



WHY CHOOSE A CONTRACT CATERER?

Damon Brown, co-founder of Olive Catering Services, suggests what to consider when appointing a contract catering company to completely manage or help set up a new employee restaurant.

With a million and one things to think about during the working day, the smooth running of an employee restaurant is one area facilities and HR managers need not worry about if an experienced contract catering company has been appointed to handle the whole process of managing, delivering and serving healthy, fresh food to people on a daily basis.

Having worked in the contract catering industry for over 20 years now, it never fails to amaze me just how integral a well-run and well-presented staff restaurant can be to the wellbeing and social life of staff that work within organisations that have such facilities on site. It's perhaps a little known fact, but businesses with dedicated restaurant facilities usually report an increase in productivity amongst employees as a result of providing them with access to good food just a minute or two away from their desks.

As well as helping reduce the amount of time staff spend off site at lunchtimes, having a dedicated restaurant also offers employees the chance to sit with colleagues whilst they grab a bite to eat. This has the added benefit of enabling people to talk to each other in a more relaxed setting, as the restaurant area effectively doubles up as an informal meeting space for employees to get together and share ideas. For reasons like these, employees usually consider having an onsite catering facility to be a huge benefit.

When it comes to choosing a contract catering company to work in partnership with, whether opening a brand new employee restaurant or reviewing existing catering facilities, there are a few key areas to consider in order to get it right first time. After all, a well-managed restaurant should be capable of delighting and not disappointing employees every day of the working week and be organised to the point that facilities and HR managers need no day to day involvement.

Firstly, it's a good idea to take a detailed look at the credentials of any catering company being considered for the role. What other clients do they

work with? What do they offer and are they capable of delivering what they promise in terms of an on-site dining experience? Running a staff restaurant efficiently and on budget is a big job and it is always good to know that any catering company on the shortlist has proven experience of managing similar sized restaurants.

As well as looking for proven experience, it is equally as important that food quality and variety features high on the list when selecting a long-term catering partner. It may sound obvious, but not every contract catering company will insist on using fresh ingredients to prepare food from scratch on a daily basis. Too much reliance on pre-prepared and processed food could impact on employees' enjoyment of what's on offer, so it is best to question suppliers on how they source seasonal produce and manage to achieve everything on budget too.

“MEALTIMES CAN ALWAYS BE MADE EXTRA FUN BY RUNNING SPECIAL PROMOTIONS OR INTRODUCING THEMED AREAS TOO.”

In view of the Government's UK-wide target to reduce the amount of salt in the food we eat and the NHS's educational Change4Life marketing campaign, which promotes healthier eating and lifestyle choices, employers naturally have an obligation to provide employees with fresh, healthy food where it is offered at work.

At Olive, our director of food brings innovation and healthy options to each and every contract, making sure dishes are produced without



CASE STUDY: OLIVE CATERING AT RICOH

Olive were awarded the contract to provide the catering services at multi-national imaging and electronics company Ricoh's office in Northampton. Ricoh were planning a complete renovation of their building, which included the creation of a social hub together with an employee restaurant. This area was to become the heart of the building and act as a valued benefit to all 450 of their employees.

During the tender process, Olive worked closely with Ricoh on the design and build of the restaurant

including three site visits to clients that had worked with Olive on similar projects. As a result, Ricoh's initial deli bar concept grew into a full restaurant facility with separate coffee bar, reading zone and business lounge.

Ricoh's Project Manager, Derek Bray, said: "Olive were the company that truly stood out against the competition. Their passion for the project was unbeatable and as a client I knew they would deliver everything they promised and everything I had witnessed during visits to their sites. Throughout the mobilisation process, they took complete control and, once opened, the restaurant far exceeded my expectations."

using packet mixes or ready-made sauces that might contain hidden salt. She also keeps a keen eye on new food trends and high street favourites, which are regularly introduced to the restaurants we manage on our clients' behalf.

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Offering a wide variety of choice is definitely the key to keeping people coming back for more and mealtimes can always be made extra fun by running special promotions or introducing themed areas too. These can be designed to highlight menu choices in an eye-catching and appealing way and there is always plenty of scope for creativity.

Finally, as well as having a passion for food, a good contract catering company also understands that what they do is all about people. In fact, a successful employee restaurant will be always be as good as the people working within it. This means not only ensuring that chefs and restaurant staff have a love of food and the right culinary expertise but also that they have the right social skills for the job too. At the end of the day, if your chosen catering partner is capable of serving fantastic food by friendly, polite people, your employees will certainly thank you for it.

www.olive-catering.com

