

Creating nourishing food platters

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Platters are a practical and convenient catering option for meetings, events and shared lunches. They are also an easy way to cater for people with a range of food requirements or preferences.

Here are some tips for creating tasty, appealing and nourishing platters:

- Build platters around vegetables, fruit, whole grains, legumes,* nuts, seeds, lean protein-rich food* and dairy.
- Prioritise whole, less-processed food.* Choose fresh or lightly cooked produce over deep-fried or ultra-processed food.*
- Aim for variety in colour, texture and flavour.
- Offer a mix of food that reflects the variety of cultures and traditions in your organisation.
- Cater for different dietary needs with versatile food – for example, include brown rice crackers in a cheese platter so it can be enjoyed by people with or without gluten-free needs.
- Offering the right amount of food helps prevent overeating and minimise food waste.
- Be mindful of food allergies and the risk of cross-contact during food preparation and serving. To help ensure food is safe for people with specific dietary requirements.
- Pastries, baked goods and sweet slices can be energy-dense and high in sugar and fat. Offer smaller portions or cut larger pieces into halves or quarters.



What to put on your platter

Aim for bite-sized food that is easy to eat with fingers. Here are a few ideas for food choices. Remember that sometimes 'less is more' and you won't need all this food on your platter.

A base food



Popular base food to dunk in dips or add toppings to includes:

- fresh vegetable pieces (carrots, cucumbers, green beans, celery, capsicum, cherry tomatoes) – choose a variety of colourful, seasonal produce to add visual appeal and help keep costs down
- wholegrain bread, toast, brown rice crackers, wholegrain crackers, pita pockets or wraps cut into fingers or triangles.

Dips and sauces

Make your own dips and sauces in advance or choose from plenty of options at the supermarket. Some appetising choices are:

- plain hummus or beetroot hummus
- vegetable-based dips such as babaganoush (eggplant dip) or carrot and miso dip
- yoghurt-based dips such as raita or tzatziki (yoghurt with fresh herbs and cucumber)
- pesto, chutneys or salsa.



Something savoury



Your savoury offerings might include:

- cooked lean meat such as meatballs or cooked chicken pieces
- cooked fish such as hot smoked salmon
- boiled eggs, halved
- falafel
- cheese such as slices/wedges of brie or cubed edam
- mini sandwiches or vegetable muffins
- sushi, vegetable dumplings or rice paper rolls
- mini meat and vegetable kebabs
- small vegetable fritters
- nuts and seeds, popcorn or roasted chickpeas
- marinated or pickled vegetables such as sundried tomatoes, olives or gherkins.

Something sweet



Options to satisfy a sweet tooth include:

- fresh fruit such as grapes, strawberries, blueberries, mandarins, kiwifruit, pears and melon, whole or cut into pieces
- small portions of sweet treats with lower added sugar* such as mini nut and fruit muesli bars or bliss balls
- dried fruit such as apricots, dates or figs.

For terms marked with an asterisk (*), see Explanatory Notes.

Supermarket Shopping List for Nourishing Platters

A quick guide to purchasing food and drinks for meetings, events and shared lunches: aim for mostly **'choose most'** options, with some **'choose some'** options included for balance.

Vegetables and fruit

- Fresh: Carrots, cucumber, celery, capsicum, cherry tomatoes, avocado
- Canned: baby beetroot, baby corn
- Frozen: edamame beans, corn cobs
- Seasonal fresh fruit: mandarins, grapes, kiwifruit, melon, pineapple
- Olives, sundried tomatoes, gherkins

Grain food

- Grainy or seed crackers, brown rice crackers, corn thins
- Wholemeal pita or wraps
- Bran, fruit or vegetable muffins or scones
- Air-popped popcorn
- Natural, unsalted corn chips
- White or flavoured crackers
- White scones or muffins

Protein-rich food

- Hummus, baked falafel or tofu
- Unsalted nuts or seed mixes
- Boiled eggs or vegetable frittata
- Chicken, roast beef or meatballs
- Mussels, tinned tuna or salmon
- Smoked fish or crumbed chicken
- Chicken nibbles, ham or sausages

Ready-made options

- Wheatmeal or grainy bread club sandwiches, wraps or rolls
- Sushi or rice paper rolls or dumplings
- Vegetable pizza bread, bread twists
- Baked spring rolls, samosas or wedges
- Mini sausage rolls, pies or quiches
- Filled croissants

Dips and flavour additions

- Tzatziki or raita
- Guacamole or babaganoush
- Pesto or nut butters
- Salsa or chutney
- Creamy dips or sour cream

Cheese

- Edam, feta, mozzarella or reduced-fat cheddar
- Cottage cheese, ricotta
- Cream cheese, haloumi, brie or camembert

Drinks

- Still or sparkling water
- Cow's milk and/or calcium-fortified soy milk
- Tea, coffee or herbal tea
- No added sugar drinks or diluted juice
- Flavoured milk

Sweet options

- Dried apricots, dates, figs
- Bliss balls, made with whole ingredients
- Mini pastries
- Sweet slices, cakes or loaves, cut into bite sized pieces

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