

**PARTY TIME:**

# **12 Ways to Maximize Sales with Summer Events**





# Contents

## **3 Introduction**

## **4 Prep Your Menu**

1. Brunch it.
2. Save on resources with a buffet.
3. Offer a custom drink.
4. Don't forget vegetarians.

## **6 Prep Your Staff**

5. Train for large groups.
6. Break up responsibilities.

## **7 Prep Your Customers**

7. Be a celebration destination for current customers.
8. Promote your event space.
9. Set expectations for event hosts.

## **8 Prep Your Space**

10. Table it.
11. Make room for gifts.
12. Watch the temperature.

## **10 Conclusion**



## Introduction

Summer can be a very challenging season for restaurants. As the weather improves, more guests might choose to barbecue at home, picnic in the park, or hit a street fair. When school lets out, many families may leave town for extended vacations. If you are not attracting tourists, you'll want to make your restaurant a summer destination for locals.

One way to do that is to **take advantage of the celebrations** that begin with Mother's Day, continue through "Dads and Grads," and culminate in Labor Day's official end to the season.

Bringing in private events during these months can help increase sales. Plus, you might reach new customers and introduce them to your establishment. So, whether you tap into catering as a strategy, or entice

your patrons to host their events at your restaurant, it's critical to maximize your ability to serve summer revelers. June, July, and August account for roughly 30 percent of all weddings, for example, and that brings along opportunities such as showers, bachelor/bachelorette parties, and rehearsal dinners. Little League finals, volleyball leagues, and business outings can be fruitful community moments, too. Is your restaurant prepared for the influx of business these special occasions could bring to its bottom line? Is it even on your radar?

Before summer gets away from you — check out our 12 ways to prepare for events and parties, and to bring in more sales.



Section

# Prep Your Menu



## 1. Brunch it.

Not quite breakfast and not quite lunch, brunch is a consistent crowd-pleaser that offers your customers the best of both worlds. Brunch can combine omelets, salads, light sandwiches, French toast, and any number of other dishes. It's a great time to test new menu options and determine what time of day they might best serve. "For brunch only" add-ons like a carving or "make-your-own" station can impress guests with customization and are relatively easy to execute.



## 2. Save on resources with a buffet.

Buffets can be a profitable sales driver if you price them properly to manage your margins. You first need to have the space to manage a buffet, and be certain you can drive enough business to limit waste. In fact, for large parties, a buffet-style menu may be your best bet. Customers can serve themselves at their leisure, allowing for small talk and festivities to continue at their own pace. Buffets also let you more easily set prices per guest (drinks included or excluded) and keep the per guest tally simple in the event of split checks. Your staff can concentrate on providing excellent service and increasing sales through things

like drink orders. They'll have more time, also, to manage your non-party dining space so those patrons don't feel ignored. Be sure to have someone assigned to manage your buffets so that trays don't go empty or even nearly empty. The buffet line is not the place for FOMO ("Fear of Missing Out").



### 3. Offer a custom drink.

Offering a special cocktail (or mocktail) to match the theme of your scheduled party is a low-impact method of ramping up the celebratory atmosphere. It can also eliminate some of the guesswork out of ordering for attendees, allowing you to plan and profit better. Do remember to have plenty of soft drinks, coffee, and tea available as well. If you are creative enough, your custom cocktail can be a great topic of conversation during the event — and beyond. Remember, **word of mouth about your restaurant** reaps greater benefits than any other form of advertising.



### 4. Don't forget vegetarians.

Make sure that whatever items you serve your party-goers, you offer clear options for those who don't eat meat. Attending a graduation party or bridal shower isn't the same as choosing a restaurant for dinner. Guests are coming for the event itself and probably not checking the menu ahead of time. Maintaining some variety in your catering menu will ensure that everyone goes home happy and satisfied. (And be prepared for custom orders as well, in case some guests need gluten-free options, have surprise allergies, or are just a little bit picky.)



## Section

# Prep Your Staff



### 5. Train for large groups.

Serving guests at an event like a wedding reception or rehearsal dinner is not the same as regular dinner service, and your staff will likely need additional training to keep service top notch. Hold a small staff meeting specifically to walk through how to serve event guests, perhaps even doing a refresher session immediately before the event itself specifically tailored to the expected crowd. Special attention should be paid to the guest of honor and host(s), of course, but every guest should be made to feel like they are being catered to.



### 6. Break up responsibilities.

In all likelihood, you'll end up with fewer staff per table working an event than you would with standard dining room service. But that doesn't mean service has to suffer. Make sure duties are clearly understood and broken apart for maximum efficiency. Ideally, you'll assign one server acting as point person for the host, overseeing everything. Keeping drinks filled, dirty dishes cleared, and special requests fulfilled is a big job, but be careful also not to be too hasty or intrusive. Your customers and their guests want to enjoy their private party.

# Prep Your Customers



## 7. **Be a celebration destination for current customers.**

Serving guests at an event like a wedding reception or rehearsal dinner is not the same as regular dinner service, and your staff will likely need additional training to keep service top notch. Hold a small staff meeting specifically to walk through how to serve event guests, perhaps even doing a refresher session immediately before the event itself specifically tailored to the expected crowd. Special attention should be paid to the guest of honor and host(s), of course, but every guest should be made to feel like they are being catered to.



## 8. **Promote your event space.**

The idea that “if you build it, they will come” is nice, but the reality is you need to sell everything that you do to ensure it can be a financial boon to your business. Reach out to local bridal or party-planning businesses, chambers of commerce, and sports leagues to let them know you have space — and are willing to make special accommodations — for group events. Share your ideas for graduation and bridal parties on social media. Post table tents with party information or slide a note into the check holder. Feature images of private events (with the host’s permission, of course) on your website and social media. Don’t be afraid to mention your celebration venue options when guests call for general information.



Section

## Prep Your Space



### 9. Set expectations for event hosts.

It's important to be able to accommodate the special needs and wants of party-planners, but it's also fair to set limits to guarantee you can deliver on your promises. Not every space is going to be able to accommodate large amounts of decoration, for instance, but you should be prepared to allow banners, some table decorations, streamers, and balloons. Also, be sure to include time before and after the event for host set-up and breakdown, and let them know clearly what your staff can and can't do to help.



### 10. Table it.

Make sure tables are arranged in such a way to allow moving around without impeding your service. Always provide enough space for each guest to **have at least 18 inches** from the edge of the table to the back of their chair, and allow at least 6 to 8 inches between each seat. This will let your servers move freely and give your guests a relaxed experience more akin to regular dining service.





## 11. Anticipate spatial needs.

A special gift table is usually standard fare for celebrations, so be sure to plan for one in arranging your party space. You'll want it to be out of the way of any buffet or dance area, but still in plain view for all the guests. Allowing for extra room where the honoree can sit and open the gifts, if desired, is also a smart move. Along the same lines, is there entertainment involved in your event? Do you have space set aside for that? Live music, even karaoke machines, can take up an enormous amount of room — much more than you anticipate — and require easy access to power outlets.



## 12. Watch the temperature.

Party rooms, particularly smaller spaces, can heat up pretty fast with an influx of guests. Setting an enclosed room to 65 degrees before any guests arrive is generally a good starting point. Be sure to keep an eye on the temperature and adjust accordingly as the party goes into full swing. This will be particularly important if the event features a buffet with Sterno or other warming tools. Keep tabs on the guest of honor (particularly at baby showers) to make sure they are comfortable.

If your private room doesn't feature a thermostat independent from the rest of your establishment, think about prioritizing that on your upgrade wish list. It will make a world of difference in keeping your party guests happy and having them recommend you to their friends for future celebrations. When you're ready to make an upgrade to help your event space attract more guests, there are a number of [financing options](#) available.



## Conclusion

Remember, your regular customers and your potential patrons are all looking for the same thing—to make their summer events and celebrations festive. Whether you get them in for a wedding-related affair, a sports league award ceremony, or an office outing, your goal should be to make the party effortless

for the host and memorable for their guests. The net result will include generating positive word of mouth, booking more events, and attracting new customers. And who knows? Maybe they'll come back for their winter holiday parties!

Want to learn more about how Rewards Network  
can help your restaurant grow?

Contact us today:

**restaurants@rewardsnetwork.com**  
or visit **RewardsNetwork.com**

rewards<sup>n</sup>  
network<sup>SM</sup>