



Hosting a Bed & Breakfast

Factsheet Series #12: *Food Service in the Bed & Breakfast*

One of the features that often attract guests to a Bed and Breakfast is the special breakfasts served. The goal of the host is to serve attractive as well as nutritious meals to guests.

The rules and regulations for food service operations will vary from state to state. Be sure to check with your local health department.

Food Service Requirements

Breakfasts run from a continental breakfast usually includes hot tea or coffee, fruit juice and sweet rolls, muffins or biscuits. Hot beverages should be freshly brewed, fruit juices freshly squeezed or of top quality to a full breakfast with juices, entrée, breads and beverages. No matter what type meal you serve, everything should also be of highest quality. Keep in mind both the rules and regulations of food service operations as well as meal planning. These are both essential to the B & B business.

Meal Planning

To provide an outstanding meal, time and thought must be put into the planning of it. And, despite of all of your planning, there is no guarantee that everyone will enjoy the meals you serve. You may prefer to serve and eat foods that do not appeal to your guests. You need to consider that people have a wide variety of food preferences, flavors and combinations that appeal to them as well as specific nutritional and dietary needs. Plan to serve foods that compliment one another and are appropriate to the season as well as those that are easiest for you to prepare and serve.

- Consider the number of people you will be serving
- Type of place settings to be used and
- The method you choose for serving

You must start with high quality foods. A meal can be no more appetizing than the individual foods used. Meals that are the most appetizing typically include a variety of temperatures, textures, shapes, colors, and sizes. Flavor combinations such as sweet, spicy, and bland are other considerations.

Table Settings

The current trend in table fashions is, just about anything goes. There are no fixed rules about what to use and when to use it.

As you prepare foods just keep in mind that the foods should always look attractive and appealing against the table cover and place settings used. Table settings can range from the informal to the very formal. The choice is yours and is determined by the mood of your bed and breakfast and the feelings you want to convey to your guests at the meal. It is not necessary to always cover a table completely. However, there are very few occasions when there is not at least a place mat, doily or cloth between the dish and the table.

Serve Healthy Foods

It is important to consider the nutritional needs of your guests. You may want to inquire ahead of time if a guest has any specific dietary needs. This is just an added special touch that will show your guest that you want to provide for their needs. Some general guidelines to consider in serving healthy meals are:

1. You may want to use low fat products to control the calories count.
2. Include whole grains, fruits and vegetables in your meals. Bran or oats can be included in muffins, quick breads and served as cereal. These foods provide extra fiber need by most people in their diet.
3. Limit the use of fats and products with cholesterol and other saturated fats. Choose vegetable oils and liquid margarines rather than butter and other animal fats.
4. Limit the use of salt. Sodium can contribute to high blood pressure. Try substituting herbs, spices and other seasonings for salt in foods. Omit or reduce the amount of salt called for in recipes; and avoid using processed or fast foods that are high in sodium.
5. Limit the amount of sugar. Even though sugar itself is not harmful, it is a source of empty calories and provides very little nutritional value. Many people are weight conscious today, so serving too many sweets may not be appreciated.

Food Safety

Making sure that the foods you serve are safe and wholesome is a very important task. We are fortunate to have proper storage and adequate cooking methods today. However, it is amazing how many unsafe food practices people still use. Government inspections and strict standards in the food industry usually assure us of high quality, wholesome and safe foods. It is your responsibility as the cook to make sure that the standard is maintained in your bed and breakfast.

The danger zone for bacterial growth in food is between 40 degrees F. and 140 degrees F. Most food poisoning bacteria grow in room temperatures around 60-70 degrees F. When bacteria grow, it divides and multiplies in number. Two very basic important rules to follow are:

- **KEEP HOT FOODS HOT AND COLD FOODS COLD**
- **WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!**

Make sure that all leftovers are stored promptly. Never thaw frozen foods on a countertop at room temperature. For rules and regulations in regards to food safety in your location, contact your local health department.

Sanitation

"Sanitization" means effective bactericidal treatment by a process that provides enough accumulative heat or concentration of chemicals for enough time to reduce the bacterial count, including pathogens, to a safe level on utensils and equipment. For example, bleach is an effective all-purpose sanitizer that even kills bacteria that may cause food poisoning. This sanitizer is authorized by use under USDA meat, poultry, rabbit and egg products inspection programs. If using other types of sanitizers such as tablets, then they must be registered with the US EPA and the product label must claim it will sanitize food contact surfaces without needing a final clear water rinse.

You will need to check with your local health department for rules and regulations in your area. You may have to undergo some type of health inspection.

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