Wittenberg Catering: Frequently Asked Questions

Is it true that all food services on campus must be provided by Sodexo?

Wittenberg University and Sodexo Dining Services have mutually agreed that Sodexo will be the sole provider of all food and related services for all events held on Wittenberg property. The only authorized exception is for drop-off pizza orders.

Why isn’t competition permitted?

Competition is present at the contract level, that is, when firms are competing to hold the dining services contract at Wittenberg. Firms must compete based on the breadth of services offered, costs and quality.

In order to meet all of the expectations of the Wittenberg community, Dining Services is often required to ignore sound business practices. Local businesses have a competitive advantage in that they do not have the same challenge. As a balance to these demands, it is common practice for colleges and universities to allow campus exclusivity for catering services.

An example of an “unsound business decision are the summer hours in Post 95; this allows us to properly welcome prospective students and their families during their summer visits to campus and also allows us to continue to provide faculty, staff and students with many of the same convenient dining options available at Wittenberg during the academic year. However, summer sales do not cover the cost operations and Sodexo operates this piece of business at a loss. Additionally, Sodexo provides services at a loss for events such as New Student Days and the Student Activities Fair. Most very small events are also serviced at a loss.

In order to compensate for these losses, Wittenberg guarantees all food service needs of the University will be awarded to Dining Services. (Although exclusivity is guaranteed to Sodexo, Sodexho is also required to provide its catering services at a competitive price – see more information below.)

Another reason for contractual exclusivity is to ensure that all dining events held on campus meet appropriate health and safety standards for food and services. Sodexho is responsible for ensuring that all Health and Safety Regulations are followed in all kitchens, preparation areas and serving spaces. This protects participants of these events from possible food-borne illness and it protects the University from potential liability.

Finally, Wittenberg University is committed to being distinctive in all aspects of its operations and requires the same of its contracted services. Dining Services helps with this commitment by ensuring Wittenberg standards of service for all events are identified and maintained.

So we cannot have potlucks or covered-dish activities?

Wittenberg and Sodexo recognize the importance of the community-building inspired by potluck events. An exception to the exclusivity clause is permitted for bona fide potluck events. A potluck is defined as a meal at which the individual participants pay for and prepare the foods to be served at the event; departmental or other university-related funds cannot be used to cover or reimburse for any food expenses for an event scheduled as a potluck.

If university funds are used (department budgets, grant funds or student organization funds,) foods must be provided by Dining Services. If the event is to be picnic or barbecue, Sodexo can provide the raw meats to be grilled by the participants, and can also provide the side dishes and other accompaniments.

(Alcoholic beverages are prohibited, see information below.)

Why do other food service establishments have lower pricing?

When comparing “apples-to-apples”, Sodexo pricing is very comparable to that of all other local providers. Other providers frequently list a base price for a menu and then add charges for setting up, room rental, chinaware, tips/gratuities, etc…. It is important to recognize that pricing listed in Wittenberg’s catering guide are all-inclusive.

Per the contract, Sodexo must obtain price comparisons twice each year and is required to be competitive (not necessarily the lowest) with local providers. Most recently, such analyses have been made with similar good and high quality catering providers including Simply Delicious, Casey’s, and Courtyard-Marriott. When comparing like events, Sodexo pricing is in line with all of these providers. A copy of this comparison is available upon request.

Why can’t I buy a dozen cookies for the same price as I pay at Kroger’s?

You can. If you stop down at the Student Center and pick up a dozen cookies from Dining Services, you will pay the same price as you would pay at Kroger’s. However, most cookie orders are requested as a refreshment set-up which
requires Dining Services to deliver the product, to cloth and skirt the service table, to provide plates and napkins, and clean up after the event. These additional services and supplies come at a cost. If you were to factor in your cost to purchase these additional items plus factor in the value of your time spent on preparation and set-up, you would have a more accurate picture of your cost to provide Kroger or WalMart cookies.

If you are planning a simple affair and are able to pick up your food items and related accessories, you will reduce your cost to host an event. Dining Services has a “Casual Catering” option which provides many items at a price greatly reduced from the full service guide. You may obtain a copy of the Casual Catering Guide from Dining Services, call 6161, or view it online from the Dining Services link on Wittenberg’s website.

What else does Dining Services do to support Wittenberg University?

Sodexo Dining Services supports Wittenberg University in many ways. Dining Services donates $35-40,000 annually in free food, services and cash donations to help support local and University-sponsored events and activities.

Dining Services provides 350 free meals a week to disadvantaged grade-school students who participate in the ARC program. This program was developed by Good Shepard Evangelical Lutheran Church to provide an after-school program for children in need.

$3 – 4,000 in food and services were donated last year to various student organizations including fraternal organizations, social and community clubs. In addition to these events, Dining Services supports many on-campus events with either free or at-cost catering - examples include Habitat for Humanity, Rotary Christmas Party, Empty Bowls, New Student Days, Upward Bound, Student Activities Fair and Witt Fest…. just to name a few.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions or concerns?

Lisa Whitt, Director of Dining Services, will be happy to answer any Dining Services questions you may have. You may contact her by phone at 6160 or by e-mail, lwhitt@wittenberg.edu. Diane Rader, Director of Catering, can be reached at 7032 or you may e-mail her at drader@wittenberg.edu. If you need any additional assistance please contact the Dining Services Office at 6161.

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