sauce
- Freshly-Baked Rolls

- ~
- Choice of Pie(s): Apple, Blueberry, Chocolate-Pecan
- Chilled Beverages
- French Roast Coffee & Herbal Tea

- ~
- \$\$ per person
- Add: Vanilla Ice Cream \$\$ per person

- ~
- Includes delivery and set-up
- Includes paper products and serving utensils
- 10-person minimum / 24 hours notice required
- For groups of 50 or more / 48 hours notice requested

You can create the most celebrated menu in the history of mankind, but if people don’t know about it, you’ll have lots of turkey in the freezer. Strategic marketing is as important as the food itself.

Leverage as many different platforms as possible, starting with advance notice to your customer and prospect base.

Suggested marketing calendar

By Monday, Oct. 28: Have a separate landing page for online traffic. *Note:* Don’t start creating the page on Oct. 28. It should be ready to go on Oct. 28.

Email marketing

Direct marketing, newsletter/blogs, Constant Contact/Mail Chimp.

Suggested dates/frequency: Oct. 29, Nov. 5, Nov. 12, Nov. 19, Nov. 22
Note: Schedule to re-send all “un-opens” three days after the original blast

Social media marketing

Beginning Oct. 28 thru Nov. 25.

- Facebook: 3 to 5 times per week
- Instagram: 1 to 2 times per day
- Twitter: 3 to 5 times per day

December: let the feasts begin!

As for December, this is a suggested (and tested with successful results) menu:

Holiday Office Feast

Available from Monday, Dec. 9 through Monday, Dec. 23.

- ~
- Appetizers
- Choice of two types; Two pieces per person of each

- ~
- Jumbo Shrimp Cocktail
- Mini Beef Wellingtons
- Spanakopita Triangles
- Chicken Satay Skewers

- ~
- Entree
- Sesame Soy Salmon Filet
- Homemade Four-Cheese Ravioli in a Lite Cream Sauce
- Rice Pilaf
- Steamed Vegetable Medley

- Our Signature Caesar Salad
- Freshly-baked Rolls
- ~
- Mini Dessert Pastries
- Hand-Sliced Fruit and Berries
- Chilled Beverages
- French Roast Coffee and Herbal Tea

- ~
- \$\$ per person
- Includes delivery and set-up
- Includes paper products and serving utensils
- 10-person minimum / 24 hours notice required
- For groups of 50 or more / 48 hours notice requested

Suggested marketing calendar

By Monday, Nov. 25: Have a separate landing page for online traffic. *Note:* Don’t start the page on Nov. 25. It should be ready to go on Nov. 25.

Email marketing

Direct marketing, newsletter/blogs, Constant Contact, Mail Chimp.

Suggested dates/frequency: Nov. 26, Dec. 3, Dec. 10, Dec. 17, Dec. 20
Note: Schedule to re-send all “un-opens” three days after the original blast


Social media marketing

Begin Nov. 25 through Dec. 20.

- Facebook: 3 to 5 times per week
- Instagram: 1 to 2 times per day
- Twitter: 3 to 5 times per day

More marketing strategies for both holiday promotions

- Include flyers with all delivery orders during the month. They can mirror your landing page. Print them in-house. Use colored or Thanksgiving / Holiday-themed paper. Make sure they include “how-to-order” information. Staple them to the copy of the invoice that stays with the client, or to the outside of the bag that includes beverages and paper products.
- If you have a restaurant/café, put signage on the door and tables. Have flyers and/or menu by the registers. Include a flyer in every take-out order.
- Instruct delivery crew to talk up the promotion to their customers. Remember, often they are the face of your catering business.
- Instruct your customer service crew who are taking catering orders over the phone to do the same.
- Add, “Ask about our holiday ____ menu” to your voice mail.
- Call clients who ordered holiday catering from you last year. Let them know you’d love to cater for them again this year.

Proper planning should lead to, at worst, “organized chaos.” It’s a hectic time of year for us, but it’s also an important opportunity to make hay. Block off some uninterrupted time and get your crew together to plan your holiday menus and marketing strategy/calendar. Consider planning both promotions simultaneously. You’ll be glad you did. 



Michael Rosman is the founder of TheCorporateCaterer.com, a consulting, coaching and lead generation company for businesses that aspire to take their corporate catering business to the next level or start a new division. He is also a Senior Consultant with CertifiedCateringConsultants.com. He can be reached at michael@thecorporatecaterer.com.