

# Right-Sizing Service: Vessel Selection & Refill Strategy

## GUIDELINE

Use serving vessels that match your portion specs and maintain visual appeal through frequent, smaller refills.

## WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE

- Banquet Captains
- Banquet Servers
- Culinary Expo
- Event Management
- Stewarding

## HOW TO USE

Right-sized vessels and smart refills keep service looking abundant without creating waste. Follow these steps to set up service that matches actual consumption, not just visual impact. Adapt this checklist to your operation.

## Right-Sizing Service: Vessel Selection & Refill Strategy

*Match vessel sizes to actual guest needs, refill strategically, and keep service looking fresh without overproduction.*

### Before Service – Set Up for Flow

The first few minutes of setup set the tone for control, communication, and guest confidence.

- Confirm guest count and any last-minute changes.
- Review the menu and portion specs to ensure vessel size fits expected consumption.
- Choose smaller vessels sized for two to three refills, not a single oversize display.
- Stage backups in hot boxes or coolers—don't set everything out at once.
- Assign clear roles: who monitors trays, who coordinates with the kitchen, and who decides when service slows or stops.
- Verify that signage and allergen labels are accurate and visible.
- Review waste and surplus protocols so everyone knows what happens to leftovers.
- Take pre-event photos: Buffet setup + backup inventory before guests arrive.

## During Service – Refill with Intention

Maintain freshness and visual appeal through smaller, timed replenishment. Guests equate freshness with attentiveness, not excess.

- Refill only when trays are about 75 percent empty.
- Refill based on guest flow and remaining service time, not how “full” it looks.
- Bring out one tray at a time and consolidate partial trays before replacing them.
- Use right-sized utensils (e.g., small ladles, tongs) to reinforce proper portions.
- Hold backups at proper temps until needed.
- Coordinate timing with the culinary expo and stewarding to avoid duplicate refills.
- Communicate with front-of-house so guests are directed to active stations.
- Stop routine refilling 15–20 minutes before service ends unless requested by the planner.

## Team Leadership – Keep Eyes on the Floor

Lead through visibility and quick feedback loops to maintain a controlled, confident service.

- Walk the floor frequently (every 15 minutes/determine time) to check guest flow and refill needs.
- Reinforce the 75-percent refill rule and praise teams for following it.
- Adjust in real time—slow restocking as traffic declines.
- Debrief immediately post-service to note any over-production patterns.
- Recognize teams achieving “just-enough” service as the standard of excellence.

**TIP:** True abundance is created through attentiveness, not volume. Frequent, smaller refills keep food fresh, guests happy, and waste out of sight.

## Post-Event Debrief Questions

- Were vessel sizes appropriate, or did we over/under estimate?
- Did we refill too early or too late at any point?
- What menu items consistently result in waste?
- How can we adjust portions, vessel choices, or timing for next time?

**REMEMBER:** Well-planned events should expect a low-to-zero surplus. Frequent, smaller refills maintain quality and reduce waste. Celebrate teams that serve exactly what's needed.