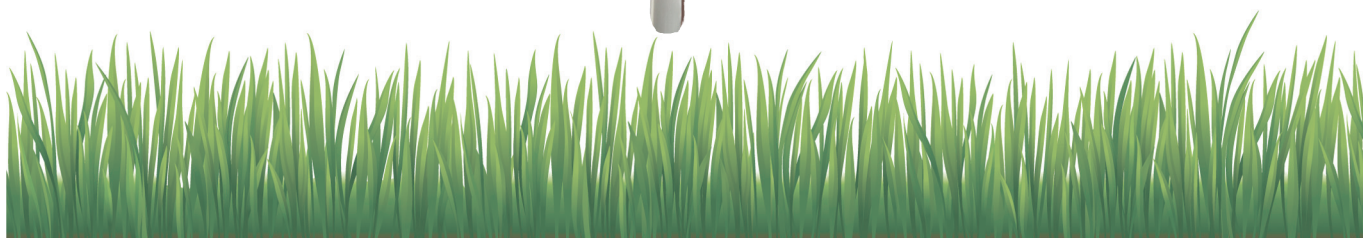


Catering for the environment



How to create an environmentally friendly event





Introduction

It is estimated that between 20 and 30 per cent of climate change caused by human activity is attributable to our food and agricultural systems (The Office of Environmental Sustainability 2009). Current agricultural practices are affecting the availability of fresh water, degrading soil quality, threatening biodiversity and generating greenhouse emissions (Queensland Health 2009a).

- *Food Guidelines for a Sustainable Environment* has been developed to assist consumers in making environmentally conscious food choices. These guidelines can be found at www.ecofriendlyfood.org.au. This guide has been assembled to help you put the guidelines into practice and to enable you to cater and promote a green event.

Key things to consider

When organising your green event, it is important to consider what foods will be served and how they will be presented. You can cater in a more environmentally friendly way by:

- selecting locally grown produce to reduce your 'food miles'
- using fresh, minimally processed and minimally packaged foods at your event
- using sustainable protein sources such as beans, lentils, chickpeas and chicken in your menu, and limiting beef and lamb
- choosing sustainable seafood (www.marineconservation.org.au)
- using organic food and drinks where possible
- conserving water in your food preparation
- using reusable or recyclable tableware
- marketing in an environmentally friendly way and raising awareness about your green event.

'Food miles' describes the distance that food has travelled from the paddock to the plate.

The main reason for minimising food miles is that the transport of food significantly contributes to greenhouse gas production.

Some venues may have other guidelines or policies that you need to consider. For example, in Queensland the menu will need to comply with *Smart Choices – Healthy food and drink supply strategy for Queensland schools* if children are to be attending an event in a public school. Be sure to check with the organisers before you start planning.

Catering for a green event

Step 1. Planning the menu

- Buy only what you need for a one-off event – know how many people you are catering for before you order to avoid excess waste.
- Plan your menu around foods that you know are produced in the local area and are in season. Seasonal food guides are available from some fruit markets and online (www.ecofriendlyfood.org.au).
- Meat production is a significant contributor to global warming so be sure to include some vegetarian options.
- Use sustainable plant protein sources or reduce portion sizes of meat in your menu. Substitute red kidney beans or lentils for red meat, and chickpeas for white meat.
- Locally sourced eggs, chicken and pork are more sustainable animal protein sources, so select them over beef and lamb.
- Utilise excess stock – see what you already have in the pantry and include it in the menu where possible.
- Plan to serve filtered or unfiltered tap water instead of purchasing bottled water.

Step 2. Purchasing the food

- To reduce food miles:
 - Shop for local foods and buy produce in season.
 - Purchase bread from the local bakery to make sandwiches.
 - Try to select Australian-made products.
- When Australian-made product is not available, purchase fair trade items, e.g. coffee, tea and chocolate.
- Buy products with minimal packaging, or packaging that can be recycled or reused.
- Buy one large container instead of many individually portioned ones.
- Look for certified organic foods if possible. Organic food and drinks have a lower ecological impact per kilogram compared with conventionally grown produce because less energy-intensive methods are used in their production (Collins & Fairchild, 2007).
- Use reusable shopping bags to reduce the number of plastic bags ending up in landfill.

Step 3. Preparing the food

- Conserve water by turning off taps when not in use.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in a partially filled sink rather than under running water.
- Switch off any cooking equipment that isn't being used.
- Ensure that equipment is in good working order and that any new equipment purchased is energy efficient.



Step 4. Presenting the food

- Use jugs for drinks rather than single-serve bottles.
- Serve foods on reusable platters and plates.
- Avoid using disposable cutlery and tableware. If you do, look for products that can be recycled or are biodegradable.

Step 5. Managing waste: *reduce, reuse, and recycle*

Waste management is one of the key components of a Green Event. One of the major threats to the environment is the amount of waste produced. Australia is the second highest producer of waste per capita after the United States, sending 18 million tonnes to landfill per annum (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2007). When food is wasted, the energy and water used in producing the food is also wasted (Queensland Health 2009a).

Here are some practical tips to managing your waste.

- Avoid over catering by confirming the number of event attendees.
- Donate food waste to compost, chicken feed or a worm farm, rather than landfill.
- Reduce packaging and try to use what has been or can be recycled.
- Reuse plastic or glass containers where possible.
- Distribute menus electronically, print menus on recycled or scrap paper or use a whiteboard.
- Provide recycling and food waste bins.

Environmentally sustainable catering ideas

- fresh seasonal fruit platters or kebabs
 - local cheeses
 - freshly made vegetable dips – capsicum and walnut, eggplant, hummus
 - seasonal salads
- quiches, savoury slices and muffins based on local vegetables
 - wraps with egg, chicken, or tofu
 - sandwiches with bread from local baker
- baked goods from local baker or that are homemade



Going green catering checklist ✓

- ☐ Is the menu made up of items where the key ingredients are seasonal, fresh and locally grown foods?
- ☐ If not local, is it organic, fair trade or Australian made?
- ☐ Does the menu contain sustainable protein sources?
- ☐ Does the menu contain vegetarian options?
- ☐ Has the menu been distributed online, on recycled paper or placed on a white board?
- ☐ Is the amount of food purchased appropriate for the number of people attending the event?
- ☐ Have you purchased foods with minimal packaging?
- ☐ Is food being stored in reusable containers?
- ☐ Is tap or filtered tap water being served?
- ☐ Do the fridges and freezers have good energy efficiency ratings and effective seals?
- ☐ Are fruit and vegetables washed in a partially filled sink rather than under running water?
- ☐ Is food being presented on reusable or recyclable platters or plates?
- ☐ Is cutlery provided reusable or biodegradable?



Promoting a green event

Marketing your event

Let your guests know that they are participating in a green event. This event is an opportunity to raise awareness of how small changes can make a big difference.

- Send out electronic invitations to reduce paper wastage. Be sure to let guests know why you are going paperless.
- If not online, use recycled paper and envelopes.
- Come up with a logo or wear green to make people aware it is a green event.
- Get guests to BYO cups.
- Ensure that your MC for the event explains the steps taken to be a green event, including the food and drinks served.
- Print talking point cards on recycled paper and place them around your event to raise awareness (talking cards can be found on pages 8, 9 and 10).

More information is available from . . .

- Monash University Office of Environmental Sustainability (<http://fsd.monash.edu.au/environmental-sustainability>)
- Fair Trade Australia and New Zealand (<http://www.fta.org.au>)

Detailed information on running a green event or conference can be found at <http://www.sustainabletravelinternational.org>.



Going green event checklist ✓

- ☐ Does your caterer have a copy of this catering guide?
- ☐ Does the venue know you are conducting a green event?
- ☐ Was the invitation sent electronically or on recycled paper?
- ☐ Do the guests know that they are attending a green event?
- ☐ Does the MC for the event know that it is a green event?
- ☐ Does the MC have a script to explain the green strategies being used?
- ☐ Are guests aware of the sustainable food choices being provided?
- ☐ Are the talking point cards printed on recycled paper and placed around the venue?
- ☐ Are unnecessary lights switched off?
- ☐ Are unnecessary power sources switched off?
- ☐ Are food waste and recycling bins being provided?
- ☐ Is food waste being donated to compost, chicken feed or a worm farm?



TALKING POINTS: Print these on recycled paper and display at the point of food collection to raise awareness about your green event and the environmental impact of foods.

Did you know?

Feedlot beef requires 20kg of grain to produce each kilogram of edible meat (Foran & Poldy 2002).



Did you know?

Three-quarters of the world's oceans are considered to be overfished (Vieira et al, 2007).

Catch rates are declining in many species due to overfishing (Vieira et al, 2007). Visit the Australian Marine Conservation society's website (www.marineconservation.org.au) and download their *3 Step Pocket Guide* to choosing sustainable seafood.



Did you know?

The Australian Greenhouse Office (2007) has calculated that Australian beef production generates 51.7kg of carbon dioxide per kilogram of carcass compared with 0.4kg of carbon dioxide per kilogram of wheat.



Did you know?

The total transportation distance of the average food basket in Victoria is estimated to be 70,803km. This is equivalent to travelling almost twice around the circumference of the Earth (Gaballa & Abraham, 2008).



Did you know?

In Australia, many major supermarkets have national distribution systems. Therefore, food grown near a particular supermarket may have travelled by road to a central depot and back to its place of origin to be sold in that local supermarket.



Did you know?

Foods that have been stored and transported large distances are often nutritionally inferior to locally produced foods (Gaballa & Abraham, 2008).



Did you know?

Brewing and winemaking industries are heavy users of water. Water is used in the production of raw ingredients and the processing and packaging of alcohol. It is estimated that 100 litres of water are required to brew one bottle of beer, with 270 litres required to produce one bottle of wine (Meyer 2007).



Did you know?

In Australia, 314,000 barrels of oil per year are required to package, ship and refrigerate bottled water alone – despite Australian tap water being freely available to most homes and safe to drink (Koutsoukis, 2007).



Did you know?

It takes between 3–5 litres of water to manufacture one litre of bottled water (Australian Conservation Foundation, 2010).



Did you know?

The total amount of energy required for every bottle of water purchased is equivalent, on average, to filling that plastic bottle one quarter full with oil (The Pacific Institute 2010).



Did you know?

Australia produces more than 1.3 million tonnes of plastic per year, which equates to more than 71kg for every person (Sustainable Choice, 2010).



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