Description of the YM Catering Function

1. Workload of the function

Time Interval	Tasks	Workload
12 months prior to YM start	Contribute to choice of venue for YM. Visits to potential venues with other committee members. Liaison with potential providers. Meetings to discern suitable venue. Liaison with potential providers. Ascertain whether provider can meet YM catering needs.	20 hours
6 months prior to YM start	Continuing resolution of selection issues. Detailed liaison with selected caterer.	Monthly meetings of two hours Two hours per week.
6 months to 1 month prior	Using data from Registration system, keep caterer informed of dietary and catering numbers and needs.	2 hours per week
1 month prior to YM start	Final numbers to caterers	2 hours per week
First 2 days of YM	Liaising with special catering needs Friends, and caterer.	3 hours per day
Whole of YM	Accounting liaison with caterer	1 hour per day
1 month after YM	Resolution of accounts (with treasurer) Feedback to caterers	4 hours 4 hour task
Overall workload:	Moderate to heavy	
Skills required to undertake this function	Liaison with other Planning Committee members. Diplomacy. Experience in catering helpful, but not essential. Experience with special needs diets (of any kind) is useful.	
This functions works most closely with:	Registration person, Caterer, Treasurer,	

Contents

Description of the YM Catering Function 1

1. Workload of the function 1
2. Tasks included in this function 2
3. Tasks to be done 18 – 12 months ahead 3
   3.1. Choosing a venue 3
   3.2. Budget 3
4. Tasks to be done 10 - 6 months ahead 4
   1. Liaise with Registration Person, and Publicity Person 4
   4.1. Negotiating ordering flexibility 4
5. Tasks to be done 6 - 1 months ahead 5
6. Approaching the time when you must supply accurate numbers 5
7. At the start of YM 6
8. At the end of YM 6

2. Tasks included in this function

This function includes doing these tasks:

1. Develop an understanding of the special dietary needs of Friends, and seeing how these can be met simply
2. Liaise with potential providers
3. Assess whether providers can meet needs of YM catering
4. Following the information provided by the Registration person, and relaying it to the caterers
5. Develop a costing plan for meals at YM, that can be used for calculating costs to registrants for their selected meals.
6. Liaising with the caterers to find simple, effective, cost-effective solutions to providing food for YM participants.
7. Understanding the needs, limitations and cut-off dates of the caterers
8. Monitoring the early days of YM, listening to issues from Friends, being clear with them what is possible, and what is not
9. Liaising with caterers over any issues that arise.

3. Tasks to be done 18 – 12 months ahead

3.1. Choosing a venue

This task needs to be done about a year and a half prior to the YM event. Someone will have created a list of candidate venues, which need to be inspected, and assessed for suitability.

Familiarize yourself with the needs of YM Friends. Consult the Registrations person, and possibly your recent predecessors to get a sense of what is required. Ask for information on dietary needs from the previous year. Friends can be extremely fussy about catering. Some is driven by genuine need, some by preference. It is useful to form a view of how far you can/will go to meet preferences. Clearly, many Friends are vegetarian, which is not a medical need, but we go to considerable efforts to provide for it.

Ceoliacs have quite specific (medical) needs, and will suffer if their diet is not available.

However, there is likely to be a limit to the extent to which some quirkier requests can be accommodated.

Form a view about how familiar the provider is with the kind of catering required. Will they be able to provide interesting food? Will their food be nutritious, tasty? Will they be able to provide without fuss?

Go on the inspections of venues. If you have not done this job before, it may help you to make a check-list of factors to look for, and ask about. If possible, speak with caterers to gain a sense of how familiar they are with providing a high proportion of vegetarian meals, and with catering for special dietary needs.

3.2. Budget

Find out how catering is charged for. Is the provider offering a Bed and Breakfast deal, with other meals charged individually? Is there a full day price (bed and three meals), with stated prices for lunch and dinner? Are there different prices for children or young people?

Assure the caterer that you will be able to give quite accurate numbers (including dietary requirements info) for every meal.

Ask the caterer when they need firm numbers for each meal. How much leeway (eg for late meal purchases) can they tolerate? What is the latest time you can notify them of changes to meal orders?

Ask the caterers if they require us to make a precise count of people entering the dining room each meal. We can tick off each person's name in the queue, we can even bar-code scan each person if the caterer requires to have precise numbers at each meal (most don't). Precise check-off adds inconvenience to the meal, and it is easier not to do this.

Ask the caterer about whether ad hoc meal orders are possible, or whether all meals must be ordered prior to YM. If ad hoc orders are possible, how long prior to the meal must orders be lodged? These factors well make a difference to the registration process and should be explained in the publicity materials. If ad hoc meal can be sold, a mechanism for selling vouchers(?), handling money will be needed as well.

From this information, you will gain an impression of how flexible the caterer will be, especially in terms of how you will be charged.

Liaise with the treasurer to contribute to forming the budget. The treasurer will need to know the price of each meal (perhaps a B&B price, rather than a breakfast price). The budget usually needs to recover the full prices of all adult meals. If you think that ordering errors will incur extra cost, you may want to allow some margin by increasing the price of meals a little.

The treasurer probably has some subsidy for the meals of young people. This may lead to their meals being charged at less than the price you purchase them for. You and the treasurer need to be comfortable that you have set appropriate prices, allowing for this. Remember that JYFs usually go away to a camp for a couple of days during YM—this will reduce numbers for the affected meals.

4. Tasks to be done 10 - 6 months ahead

1. Liaise with Registration Person, and Publicity Person

The information that you have gained (in the previous section) will affect how YM is publicized.

Make sure the person preparing the publicity about YM knows what you do about catering. Similarly, the Registrations person needs to know. Liaise with both of these. Contribute to establishing the cut-off date for registrations to close. For general planning of YM, it is preferable to have a cut-off which is 2 to 3 weeks prior to the commencement of the event, but catering needs may make it longer. However, some Friends will always push the limits of what is possible, so you should know what the cut-off must be, and what flexibility is possible.

Ask to review the publicity information which explains the catering arrangements. Ensure that catering for special diets is accurately explained, as well as the opportunity (or otherwise) for ad hoc purchases of meals. Ensure that the Registration Form correctly represents the Special needs provision that is possible.

4.1. Negotiating ordering flexibility

Caterers who operate in a demand-driven environment (eg running a café) are used to operating in reasonable uncertainty of demand (ie unknown customers walk in off the street), whereas institutional caterers work with predictable demand for each meal. It is reasonable that higher uncertainty levels will increase the prices of meals (to cover greater wastage). Thus a negotiating point can be that the YM demand will be well predicted a week or more before YM starts. So, most of the catering can be done based on high predictability of demand. You may be able to strike a deal where pre-ordered meals are priced cheaper than ad hoc sales of meals to a fair margin.

Further, the greater the choice that is offered, the higher wastage can be expected. Some behaviours that can be anticipated from YM participants :

- Customers who have not identified as Vegetarian will likely want to eat some vegetarian meals.
- Foods which are labelled as for special diet customers (eg gluten-free) will likely be respected by the customers who are not in that special needs group—provided they are well labelled.

- Friends will tolerate some reduction in choices at the tail-end of a meal queue, especially if they understand that food wastage is thereby being reduced.

5. Tasks to be done 6 - 1 months ahead

Once Registrations are open, various questions will arise from Friends. Some of these will concern Special diets. Such questions will usually be routed via the Registrations person. Some may require further liaison with the caterer. Keep in mind that some requests may be too hard, and it will not be possible to meet the request—it is OK to tell a Friend that a dietary request cannot be met. In previous YMs, some Friends have had to make their own catering arrangements.

The Registrations system will provide three reports on catering numbers as registrations come in. there are several reports specially summarizing catering needs information. Each report lists each person who has ordered each meal by name, and shows their dietary needs as supplied at registration. You will be able to produce an up to the minute version of each of these reports at any time.

"All Meals" puts each meal in a separate column, so that you can see how many people have ordered each meal, and the special dietary needs of each person. This report shows every person who has ordered each meal. The second page in the workbook provides the total number for each meal. This report is especially useful for the totals page, and for reconciling actuals delivered with orders.

"Special Dietary" This report concentrates on the people with special needs, and does not list anyone who has not identified a special dietary need. It is useful to the caterer in showing the range of specific needs to be catered for. It shows the total number of breakfasts, lunches dinners of each customer.

"Meal Roll Lists" this breaks each meal out into a separate list of those who have ordered the meal. It can be used for checking at the entry to the dining room that each person presenting has ordered (and paid for) the meal. It is of no use for planning.

You are recommended to become familiar with the former two as soon as they become available. As time goes on the number of people registered will increase, but the form of the report will stay the same. It is useful for you to be familiar with each report, understand its capabilities, and how you can share it with the caterers.

6. Approaching the time when you must supply accurate numbers

Establish expectation with the caterers as to when you will supply firm numbers. Ensure that the Registration person knows these too. Try to make for as few surprises as possible.

Eventually you will supply a "final" set of numbers for you to give to the caterer.

Make sure you understand how much flexibility is available in these. There will be last minute changes from Friends. Some will seek to register late, some will have unanticipated disasters, which will cause late withdrawals. Sometimes you can work cancellations and late arrivals to your advantage. If your caterer is not too concerned about uncertainty, you can know how to advise the Registrations person and the Help Desk to deal with late enquiries.

7. At the start of YM

Monitor how the first meal goes—so you can make any adjustments. Sometimes changing where a queue forms, or a similar change can improve the efficiency of serving, and reduce delay.

Explain to YM participants that any concerns they have about food should be taken up with you—they should not complain directly with the caterers (unless you work out an exception to this practice).

Stay in touch with the caterers. Monitor their satisfaction level with arrangements. Deal with any difficulties early, so as to minimize them. Ask other members of your planning committee if they are aware of any difficulties.

Stay in touch with your treasurer. Make sure (s)he knows how the caterer will submit their account after YM, and what level of reconciliation will be required.

Once you settle into a pattern, your job may reduce to nothing. However, be alert to the unexpected, and your job as a liaison person.

Ensure that you maintain whatever records you have agreed with the caterer. For example, if the caterer expects a precise count of every meal, make sure you have a way to collect and record that information.

8. At the end of YM

Tidy up any loose ends with the caterer. Provide appropriate feedback to them. Listen to any difficulties the caterer encountered with YM.

Work with the treasurer to reconcile the monies owed to the caterer.

Contribute suitable feedback to your planning committee, and the report it may write about YM.

Provide any feedback to the YM Planning Support Committee about the suitability of this planning guide, and of their helpfulness. They want to provide a fully useful support to future years' planning committees.