

Food & Beverage Quantity Planner

Practical serving estimates and a planning worksheet for birthdays, anniversaries, reunions, graduations, retirement parties, and other events.

Event: _____	Date: _____
Venue: _____	Expected Guests: _____
Adults: _____ Children: _____	Event Length: _____ hrs

Quick Planning Notes

- These are starting estimates, not exact rules. Guest age, event length, menu style, weather, and time of day can change consumption.
- For buffets, plan a little extra because guests serve themselves and portions are less predictable.
- For children, a useful shortcut is to count two younger children as roughly one adult serving for many foods, then adjust for age.
- If the event overlaps a normal meal period, plan a full meal; between meals, lighter food may be enough.

Appetizers & Finger Foods

Event Situation	Suggested Amount Per Guest	Notes
Before a full meal	4-6 pieces	Use a mix of 3-5 appetizer types.
Cocktail-style / light party	8-12 pieces	Increase for events lasting 2+ hours.
Appetizers as main food	12-16 pieces	Offer substantial hot and cold choices.
Cheese	2-3 oz	More if cheese is a featured item.
Crackers	4-6	Provide extra for dips and cheese.
Vegetable tray	3-5 oz	Include dip separately.
Fruit tray	4-6 oz	Popular at daytime and warm-weather events.
Dips / spreads	2-3 oz	Pair with enough chips, bread, or vegetables.

Main Meal Estimates

Food	Suggested Amount Per Adult	Planning Note
Boneless meat / poultry	6-8 oz cooked	Use 8 oz for hearty appetites or a single entree.
Bone-in meat	10-12 oz raw	Bones reduce edible yield.
Pasta as side	2-3 oz dry	Increase to 4 oz dry if it is a main dish.
Rice / grain	1/2 cup cooked	About 3-4 oz cooked.
Potatoes	5-6 oz	Mashed, roasted, or baked.
Vegetable side	4 oz	Plan one or two vegetables.
Salad	1.5-2 cups	Approximately 3 oz greens.
Dinner rolls	1-2	Provide butter or spread.
Sandwiches / hoagies	1.25-1.5 portions	For mixed trays, cut into halves or thirds.
Pizza	2-3 slices	More for teens or if pizza is the only food.

Dessert Estimates

Dessert	Suggested Amount	Notes
Cake	1 slice per guest	Add a small buffer if cake is the only dessert.
Cupcakes	1-1.25 per guest	Mini cupcakes: about 2 per guest.
Cookies	2-3 per guest	Increase if there is no cake.
Brownies / bars	1-2 per guest	Cut smaller when offering several desserts.
Ice cream	1/2 cup per guest	Increase for children or hot weather.

Nonalcoholic Beverage Estimates

Beverage	Suggested Starting Amount	Notes
Water	16-24 oz per guest	Increase for hot weather, outdoor events, or dancing.
Soft drinks	2-3 servings per guest	A serving is roughly 8-12 oz.
Iced tea / lemonade	8-12 oz per guest	Useful as an alternative to soda.
Coffee	1 cup per adult	Increase for breakfast, brunch, or cold-weather events.
Juice	4-8 oz per guest	Most useful for brunches and children's parties.
Ice	1.5-2 lb per guest	Includes chilling beverages plus serving ice.

Guest-Count Calculator

Item	Per-Guest Estimate	Guests	Amount Needed	Buy / Order
Appetizers	_____ pieces	_____	_____	_____
Main protein	_____ oz	_____	_____	_____
Pasta / starch	_____ oz/cup	_____	_____	_____
Vegetables	_____ oz	_____	_____	_____
Salad	_____ cups	_____	_____	_____
Rolls / bread	_____	_____	_____	_____
Cake / dessert	_____ servings	_____	_____	_____
Water	_____ oz	_____	_____	_____
Soft drinks	_____ servings	_____	_____	_____
Ice	_____ lb	_____	_____	_____

Shopping Checklist

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Main food / entrees ■ Side dishes ■ Appetizers ■ Salad / dressing ■ Bread / rolls ■ Condiments / sauces ■ Desserts / cake ■ Water ■ Soft drinks ■ Coffee / tea | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ice ■ Cups ■ Plates ■ Bowls ■ Forks / knives / spoons ■ Napkins ■ Serving utensils ■ Food storage containers ■ Trash bags ■ Coolers / beverage tubs |
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Final Food-Service Check

- Confirm final guest count with the caterer or food provider.
- Ask about allergies, dietary restrictions, vegetarian, and gluten-free needs.
- Confirm refrigeration, warming, and food-holding equipment.
- Make sure serving utensils are assigned to every dish.
- Set beverages in more than one location for larger parties.
- Keep backup food and drinks stored until needed instead of putting everything out at once.
- Plan for leftovers and confirm the venue's rules on taking food home.

Planning Tip: A modest buffer is usually better than dramatically overbuying. For many general parties, adding roughly 5-10% to the final food count is a practical starting cushion when attendance or appetites are uncertain.