EC954 Revised 1946 The Buffet Meal

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The Buffet Meal

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College of Agriculture
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The Buffet Meal*

Many families at one time or another have occasion to express hospitality by entertaining a larger number of guests than can be served at the table. Under such circumstances the buffet style of service is deservedly popular. It is suitable for use at club meetings, breakfast or luncheon parties, covered dish or pot-luck suppers, picnics, Sunday evening suppers, wedding receptions, class reunions, church entertainments, or similar occasions where the number to be served may be more or less indefinite. The reason for the popularity of the buffet type of service may be attributed to its informality, simplicity, friendliness, attractiveness, ease of service, convenience in use of space, and the requirement for minimum equipment in china, linen, and silver.

Adaptations of buffet service include the Swedish smörgåsbord, the al fresco supper, and the outdoor garden or porch party. With increased interest in foreign foods, the foreign buffet affords a means of introducing interest and variety into meals which might have a tendency to become routin eand commonplace.

Photo courtesy National Livestock and Meat Board

*Prepared by the Divisions of Foods and Nutrition and Family Economics, Home Economics Department, and the extension nutritionists of the Agricultural Extension Service, University of Nebraska.
A buffet meal may be served in the forenoon as a breakfast or brunch, at one o'clock as a luncheon, after bridge or the club meeting in the late afternoon, as a supper in the evening, or as a reception in the afternoon or evening.

Table Setting and Decorations

Originally, the term buffet service was applied to service from a buffet or sideboard, and the general idea is still the same, but the table is now the center of interest. The table is made as attractive as possible, using linen, china, and silver in keeping with the nature of the occasion. The table should be set with accessories appropriate to each other and to the food which is served. Peasant linens and bright-colored pottery are suitable for informal affairs. Suitable decorations for such a setting might be fruits, vegetables, the coarser type of flowers, such as zinnias, hollyhocks and calendulas, and candlesticks of pottery, wood, pewter, brass, or copper.

For a more formal or semi-formal type of occasion, fine linen damask or lace, lovely china, glass and silver are appropriate. A cloth which covers the table is usually more convenient than doilies or runners because there is more space for the arrangement of dishes and silver. Flowers such as roses, carnations, snapdragons, and chrysanthemums may be used for a centerpiece. Candlesticks of crystal or silver are in keeping with this type of table arrangement.
In setting the table, attention should be given to balance and proportion, so that the table gives the impression of a harmonious unit. The table covering and decoration give excellent opportunity for creative, artistic expression and individuality.

**Buffet Table Arrangement**

The table may be placed in the center of the room, at one end or side of the room, or with one side against a wall if room space is limited. Usually a maximum of table-edge space is desirable for buffet service, and this is necessarily limited when the table is placed against the wall.

The arrangement of food, dishes, and silver will depend upon the menu and the plan of serving. The main course only may be served from the buffet table, or the main course and beverage may be served as one course. If both main course and dessert are served from the buffet table, the table will be cleared after the main course, and the dessert or the dessert and beverage will be arranged conveniently for serving.

For the main course, a stack of six or eight plates is usually placed at one end of the table near the main dish or the salad. The serving silver is placed beside the dish of food. If only a spoon is required, it is placed at the right of the food dish. If both a spoon and a fork are needed, the spoon is placed at the right and the fork at the left of the dish of food.
Other foods such as salad, vegetables, buttered rolls, sandwiches, and relishes are placed on the table so as to be accessible for guests to help themselves and yet in an orderly, logical, and well-balanced table arrangement. Serving silver that may be needed should be placed beside the dishes of food.

The salad may be an informal tossed salad arranged in a lettuce-lined bowl, or it may be served in individual molds or divided to have the platter look attractive even after several servings have been removed. A molded salad may also be in the form of a large mold.

If the beverage is to be served with the main course, it may be placed on the table opposite the main dish, with the cups arranged in an orderly and convenient manner. If preferred, the beverage service may be on the buffet or service table. Accompaniments for the beverage, such as cream and sugar, are usually placed on the table next to the beverage, so that guests may help themselves.

Silver and napkins are usually arranged so that they may be picked up last.

The guests may pass around the table either to the right or to the left depending upon the arrangements of the table, rooms, or other furnishings.

Types of Buffet Service

There are, in general, three types of buffet service—the informal, semi-formal, and formal. The choice may depend upon the occasion,
number of guests, facilities in the home, and extent of service available. The guests may hold the filled plates on their laps, or small tables may be provided. These tables should be covered with lunch cloths, may be provided with decorations, and are usually set with napkins, silver and glasses. The beverage cups and saucers may also be on these tables if desired. If there are to be men guests at a buffet meal, small tables should be provided, because men dislike trying to balance a plate or tray on their laps while eating. For informal or semi-formal service, trays may be used if desired. They may be placed on a service table.

Informal Buffet Service. Informal buffet service requires no waitresses because the guests serve themselves. This form of service is suitable for relatively small groups. Dishes, food, napkins, and silver are arranged on the buffet table.

Each guest takes a plate and passes around the table, taking up the foods as they have been arranged in order of their importance, coming to the beverage, silver and napkins last. It is more convenient to place the silver so that it may be taken last, because it is difficult to hold silver and serve a plate at the same time unless trays are provided.

If second servings are desired, the hostess may invite the guests to return to the table to serve themselves or, if she prefers, she may pass the serving dishes to the guests. While the guests are eating the main course, the table may be cleared and the dessert course placed. The hostess may then ask the guests to place their first course plates upon a service table or tea-cart and invite them to serve dessert to themselves.

Semi-formal Buffet Service. This type of buffet service is perhaps used most frequently. Assisting friends of the hostess may be seated at one or both ends of the table. The friend at one end of the table may serve the main dish, or perhaps the salad, while the friend at the opposite end pours the beverage. The guests help themselves to other foods—vegetables, rolls, relish—and to silver and napkins. This type of service is convenient for the guests, as it is sometimes difficult to hold a plate in one hand and serve one's self food such as salad.

The dessert course may be placed on the table, as in the case of informal buffet service, and be served by assisting friends, or it may be served from the kitchen. In the latter case, waitresses who may be young friends of the hostess will take the main course plates from the guests before serving the dessert. A waitress may take two main-course plates to the kitchen and return with two desserts, then remove two more main course plates and so on. Usually, the assisting friends leave the table after they have finished serving the food to the guests. They serve themselves and join the other guests.

Smörgåsbord.* A gift from Sweden to America is the smörgåsbord. During recent years it has grown in popularity as an American way of entertaining. Unfortunately the term smörgåsbord is sometimes used for any buffet service.

Smörgås means bread and butter, or sandwich, and bord refers to table. Though the whole term really means sandwich table, neither

* Description of smörgåsbord and menu contributed by Mrs. Evar Anderson, Lincoln, Nebraska.
sandwiches nor canapes are ever used, but interesting and unusual breads and sandwich materials. One always finds different kinds of rye bread and knäcke bröd (rye krisp) and butter in fancy shapes. Close to these and interestingly arranged are platters of cold meats and cheese (always kumming ost which is a Swedish cheese with caraway seed) and all kinds of pickled, smoked, fried, boiled and dried fish. The Swedish people enjoy their salt water fish as well as their fresh water fish. A rather large appetizer table may include an array of colorful salads and homemade pickles.

The correct procedure is for the guest to serve himself from this table of appetizers and relishes, but he should not over-emphasize the appetizer angle for there will be additional food. He may or may not be seated at another table to enjoy these appetizers. When he is ready for his second course, he returns to the table and helps himself to the main course foods, more bread and butter and coffee, the national beverage of Sweden. The main course includes ham, baked or boiled, roast beef and pork, many kinds of homemade sausages, and always the favorite little spiced meat ball about the size of a walnut. It is proper to return as many times as one desires for more of either appetizers or main course dishes. Sometimes one returns to the smörgåsbord for his dessert, but more often he remains seated and the main course dishes are removed by a waitress who then serves the dessert and more coffee.
Americans often serve a supper *smörgåsbord*. Here they combine the appetizer table with a few main course dishes. The suggested menu in this circular is of that type.

The table is always covered with a handwoven linen or lovely damask cloth. The table is placed so that guests can walk all around, and great emphasis is laid on a beautiful, well-planned table arrangement, and food with eye-appeal as well as taste-appeal.

**Formal Buffet Service.** This service, though formal, is much less so than formal service at a table. It may be used for large numbers of guests, as at wedding receptions. Plates, napkins, and silver are usually placed on a service table at the side of the room to avoid overcrowding the table. Instead of going around the table, the guests are seated in the dining room and in adjoining rooms. Duplicate services are arranged at each end of the serving table. Friends of the hostess are seated at opposite ends of the table and each serves half of the plates. The served plates are taken to the seated guests by waitresses who may be young friends of the hostess. Detailed directions for serving such a meal are as follows:

1. The waitress brings two empty plates from the service table and places one plate (left hand, left side) before the woman who is serving.
2. The waitress lifts the filled plate (left hand, left side), and places the empty plate (right hand, left side) in its place.
3. The waitress goes to the serving table and places a fork on the plate, a napkin under it, and carries it to a guest, taking care that the handle of the fork is in a convenient position for the guest.

Photo courtesy U. S. Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics
4. The waitress gets another empty plate from the service table and continues to exchange plates at the serving table and to pass the filled ones until all the guests are served.

5. Waitresses pass rolls and relishes. These are passed a second time and taken to the kitchen.

6. Small glasses of water arranged on a tray are passed to those who desire them.

7. Coffee may be served with either the main course or the dessert course. A tray containing filled coffee cups may be used. Another waitress follows with a tray containing cream, sugar, and coffee spoons.

8. The buffet table is cleared and arranged for dessert.

9. Waitresses may remove two main course plates at a time, being sure not to remove the napkin.

10. The dessert is served in the same manner as the main course. If preferred, the dessert course may be served from the kitchen.

11. The waitresses pass nuts and candies. These are repassed once.

12. When all the guests have been served, the waitresses remove all dishes from the buffet table, leaving cloth and decorations.

13. The waitresses relieve the guests of dessert plates and napkins.

**The Menu**

Buffet service necessitates certain limitations in planning the menu. From the form of service it would be inferred that the menu should be relatively simple. Available facilities and equipment should be considered. Two courses are usually sufficient—a main course and a dessert. A tomato or fruit juice cocktail may be served before the guests are invited to come to the buffet table. The food should be selected so that it will be appropriate for the type of meal planned, such as Swedish foods for a **smörgåsbord**. The menu should be reasonable and attractive, and is frequently planned to carry out a color scheme. It should be planned so that the food will go on the plate without overcrowding. Foods which are too juicy or creamy should be avoided as they are apt to detract from the appearance of the plate. The food for a buffet party should not require much last minute preparation, and as far as possible should be the kind that keeps well.

For a buffet meal, the food should be such as can be easily eaten with a fork unless small tables are provided. Likewise, salad or bread and butter plates, and saucers for the beverage cups are not usually used in buffet service. The use of tall-stemmed sherbets, parfait glasses, and goblets is undesirable when the plate or a tray is held on the lap. In this case it is well to serve buttered rolls so as to avoid the need of a butter spreader.

The main course generally consists of one or two hot dishes, a salad, rolls or sandwiches, and one or two relishes. A substantial salad may replace one of the hot dishes. Foods should be served at appropriate temperatures. Fresh vegetable salads should be crisp, and hot foods should be very hot. An electric casserole may be used for keeping hot such foods as buttered vegetables or creamed dishes. Foods cooked in a casserole are desirable for buffet service for the same reason.
There should be extra serving dishes filled and ready to bring in from the kitchen so that as the ones at the table are emptied they may be replaced without delay.

### Suggested Dishes for Buffet Meals

#### Main Dishes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scalloped Dishes</th>
<th>Casseroles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Chicken, Rice and Almond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veal</td>
<td>Chicken and Vegetable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>Rice and Tuna Fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes with Ham</td>
<td>Tuna and Potato Chip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ham and Eggs</td>
<td>Ham and Noodles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creamed Dishes</td>
<td>Chicken Pie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ham and Mushrooms</td>
<td>Hot Stuffed Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetbreads and Mushrooms</td>
<td>Hungarian Goulash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken in Rice Ring</td>
<td>Southern Hash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotch Woodcock</td>
<td>Spanish Rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ham or Chicken Mousse</td>
<td>Shrimp Creole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg or Sweetbread Cutlets</td>
<td>Veal Birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curried Veal and Rice</td>
<td>Chicken a la King on Rosettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviled Crabmeat</td>
<td>Welsh Rarebit with Rice Croquettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baked Beans</td>
<td>Baked Ham and Spoonbread or Sally Lunn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assorted Cold Meats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Potatoes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scalloped</th>
<th>Baked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stuffed</td>
<td>Lattice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoestring</td>
<td>Au Gratin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chips</td>
<td>Hot Potato Salad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Vegetables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buttered Vegetables</th>
<th>Green Beans—English Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cauliflower and Brussels Sprouts</td>
<td>Baby Lima Beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Lima Beans</td>
<td>Onions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sweet Potatoes
Croquettes
Scalloped with Apples
Hawaiian
Creamed Vegetables
Carrots with Green Beans
Carrots and Onions
Carrots and Celery
Cabbage—Cheese Sauce

Buttered Vegetables
Cauliflower
Parsnip Croquettes
Succotash
Harvard Beets
Scalloped Carrots and Apples
Carrot in Sweet-and-Sour Sauce
Scalloped Green Beans with Mushrooms
Scalloped Cauliflower with Cheese Sauce

Salads
Stuffed Tomato
Tomato and Cottage Cheese
Tomato, Cucumber, and Onion
Tomato and Pineapple
Asparagus and Pimiento
Cabbage and Apple
Cabbage and Carrot
Combination Vegetable
Frozen Cheese

Orange and Grapefruit
Stuffed Cinnamon Apple
Peach with Cottage Cheese
Pear with Grated Cheese
Pineapple with Cheese
Grapefruit and Avocado
Banana and Cherry
Waldorf
Combination Fruit
Chicken

Salad Bowls
Lettuce Hearts and Endive
Lettuce and Watercress
Lettuce, Sliced Cucumbers, Radishes, and Green Pepper Rings
Lettuce, Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Green Pepper, and Bermuda Onions

Red Cabbage, Peanuts, Onions
Cabbage, Carrots, Green Pepper
Rutabagas, Spinach, Radish
Spinach, White and Red Cabbage
Potato
Julienne Vegetables
Watercress
Molded Salads

Golden Glow  Tomato Aspic  Jellied Vegetable  Tomato Jelly and Cottage Cheese  Molded Salmon  Chicken or Veal in Aspic

Bing Cherry  Pears in Lime Gelatin  Molded Apple and Orange Ring  Jellied Cranberry  Grape  Fruit Melon Mold

Bread and Rolls

Sandwiches  Yeast Rolls  Parker House  Cloverleaf  Crescent  Twin  Finger  Bowknot  Poppy Seed  Sesame Seed  Hot Cross  Kolaches  Cinnamon

Quick Breads  Biscuits and variations  Muffins and variations  Orange Pin Wheels  Scones  Steamed Brown Bread  Gingerbread  Nut Bread  Orange Bread  Prune Bread  Raisin Bread  Banana Bread  Graham Bread  Toasted English Muffins

Relishes

Pickles  Dill Pickle Fans  Cauliflower Flowerettes  Raw Turnip Wedges

Photo courtesy Wheat Flour Institute
Olives
Spiced Fruits
Vegetable Relish
Chutney
Chow Chow
Carrot and Lemon Relish
Cranberry, Apple and Orange Relish
Raw Carrot Strips
Celery Curls
Radish Roses, Tulips or Chrysanthemums
Rutabaga Strips
Stuffed Celery
Jelly
Jam
Preserve
Conserve
Marmalade
Honey

Desserts

Frozen
Vanilla Ice Cream with Fresh Frozen Strawberries
Mock Lime Sherbet
Raspberry Ice with Marshmallow Sauce
Hot Fudge Sundae
Butterscotch Sundae
Meringue Shells with Ice Cream and Fresh Berries

Pastry
Lemon Chiffon Pie—Whipped Cream
Pecan Pie
Pumpkin Chiffon Tarts

Cakes
Upside Down Cake
Date Torte
Chocolate Roll
Orange Short Cake
Ice Box Cake (Sponge Cake Basis)
Orange Cup Cakes
Brownies
Assorted Cookies

Miscellaneous
Bavarian Cream
Assorted Cheese and Crackers
Baked Apple Crisp

Suggested Menus for Buffet Meals

A. Suitable for Semi-formal Service using Plates, Trays, or Small Tables

I
Chicken, Rice, and Mushroom Casserole
Buttered Green Beans
Sliced Tomatoes Celery Curls
Buttered Cloverleaf Rolls Crabapple Jelly
Orange Milk Sherbet Chocolate Cup Cake
Coffee

II
Scotch Woodcock on Toasted English Muffins
Potato Chips
Tossed Vegetable Salad Bowl
Assorted Olives
Twin Half-and-Half Rolls
Grape Conserve
Tea
Fresh or Frozen Strawberry Tarts

III
Assorted Cold Meats
Hot Potato Salad
Buttered Green Beans—English Style
Fresh Vegetable Relish Platter
Crescent Rolls Raspberry Jam
Assorted Cookies
Hot Spiced Fruit Punch

IV
Tomatoes Stuffed with Chicken Salad
Scalloped Cabbage Potato Chips
Bread and Butter Pickles
Poppy Seed Rolls
Prune Filled Jelly Roll
Hot Chocolate

V
Egg Croquettes Creamed Mushrooms
Tomatoes and Cucumbers on Watercress
Bowknot Rolls
Golden Cottage Pudding
Orange Sauce
Coffee
B. Suitable for Informal Buffet Service

I
Baked Beans
Boston Brown Bread
Chili Sauce
Raw Spinach and Endive Salad
Apple Crisp
Coffee

II
Savory Meat Loaf
Potatoes au Gratin
Red and White Cabbage Slaw
Buttered Parker House Rolls
Jelly Roll
Coffee

III
Chicken Chow Mein
Rice
Sliced Tomatoes
Raw Rutabaga Wedges
Green Pepper Strips
Orange Rolls
Tea

IV
Scalloped Potatoes with Ham and Peas
Red Cabbage, Onion and Peanut Salad
Buttered Whole Wheat Rolls
Grape Marmalade
Orange Sponge Cake
Hot Chocolate

C. Buffet Breakfasts

I
Fruit Cup
Scrambled Eggs
Sausages
Hot Biscuits
Preserves
Coffee

II
Cantaloupe
Omelet Souffle
Blueberry Muffins
Hot Chocolate

14
III
Grapefruit Juice
Devilled Eggs en Casserole
Scones
Coffee

IV
Fresh Unstemmed Strawberries
Powdered Sugar
Cornbread with Creamed Dried Beef
Coffee or Chocolate

D. Suitable for Formal Buffet Service
I
Brick Ice Cream
Petit Fours
Coffee
Salted Nuts Mint Wafers

II
Ice Cream Molds
Frosted Cup Cakes
Salted Almonds Bon-bons
Coffee

E. Sandwich Buffet
Assorted Breads and Crackers
Creamed Butter
Assorted Spreads
Spiced Pears Radishes Stuffed Celery
Coffee Chocolate

Have an electric toaster on the table for those who prefer toasted sandwiches. A sandwich buffet affords a delightfully informal way of serving a group after square dancing or for a Sunday night supper.

G. Smörgåsbord *

Inlagd Sill
(Pickled Herring)

Tunga
(Cold Tongue)

Potatis med Smör och Persilja
(Potatoes Persillade)

Köttbullar
(Meat Balls)

Syltada Rödbetor
(Pickled Beets)

Morötter med Arter
(Buttered Carrots and Peas)

Frukta Salad
(Fruit Salad)

Råg Bröd
(Rye Bread)

Smör
(Butter)

Ost Kaka
(Cheese Pudding)

Kaffe
(Coffee)

Sylta
(Head Cheese)

Potatis Korf
(Potato Sausage)

Bruna Bönor
(Brown Beans)

Grönsaksfat
(Vegetable Platter)

Knäcke Bröd
(Rye Krisp)

Ost
(Cheese)

Lingon
(Lingon Berries)

Smörbakelser
(Sprits)

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W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln, Nebraska.

(7-46-30M)
Cover page pictures courtesy of the H. J. Heinz Co.; Libby, McNeill & Libby; Wheat Flour Institute; and American Meat Institute.