



Breakfast

You can help attendees get a strong start to your meeting with a nutritional breakfast. However, it's important to keep in mind that, in most cases, planners will have to contend with a considerable no-show factor for breakfast. Unless breakfast is being served in conjunction with an important presentation or high-profile speaker, count on at least 10 percent slippage, a figure that tends to increase toward the end of the meeting.

In addition, location and weather can affect the no-show factor at breakfast. For instance, if your group is in San Diego on a beautiful day, you'll lose some attendees to the sunshine. Or if your group is meeting in New Orleans or Las Vegas, and everyone has been out partying or gaming until the wee hours of the morning, you can expect a smaller turnout for breakfast. In fact, you may want to reschedule the morning meal altogether and consider a hearty brunch instead.

Breakfast Choices

There are three basic choices for the morning meal: a plated breakfast, a buffet breakfast and a Continental breakfast. As with every food and beverage event, the breakfast menu and setup you choose should be determined based on your budget, the profile of your attendees and your objectives for the event. For instance, if you have a breakfast speaker, your setup will be different than if your attendees are simply grabbing a bite on their way to the first breakout session of the day.

Plated Breakfast

Plated breakfasts offer exceptional opportunities for your guests to enjoy a served meal and spend quality time with fellow attendees. Plated breakfasts served family-style offer even more of a chance for relaxed networking. Some meeting planners choose this option and set the room in crescent rounds—round tables with seating halfway around the table and with all chairs positioned toward to the speaker—so that they can use the same room for both the breakfast and the morning program.

Plated breakfasts generally cost less than a buffet because there is less wasted food, but they limit the food choice for your attendees. Plated breakfasts also set a more rigid time frame for attendees, as the entire group needs to be present before service begins in order to preserve the food quality.



Buffet Breakfast

A buffet breakfast tends to be the most expensive option for the morning meal, but it offers your attendees more freedom to choose the foods they would like to eat. For that reason, attendees prefer buffet breakfasts. If your meeting schedule doesn't call for a breakfast speaker, attendees usually prefer a buffet because they have more choices and more hot items, and they're able to set their own schedules.

Make Breakfast Flow

For the most successful Continental breakfast, follow the station order listed below.

- Juice glasses
- Juice
- Plates/forks/knives/spoons/napkins
- Pastries (with a toaster for bagels)
- Butter/jam
- Fruit
- Coffee cups
- Regular coffee
- Decaf coffee
- Tea
- Cream, sugar and Sweet & Low/Splenda/Equal (ideally set on a separate section)

Continental Breakfast

Because you don't have to worry about food choices, a Continental breakfast is often the best choice for a working breakfast in a meeting room. The Continental option is a great way to allow attendees to eat at their leisure; they can arrive early or right on time and have food available.

At a minimum, a Continental breakfast consists of coffee, juice and pastries. Additionally, it can include fruit, yogurt, cereal, granola, milk or other pick-up items. (See sidebar on facing page for details on ordering Continental breakfast menu items.)

The only drawback to a Continental breakfast is that some attendees need more than a muffin and coffee for breakfast, and they may feel cheated with this option. The best way to avoid disappointment is to add enhancements such as ham, egg and cheese croissants or sausage biscuits. These additions will provide a hot item and satisfy the more hearty eaters. Finally, when fitting a Continental breakfast into your budget, be sure to find out whether the facility charges for seating or rolled silverware

at a buffet-style Continental breakfast.

Breakfast on a Budget

Breakfast can be a good place to trim your food and beverage budget. If you need to cut costs, consider some of the following tips.

- **Size matters.** Ask what size juice glasses and coffee cups the hotel uses. Can you use coffee cups and saucers instead of mugs? If the hotel uses juice glasses that are 8- or

10-ounce, can it replace them with glasses that are 5- or 6-ounce? If smaller glasses and cups are used, the attendees will consume less juice and coffee.

- **Portion control.** Ask that bagels be cut in half. Also, verify the size of muffins and Danish to make sure you are ordering correct quantities. For instance, if the hotel makes mini-muffins, you'll need more than if it makes extra-large muffins. In fact, it's a good idea to ask the hotel to show you a muffin and Danish so you can view the size for yourself.
- **Juicy variety.** Canned juices such as apple, cranberry or tomato are often less expensive than orange juice, so they make good supplements to strictly fresh juices.
- **Drop-in ready.** Some attendees will simply step in, get coffee and leave, so consider having a "coffee only" station near the entrance. This station will not only increase convenience for the attendees, but it may also reduce your consumption of food.
- **Save the best for last.** If you are ordering more expensive breakfast food items for one day only, do this on the last day, as more people tend to skip breakfast as the meeting goes along.
- **Go whole.** Whole fruit is cheaper than sliced fruit. You can sometimes get whole fruit on consumption, which means you pay only for the fruit that is eaten. Bananas are more popular than other fruit, so always order more bananas than anything else.
- **Small servings.** Use nothing larger than bread and butter plates.
- **More with less.** Rather than offering a full breakfast buffet, simply upgrade a Continental breakfast with hot breakfast sandwiches such as ham and cheese croissants, breakfast burritos, sausage biscuits and French toast sticks.

Your Order's Up!

Tips for Ordering Continental Breakfast Items

Juice

Most hotels use 5- or 6-ounce juice glasses. You will get 20-25 servings of juice per gallon. Experient recommends that you order enough juice to give each attendee one glass. Varieties may include orange, apple, tomato, cranberry, pineapple and V8, among others. Order at least two types of juice with 80 percent orange juice. (For instance, if you have 110 guests, order four gallons of orange juice and one gallon of tomato or apple juice.) For cost-conscious groups, keep your options to two juice types. The more juice types you order, the greater the potential of waste.

Pastries

Order a variety of pastries, including sweet (Danish, doughnuts, muffins, fruit breads) and non-sweet (bagels, plain croissants, brioche). For most groups, order about half sweet pastries and half non-sweet. Order a minimum of one to one and a half pastries per person.

Fruit

Order fruit by the tray rather than per person. Start by asking the hotel how much fruit comes on a tray, or how many people one tray will serve. A good rule of thumb is to order enough fruit to allow each person to get 3 ounces. If a la carte pricing is not published for breakfast, you can often find fruit tray pricing on reception menus. Many hotels will allow you to purchase whole fruit on consumption. That is, you pay only for the pieces of fruit that are eaten. If not, ask the hotel to ensure that leftovers be carried over to the following days.

Yogurt, Cereal and Granola Bars

At most facilities, cereal and yogurt can be provided in individual servings, but you should ask, as these items are not always on the banquet menus. In theory, both yogurt and cereal can be purchased on a consumption basis, and you should definitely try to purchase this way. Be careful not to over-order; plan on 20 percent of the group eating cereal or yogurt.

