

SIDE BY SIDE COMPARISON: OFFICE CATERING MODELS

The office catering industry has gotten extremely competitive and there are hundreds of companies around the world offering a wide range of services.

Selecting the right partner is crucial, but before we can start evaluating corporate catering partners you need to decide which model is best suited for your office.

In this paper, we'll define the current corporate catering models and we'll compare the options across a broad spectrum of criteria.

DEFINING THE OPTIONS

There are three dominant options in the corporate catering space. Each model has different advantages depending on company size, pace of growth, and workforce preferences. carry-in catering, on-site cafeteria and aggregators/food delivery.



3 OFFICE CATERING MODELS: COMPARED

CRITERIA	CARRY-IN CATERING	ON-SITE CAFETERIA	AGGREGATORS/ FOOD DELIVERY
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Who prepares the food	Prepared offsite by vendor chefs	Prepared onsite by internal or contracted kitchen staff	Prepared by partner restaurants
Food safety	Commercial kitchen standards and vendor handling	Onsite inspections and direct oversight	Varies by restaurant; less direct oversight
Ingredient labeling and traceability	Clear labeling and digital menus with traceability	Full transparency; company controls sourcing and labeling	Limited; depends on restaurant partners
Allergens and dietary needs	Can accommodate dietary needs and provide clear labeling	Highly customizable; dedicated stations possible	Dependent on the restaurant partners. In some case, Employees select meals that fit needs
Variety of menus	High variety in cuisine, menus. Best caterers offer variety within each day's meal	Extensive with multiple onsite stations	Depends on the number of restaurant partners.
Quality of ingredients and staff	Focus on fresh, high-quality ingredients; trained hospitality staff	Full control over quality and staff training	Dependent on restaurant partners and delivery
Flexibility to adjust headcount	Easy to scale up or down with notice	Limited; fixed overhead makes scaling harder	Highly flexible; employees opt in individually
Sophisticated reporting and analytics	Wide range, Best caterers offer advanced analytics and reporting	Usually data and custom dashboards available	Usage and spend analytics available; less robust than onsite
Ability to customize and add events	Yes, custom menus for events with notice	Maximum flexibility; full events and catering onsite	Limited; mainly for daily orders

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Pricing structure	Per-person pricing; mid-range cost	High fixed costs plus food costs	Meal cost plus delivery/platform fees
Management required by client	Minimal; vendor handles logistics	High; requires internal oversight or vendor management	Moderate; manage platform and budget
Who sets up and serves the food	Vendor staff sets up and may serve	Onsite staff serve and maintain stations	Depends. Often no setup staff; employees pick up meals
Oversight required by client	Low; mainly menu feedback	High; manage staff and compliance	Low to moderate; administrative tasks
Equipment needed onsite	Minimal; tables for setup	Full commercial kitchen infrastructure	Minimal; tables for setup
Office size suitability	50–500 employees; small footprint	500+ employees; large footprint needed	Best for smaller offices, hybrid/distributed
Meal formats offered	Buffet, grab-and-go, individually packaged	Buffet, made-to-order, grab-and-go	Individually packaged or buffet style
Can staff order their own food	Limited; usually pre-set menus	Yes; choose meals onsite	Yes; order individually via app
Amount of options	Extensive, variety in cuisine and in everyday's menu	Usually multiple stations to choose from	Depends on local partners