



Catering for your conference

Conference delegates often talk more about the conference social programme and the food, than the conference programme content and speakers.

So your knowledge about what works well may add strength to your conference bid.

1. In-house OR a list of approved caterers (panel caterers)?

Edinburgh Castle in-house caterers: Digby Trout Restaurants (DTR)

'The advantage for our clients in having a sole caterer is that DTR has in depth knowledge of the site and can therefore give expert advice on the best options for any particular event. The chef is based at the castle, and all dishes are prepared fresh on site. This gives the individual delegates the same quality experience as they would in a hotel or restaurant. It is vital to Edinburgh Castle's international standing that the level of catering offered to clients is of an extremely high standard. This is particularly important when considering events for international conferences where delegates from all over the world are comparing their experiences with events they have attended internationally.'

Gillian MacDonald, Edinburgh Castle

Sodexho Prestige is a catering company that supplies 9 venues in the Edinburgh area both as an in-house and panel caterer

'Panel catering offers the flexibility of choosing from a range of caterers, but this can be a complication for the customer who is not familiar with the suppliers on the approved list. How to choose?'

At Sodexho Prestige we make the co-ordination and selection process easier for the client by having clear contracts that enable us to work with all types of clients, plus regular meetings with clients in order to be flexible and tailor each event to their specification.'

Austin Tilsley, Sodexho Prestige Central Sales Manager for Scotland

2. Catering is a dynamic industry – how does this affect your company's approach?

Edinburgh Castle

'A conference dinner or reception is about much more than the food; the presentation has become almost as important. The chef takes great care to ensure that the food looks good on the plate. Service is another essential element of the experience and a further advantage of working with the contracted caterer is that the waiting staff are familiar with the venue.'

3. How do you achieve quality and variety in your catering menus?

Sodexho Prestige

'The quality of the raw product is crucial to a catering event, and Sodexho Prestige uses the best suppliers across the UK. Our Executive Head Chef has recently been working with a number of new Scottish suppliers to introduce more local food items to our menus. An example of this is our beef and venison which is now bought from the Blair Atholl Estate in Perthshire.'

4. How do you work within the frequently limited catering budget for association conferences?

Knowing the budget for a catered event is a priority for all venues and caterers. To produce attractive food and maintain the quality of service, it is essential for the catering team to work closely with the customer. As informed customers, Edinburgh Ambassadors have their previous conference experiences to draw on...*in addition to the wisdom and expertise of the Edinburgh Convention Bureau!*

Any questions?

If you have questions about catering or any other aspect of holding a conference in Edinburgh, please contact the Edinburgh Convention Bureau on 0131-473 3666 or email us at info@conventionedinburgh.com