

10 Steps to Catering Success

The keys to building a successful catering business

Culinary Capers Catering and Special Events began with a 20-seat café and a staff of four in 1986 in Vancouver. The company has grown to a \$10-million enterprise, catered at three Olympic Games and opened a kitchen in Beijing, China. CRFN recently reached out to CEO Debra Lykkemark to ask her how she built her successful catering business in Canada and overseas. Here are her Top 10 steps to catering success:



1. COMMITMENT IS KEY

Catering is hard work. Every event is unique with a different location, client and menu. Without passion for adopting a client's vision and turning it into a great event, you will struggle to grow your business. When I first went into business, I really wanted a restaurant but all I could afford was a café. In retrospect it was a blessing in disguise because it led me into catering. I loved off-premise catering because it was so creative and challenging. It's definitely not boring!

2. DEFINE YOUR MARKET

Decide where your culinary and event strengths lie and focus on those areas. When I started catering we focused on doing corporate drop-off catering for meetings. Once we had a solid client base we decided to move into a larger facility so we would be able to offer those clients full service catering for their staff and client events. To introduce the new full service catering division, we invited all our corporate delivery clients to a catered event in our catering kitchen. The event gave clients an opportunity to experience what we could do and to assure them that we were capable of handling their full service events as well as their drop off catering.