

LAST-MINUTE HOLIDAY EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

What the Experts Are Saying: Catering Trends for 2024 Holiday Events

by Stacy Wyatt

Peter and Paul's Event Catering

Laurie Bernardi, Director of Catering at Peter and Paul's Catering is seeing mini entrees served during cocktail events as a defining trend. These heartier, filling options elevate the cocktail hour by offering more substantial dishes, such as Holiday "Leftovers" Sliders, Mini Wellingtons with braised beef, Shepherd's Pie Tarts, and Turkey Dinner served on mini potato skins with stuffing crumble. Fusion foods, like chipotle holiday meatballs and Thai-style shrimp cocktails, will also add a global twist to holiday menus.



Mini Wellington with Braised Beef



Sheppard's Pie Tart

Creating menus that are both trendy and dietary-friendly is a must. Gluten-free, vegan, and allergen-sensitive options will ensure that every guest can enjoy the feast without restrictions. Laurie also agrees that as non-alcoholic beverages gain traction, expect to see de-alcoholized wines, 0% beers, and sugar-free mocktails becoming more prevalent at corporate events. These options cater to a wider audience and reflect the growing demand for mindful consumption.

“A party should be an event message. Catering is not just about food—it’s about creating an experience. From the sights, sounds, smells, and energy, a party isn’t a party until it’s an event. It should always invoke emotion and provoke the senses.”

According to Toben Kochman, Chief Culinary Director at Toben Food by Design Catering, food stations are expected to stay strong throughout 2024, but we’re also seeing a resurgence in family-style dining for holiday parties. Whether a full dinner or a mix of plated and family-style courses, this approach fosters connection and warmth at events. Elaborate grazing tables will also be a highlight during cocktail hours, featuring floral arrangements and decor elements thoughtfully integrated into the display.



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Kochman adds elevated plant-based options should be a staple at holiday events this year. These dishes are designed to be just as satisfying for non-vegetarian guests like vegan Mini Impossible ‘Meat’ Jamaican Patties and Sweet Potato Steak. Emulating Adrian’s note about caviar, Kochman is also seeing a big draw for caviar. Whether part of a dedicated station or featured in hors d’oeuvres like Mini Corn and Caviar Hasselback Potatoes, caviar is making a big comeback and is sure to impress.

“Catering can be so much more than just the food that’s served—it should be a key part of the conversation. Reflecting the diversity of the corporate landscape by blending international flavours with local ingredients sparks discussions about global culinary traditions. It’s an opportunity to celebrate diverse cultures and bring people together over shared tastes from around the world.”

It’s clear that the 2024 holiday catering landscape is all about creativity, sustainability, and immersive experiences. From globally inspired flavours to interactive food stations and innovative plant-based options, these expert planners have pushed the boundaries of traditional holiday fare. With their vision and dedication to creating memorable culinary experiences, corporate holiday events across Canada have been transformed into something far more than just a meal—they’ve become unforgettable celebrations that delight, and inspire.

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