

Perfect Pairing

Vendor Selection Checklist

Great food service consistently raises the bar. Whether you're rethinking an existing partnership or launching a new program from scratch, these 20 questions are your starting point. Use them to evaluate a new contender or hold a legacy provider accountable, and look for transparency, flexibility and attention to detail.

CHECK EACH BOX FOR YES. LET'S DIG IN.

Legacy & First Impressions

- ☐ Do they spend more time talking about you than themselves?
- ☐ Are company leaders directly available to you, not just a sales rep?
- ☐ Are their materials tailored to your organization versus clearly templated?
- ☐ Do their promises feel realistic and specific, not too good to be true?
- ☐ Are scratch-made meals a cornerstone of their culinary process?

Red flag: If they can't tailor their sales process, they probably won't customize your program.

Proof Over Promise

- ☐ Do they source ingredients locally, and can they document which farms and suppliers they use?
- ☐ Do they have a published sustainability commitment?
- ☐ Do they have a formal animal welfare policy?
- ☐ Are biodegradable and compostable serviceware options available?

Red flag: Any vendor can claim to care about sustainability. Ask for the documentation.



Your Needs Change. Can They Keep Up?

- ☐ Can they adapt your program without a formal change order or renegotiation?
- ☐ Can they scale service up or down without a contract renegotiation?
- ☐ Do they support events beyond standard daily service?
- ☐ Is there a guarantee that menu changes happen when you ask for them?

Red flag: If adapting to your needs requires corporate approval, they're treating you like a transaction, not a real partner.

Are the Numbers Adding Up?

- ☐ Is the subsidy structure clearly defined and itemized?
- ☐ Can you exit the contract without penalty if your needs change?
- ☐ Is there an agreement that unexpected cost increases will be clearly explained?

Red flag: Any hesitation around pricing transparency is a warning shot for every budget conversation.

The Human Touch

- ☐ Do you know who is running your program, and are they the right long-term fit?
- ☐ Is knowing every diner's name, order, preferences, and allergies standard practice?
- ☐ Is it in their DNA to bring you fresh ideas, unprompted?
- ☐ When you talk to the people in your café every day, is flawless service top-of-mind?

Red flag: If you have to ask who's in charge, the honest answer is nobody.

Now tally up your score

18–20

You may have found your match. Get a written proposal.

13–17

Promising, but press harder on the gaps. Details matter.

8–12

Proceed with caution. Don't mistake a few green flags for success.

Below 8

Keep looking: tastier options are out there.

The best dining partners do more than check boxes, they go above and beyond to satisfy every client and palate.

Ready to taste the difference? Let's talk.

Call 978-897-0660 x184, visit our [website](#) or [email us](#).



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