

# Menu suggestions for board meetings

**Question:** It is my job to order the food for our board meetings. We've had several complaints about ordering the same types of food for each meeting. My boss generally requests Caesar salads or sandwiches with small sides. Does anyone have any ideas as to what else we could serve for our board meetings? I need to keep the cost reasonably low. -- *Gina*

## Comments

Do you have a particular caterer you use? Sometimes just sitting down and requesting suggestions from whoever provides the catering will give you some good ideas. When our management meetings moved to every week at noon, I suggested that the task of ordering catering be split among different admin assistants, not because I didn't want to do it but because I run out of ideas if I have to do it every week! This has helped tremendously, and the management team really appreciates the variety.

Something simple like a salad bar or a baked potato bar are enjoyable as well. Or bring in pizza for a change of pace. Just be sure to include at least one vegetarian variety for those who may be counting calories!

**Posted by: CJ | March 16, 2007 at 04:58 PM**

Check with your local delis. One of the ones in our area has a service where you can set up an order online and let the attendees sign in & choose what they want from the menu the day before. The lunches are boxed and labeled with the individual's name. This way everyone has a choice, not just the person running the meeting

**Posted by: | March 16, 2007 at 04:58 PM**

I'm not sure what restaurants you have around your business, but have ordered in from Zaxby's, a great chicken place next door. They have wings, fingers, sandwiches, salads - a little something for all tastes. Another idea is Italian. I would recommend lasagna, ravioli, etc. over something with messy noodles. With that, you could serve bread sticks and salad on the side. We haven't tried Mexican food yet, but they offer a lot of options, too. You could do burritos, enchiladas, refried beans, chips, dip, etc.

Hope this helps!  
Beth : )

**Posted by: Beth | March 16, 2007 at 04:59 PM**

I do 2 Board meetings a year and many committee meetings. The past couple of meetings I ordered and served

wraps with lettuce salad, chips and soda. That has been a "big hit." Many of the members commented on how much they liked the meal. Try it and see what the response is.

**Posted by: Sandy Barnard | March 16, 2007 at 05:01 PM**

I have ordered for several luncheons and retreats. If the attendance isn't too big, maybe under 12, you can pick a restaurant that has a variety and send them the menu and have them send you back their order.

Another way we have ordered is to get trays of assorted sandwich's or wraps, bowls of salads or chips, and trays of a variety of cookies or bars.

**Posted by: Content | March 16, 2007 at 05:04 PM**

I would have to ask-do you use a caterer or provide the food yourself? Our Board meets at 9 a.m. I used to provide the food/beverage items myself. We then started using a caterer. It has been a dream. My time is freed to do other more important things. Since you are using a caterer, they plan the menu. You just need to work with the caterer. You should meet with your superior and pitch the idea. Point out-do they really want to be paying your hourly wage for you to run around and gather up all the necessary items for the Board. If you can't afford a caterer, you could investigate the idea of ordering from an establishment that delivers. Some ideas for lunch are: pasta & salad, wraps, a taco buffet, a pizza & salad buffet, soup & salad, a burger bar. If you do a little investigating on the web (menu ideas) I am sure you could come up with some innovative ideas. Good luck and happy eating!

**Posted by: Delaware | March 16, 2007 at 05:05 PM**

I have several different menus from the delis in my area. Keep a log of what your serve this way you won't repeat it too much. Let them give ideas. Send an email with the place you're ordering from and let them pick and give a time you need their orders by. Also, you can order assorted tray of sandwiches or wraps or pizza (one veggie) or a 3-6 foot hero half Italian and half American.  
Good luck!

**Posted by: | March 16, 2007 at 05:05 PM**

Our company uses different eateries each month. Sometimes we get Subway, other times it will be BBQ or Chick Fil A. If we use a restaurant, they will take the individual orders of each person (usually from a pre-determined set of menu items) and that way people get to choose what they want.

**Posted by: Jen | March 16, 2007 at 05:06 PM**

Sandwiches do get a bit old, don't they? A big hit for me has been hiring a caterer to provide either a taco bar or a chef's salad bar... The taco bar features hard and soft shell tacos, tortilla chips and salsa, a hot plate of seasoned hamburger and another with chicken, and then a variety of all the toppings you would put on a taco. The chef's salad bar is the same concept, with fresh chopped lettuce, luncheon meats, cheese and all the basic salad toppings. Both options allow people to eat as much or as little as they'd like, and allows the guests with

particular preferences or allergies to include or leave out any ingredient they want. We usually have rice krispie bars and brownies for dessert, although fresh fruit is always nice too (but tends to be more costly). You still tell the caterer how many people you're feeding so that they provide an appropriate amount. If your caterer doesn't already have this concept listed as an option, talk to them about it to see if they'll do it for you because there's a good chance that they'll accommodate you. Good luck, I've felt the "now what should I order??" pain too. Oh, by the way, I served both of these concepts to senior level managers of one of the largest banks in the US - and they loved it! Good luck!

**Posted by: Realistic | March 16, 2007 at 05:06 PM**

I know what you mean about "food" issues. I've run into that problem also. We normally have sandwiches, assorted cookies, and individually packaged fruit. But, once in a while I hear complaints. Unfortunately, good catering options gets expensive.

We have ordered from a local Italian restaurant and ordered lemon chicken, lasagna, Caesar salad, salmon, garlic rolls. We've also ordered from a Mexican restaurant and ordered chicken burritos and assorted meat tacos (which don't work out very well since they have to put it together themselves), guacamole, chips & salsa, and for dessert - churros and flan. (hhhmmm...I haven't tried Chinese food yet).

Look for local restaurants that offer catering. The food is usually packaged to make it easier for individuals to serve themselves. See if your company will invest in a chafing dish. This will help in keeping the food warm, especially if your Board members are like mine, they eat after the meeting.

Good luck!

**Posted by: Sandy | March 16, 2007 at 05:06 PM**

My BOD meeting seems real found of Boston Market. I can get roasted chicken, chicken ceasar salads, steamed veggies, all at a small cost compared to others.

**Posted by: Charla | March 16, 2007 at 05:21 PM**

I work for a large corporation. Box lunches get boring after a while. I have used the sandwich places like Subway, Lenny's or Chik-Fil-A. But try doing BBQ, Italian, Moe's for Mexican enchiladas and burritos with chips, pizzas and salad, Chinese with egg rolls and rice with meat dishes. Don;t limit yourself to sandwiches. Have fun with a different theme for each meeting. Try using a few decorations to dress up the meal. The bosses will love it.

**Posted by: Linda | March 16, 2007 at 05:28 PM**

Every few meetings we bring in Chinese food. We have a wonderful restaurant close to the office that cooks to order. A couple of days prior to the meeting, I send each attendee the one-page menu. The menu is designed with check boxes and a place for the person's name and drink choice. I then fax the menus over to the restaurant the day prior to the meeting advising them of the date and time we'd like the food delivered (or picked up). The lunches are boxed with the individual's name on top, and their drink is labeled as well. The food is great and everyone appreciates the change from the same old deli sandwiches. It just doesn't get any easier

than that.

**Posted by: Gayle Gehrmann | March 16, 2007 at 05:36 PM**

Our Board consists of all men...so I normally order from our local grocery store's deli department. We get a meat tray and a fruit and veggie tray. We also buy rolls, so they can put their own sandwiches together. In addition, I'll get some cookies, soda and water. They usually want to get back to work, so I don't think an extravagant meal meets their needs. Our annual shareholder meeting is usually in the morning, so we have exceptionally good doughnuts, fruit trays, juices - a type of mini brunch. Simple is good - and the cost is usually under \$500 for the board meeting, and maybe under \$300 for the annual meeting. Pretty low - and they deliver. I also provide a simple breakfast for a monthly meeting, and provide the exceptional warm breads and fruit trays. People are happy and it is simple. It's delivered warm at 6:30 am for a 7:00 meeting.

**Posted by: Laurie Earl | March 16, 2007 at 06:16 PM**

May I correct a typo in my previous comment? I said that the board meeting came in under \$500 - when what I wanted to say is that it comes in under \$150.

**Posted by: Laurie Earl | March 16, 2007 at 06:18 PM**

We have gone with wraps to keep it interesting. It is basically the same cost as a sandwich with traditional sandwich toppings inside a wrap instead. We all prefer them to sandwiches actually. You can go for more interesting stuffings too like roasted chicken caesar or Mediterranean vegetable. Another option is panini sandwiches if you can find a reasonable supplier in your area.

**Posted by: | March 16, 2007 at 07:18 PM**

Have the attendees suggest the type of foods they'd like to have. Once you compile a list, you have something to work from and can rotate so everyone will eventually get their choice.

**Posted by: Celeste | March 16, 2007 at 07:39 PM**

I usually have from one to three meetings per week. I try and mix up what I have each week so it's doesn't get boring. I use the catering service through a couple of the local restaurants near us like Atlanta Bread Company or Chik-Fil-A. I also go out myself and actually go grocery shopping for things like beverages (water, soda, tea), chips, desserts and already prepared fresh fruit and vegetable trays. I do have a couple of vegetarians so I always make sure I have something suitable for them as well. One of their favorite items is the fruit tray or veggie sandwiches. Good Luck and have fun!

**Posted by: Sherrie | March 17, 2007 at 08:04 AM**

We have an in-house caterer so our folks get tired of the same old sandwiches/salads, too. However, we do have the option of a Fajita Bar, and that's always a big hit.

It's not the greatest idea to serve food DURING meetings, though, because people are pre-occupied with their food and not paying attention to the presentations. And if they eat before the presentation, then they're sleepy in the middle.

But what can ya do? There are so many hours in the work day and too many meetings to fit into them as it is.

**Posted by: | March 18, 2007 at 12:21 AM**

Why not ask them? Our board goes for different meals each month. They prefer variety, too, so they are asked what they want and we go with that.

**Posted by: Mark | March 18, 2007 at 02:17 PM**

I don't know if you have an Olive Garden near by, but they do a nice job with catering meals and also Jason Deli.

**Posted by: Ellen Warthen | March 19, 2007 at 08:42 AM**

Our Board usually meets at 5:30 PM. I like using a fantastic caterer and ordering heavy hors d'oeuvres. That way they can eat more or less according to their plans for the evening. They have been very happy with the variety! Other meetings are at lunch time where we have pizza, sandwiches, or box lunches, with fruit or cookies for desert, always remembering to have vegetarian selections available.

**Posted by: Lynn | March 19, 2007 at 02:48 PM**

I have been in the same situation and have done the following menus:

Italian ~ pasta, bread, salads

Chinese ~ variety of vegetable and meat dishes

hot sandwiches with side salads, potato or mac salad

cold sandwiches with side salads, potato or mac salad

This is inexpensive and makes for a good variety.

Sharon

**Posted by: Sharon | March 21, 2007 at 05:09 PM**

Boston Market is great. They will deliver in most markets and set up for a small fee. You can order on-line at <http://www.bostonmarket.com/catering>. I've had great reviews from meeting members. I'll even use them two days in row. Ordering sandwiches one day and hot meals the other. Additionally, the cost is inexpensive.

**Posted by: Kim | March 28, 2007 at 03:32 PM**

For small meetings of 4 - 6 I print the menu from a website like Panera and have each person indicate their selection. I call the order ahead, then pick it up.

For larger meetings I use our university catering system, but I like the Boston Market idea too.

**Posted by: Linda | April 13, 2007 at 12:34 PM**