



"Keep a vigilant eye on your invoices. If a price looks askew, call your vendor and ask about it."
—Michael Rosman



TIPS FROM

Michael Rosman

Founder of The Corporate Caterer, a membership website and consulting company for restaurateurs and caterers who want to begin or grow a corporate drop-off catering business. ●●● thecorporatecaterer.com

Keep your service vendors competitive.

"Let your laundry, chemical and trash removal companies know that you will put their contracts out to bid once a year—and then do it," says Rosman. "These are all competitive industries. Make sure you are not over-paying."

Look closely at your food invoices.

Rosman advises caterers to "keep a vigilant eye on your invoices. If a price looks askew, call your vendor and ask about it. This will encourage them to 'sharpen their pencil' when market conditions affect pricing."

In fact, Rosman adds, don't just check the invoices—get out the scale. "Spot-check weights on chicken, fish, meat and produce," he says. "If you are being charged for 20 pounds of chicken breast and you received 18.5 pounds, a call to your vendor should straighten out any future 'weight miscalculations.'"

Shop creatively.

Think outside of the box—both in where you shop for food and in what you buy. Rosman suggests shopping at such discount food warehouses as Restaurant Depot, where it's possible to save 15%-25% off of wholesale prices. "Consider creative uses of lower-cost food items such as pork and tenderloin butts that are medium-priced entrees at higher profit margins," he adds.

Consider leasing appliances.

Rosman outlines a few reasons why he's a big proponent of leasing kitchen equipment. First, he says, it can be very difficult to get financing from a bank for restaurant equipment because it is viewed as a higher-risk loan. Second, "I can write it off 100%, and do not have to factor in depreciation." Finally, Rosman points out, "I would rather invest my liquid cash in other areas of expanding the business."

Be careful with your energy costs.

Regarding utilities, Rosman points out that many states now have private utility providers, so it pays to shop around for the most aggressive pricing. Simple steps like switching out traditional light bulbs for more cost-efficient LED bulbs is a good cost-saving move. Furthermore, make sure any of your leased equipment is as energy-efficient as possible. Finally, Rosman adds, "make sure your staff is doing all the things your mother told you to do—turn off lights that are not being used, keep all refrigerators and freezers shut, and close the windows when the air conditioner is on." ●



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