

Members Quarterly

Winter 2014 Edition

Ask the Expert

Catering to Everyone –

Beware of the pitfalls

Q: We have a number of catered meetings at breakfast and lunch. With so many people with food allergies and special requests, can you give us some suggestions as to how we plan our food orders?



Teri R. Gentes

A: Personal dietary needs and preferences are more predominant now than ever before. Years ago when food wasn't mass produced or overly processed, many of our present dietary diseases did not exist. Now, more people contend with very specific dietary needs and/or eat more healthfully.

Excess nutrient void food consumption has caused -numerous digestive disorders with ever increasing numbers of people afflicted with food intolerances and allergies. Symptoms show up in numerous ways including chronic pain, fatigue, inflammation, indigestion, insomnia, headaches, hormonal imbalances, weight gain, acne, hair loss and more.

With the plethora of information out there, common sense nutrition is anything but common. Compounding this problem are the contradictory approaches on exactly what constitutes a healthy diet. Everyone has their beliefs and opinions influenced by industry, the media, so called diet gurus, culture, religion and their emotional attachments to food. However, a general poll of employees will quickly reveal that most aspire to feel, look and age as wonderfully as possible.

Eating in the workplace can often be one of the most deviant culprits in sabotaging one's healthy intentions compromising the entire workplace environment. It's no secret that healthier people are more productive, personable, cooperative and motivated. When it comes to food allergies and special requests regardless of specific dietary needs, quality nutrient dense food requirements are universal. In order to have employees embrace, commit and sustain nutritional menu choices, it is imperative to establish a corporate culture dedicated to healthier diets and lifestyles.

To create acceptance of such an initiative, educating employees on the correlation between food and health is necessary. Research validates 80% of our diseases are related to diet and lifestyle. Also, adding in great tasting nutrient dense food options is absolutely necessary. No one likes to feel that they are being deprived of delicious foods. Collaboration with the caterers is necessary in providing quality food choices accommodating those with dietary restrictions as well as those with dietary liberty.

We strongly advise you to consult with experienced caterers, food service specialists or nutritionists rather than trying to figure out all the menu options on your own. These specialists can suggest menu items that will accommodate the major allergies so you don't need to become a nutrition expert while planning a simple corporate meeting.

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Today's top food allergens include dairy, wheat, soy, corn, eggs, shellfish, tree nuts and peanuts. Though this growing list may appear to be quite the challenge to accommodate, working with specialists will help you avoid potential disasters. Most caterers offer a wide variety of options such as low-to-no food allergens, low sodium, gluten free and vegan selections which are excellent replacements for the proverbial muffins, sandwiches, wraps, pasta salads, sugar laden cookies, etc.

How can you find quality caterers? Check out these websites to access numerous options in your locale: www.happycow.com and www.eatwellguide.com

Some suggestions to incorporate in your meetings include super food shakes, main course salads and "make your own salad" stations, dairy and gluten free wraps, gluten free pastas and power bars.

These healthier options reap a win-win situation. Nutrient dense whole foods optimize one's overall health. They improve mental ability, blood sugar, triglyceride, hormone and energy levels. They will improve mood, weight management and more. Every organization today is ready to reap the benefits here!

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