

3 Quick Tips to Keep Your Christmas Party Stress-Free - Complete Hospitality Training

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Details:

A Christmas function usually goes wrong in three predictable places: the numbers, the drinks and the trip home. Each one can be settled in advance, and the second is the one that carries legal weight for the people working the bar.

For a gathering at home: the original three tips

Our source Christmas-party guide is written for the person hosting friends or family. Keep it simple: choose food you know how to prepare, or ask guests to bring a dish, rather than building a menu you cannot enjoy. Plan ahead: make a short task list, prepare what can be done the day before and arrange drinks so you are not serving everyone all night. Focus on the people: a game, music or a shared task can help, but give yourself time to join the celebration. The aim is a relaxed gathering, not a perfect production.

The operational and legal notes below apply when a party is run by a licensed venue or staffed function. They do not mean a private home host must hold an RSA simply for serving friends. For any event, check the setting and who is responsible for food, alcohol and transport rather than assuming one set of rules fits every party.

1. Settle the numbers and the details in writing, early

Final numbers, the seating arrangement, the timing of speeches and the dietary requirements should all be confirmed before the day, not negotiated at the door. Dietary and allergen information in particular has to be collected in advance and passed to the kitchen in a form it can act on. A verbal mention to a server during service is the weakest possible link in that chain.

A short run sheet does most of the work: arrival time, when food is served, when speeches happen, when service ends, and one named contact on the organiser's side who can make a decision on the night. Venues that ask for this are not being difficult; a function without a nominated decision-maker stalls at every unexpected turn.

On the dietary side there is a specific competency behind the kitchen's answer. SITHCCC042 Produce food to meet special dietary requirements is a core unit of SIT30821 Certificate III in Commercial Cookery. On the floor, SITXCCS014 Provide service to customers, core in both Certificate III in Hospitality qualifications, requires staff to identify customer needs and expectations including customers with special needs, and its knowledge requirements name special needs awareness including the customs and practices of various social and cultural groups. A work function is exactly where religious and cultural requirements arrive together and without notice.

2. Plan the alcohol service before the first drink is poured

This is the substantive part. A Christmas function is a peak responsible service of alcohol risk: extended sessions, free or subsidised drinks, and a social expectation that people will drink more than usual.

The legal position is not softened by the setting. Service must stop to a person who is unduly intoxicated, and that applies at a private function exactly as it applies to a public bar. The statutory phrase in Australian liquor law is unduly intoxicated, not drunk, which is a distinction worth knowing because it describes an observable state rather than a judgement about someone's character. Just as importantly, the obligation attaches to the individual serving, not only to the venue. The person holding the bottle is the person making the decision, and penalties can attach to them personally.

Practical measures that reduce the pressure on that decision: keep the bar staffed rather than self-serve, put substantial food out at the start and keep it available, make water freely accessible, end drink service before the function ends rather than at the same moment, and agree in advance with the organiser who will support staff if service has to be refused to a colleague or a senior guest. That last point is the one function agreements never cover and staff always need.

RSA is one unit, and eight jurisdictions regulate it differently

RSA is SITHFAB021 Provide responsible service of alcohol, also available as the standalone SITSS00071 Responsible service of alcohol skill set. There is no single national credential:

Jurisdiction	The position
Victoria	Use a current Victorian RSA certificate. Eligible interstate holders can apply for free bridging: approved original training within three years, with the online-course residence condition. Specific exemptions apply at qualifying producer events. Victorian RSA Refresher every three years.
New South Wales	Eligible temporary interstate workers can use approved interstate RSA. Permanent movers and security or RSA marshal roles must meet NSW training and competency-card requirements; eligible holders can use bridging instead of the full NSW RSA course. NSW competency card: five years. Interstate concessions have separate eligibility and certificate-age requirements.
South Australia	Check provider approval and training date. Training from 1 November 2020 must be through a Commissioner-approved RTO. Earlier RSA training need not be repeated solely because of that approval change. No routine RSA renewal period stated in the cited CBS guidance; check applicable licence conditions.
Queensland	Accepted where the evidence is a Statement of Attainment for the nationally accredited Provide Responsible Service of Alcohol course. An attendance certificate is insufficient. Valid RSA training generally has no expiry; training completed before 2002 must be replaced.

Western Australia	Provide the RSA certificate showing completion of the nationally accredited course. An interstate RSA card alone is not accepted as evidence. Keep the RSA certificate as training evidence; approved-manager cards have separate renewal requirements.
Northern Territory	Certificates from an RTO registered to deliver RSA are accepted, including interstate certificates. Check certificate age and the NT refresher requirements. NT guidance gives a three-year limit for interstate certificates and directs holders to a refresher; check current renewal guidance.
Australian Capital Territory	Valid interstate RSA certificates are recognised, subject to the ACT's three-year currency limit and ACT-approved refresher requirements. Three years from course completion, then an ACT-approved refresher.
Tasmania	Interstate certificates can be accepted under the Commissioner's conditions. Requirements differ for employees and liquor licence holders; check the appropriate role. No RSA expiry date in the regulator's FAQ; an employer may request updated training.

Current regulator guidance: NSW , VIC , SA , QLD , WA , NT , ACT , TAS .

The December implication: if you are bringing in casuals for the season, check their certificate against your state's position before rostering them on a bar. A Melbourne certificate does not work in Sydney or Adelaide. And in Victoria, completing the unit is not the end of it. See RSA , how long does an RSA last and managing intoxicated patrons .

For a new Victorian RSA course, use an LCV-approved provider for the delivery mode and complete the required LCV Learning Hub surveys and sexual harassment and assault module as well as the national unit. Victorian certificate holders must complete the free RSA Refresher every three years. In Victoria, an interstate RSA certificate generally cannot be used on its own. Eligible holders can apply for the free RSA Refresher bridging course to obtain a Victorian certificate. LCV requires approved original RSA training completed within the last three years and, for an online course, residence interstate or overseas at the time. Allow about ten working days for the application. LCV lists a specific exemption for interstate liquor producers at qualifying temporary or major events. Check the Victorian eligibility and event rules before relying on a certificate.

Gaming, if the venue has machines

Where a function is held in a Victorian venue with gaming machines, note that Responsible Service of Gambling training in Victoria is free government training, and no registered training organisation can supply it, including us. That is worth knowing before anyone pays for it. See responsible service of gambling and how do I get my bar and gaming licence .

One further distinction matters here. A venue is not a training organisation. The Standards for RTOs bind the provider that issues a certificate; a pub, club or restaurant takes its obligations from liquor, food safety and work health and safety law instead.

Which award covers the staff working your function

This is not the organiser's problem, but it is the venue's, and it changes with the room. Coverage follows the premises, not the job title , and there are four awards, each covering its industry to the exclusion of any other modern award :

Award	Code	Where it applies
Hospitality Industry (General)	MA000009	Hotels, pubs, taverns, motels, resorts, casinos, caterers , and a function or convention facility operating in or in connection with those premises
Registered and Licensed Clubs	MA000058	Not-for-profit registered clubs : RSL, bowls, golf, surf, sporting, community
Restaurant Industry	MA000119	Standalone restaurants, cafes, night clubs , reception centres , roadhouses, and catering by a restaurant business
Fast Food Industry	MA000003	Food sold primarily to be consumed away from the point of sale , food courts

So the same Christmas function sits under a different award depending on where it is held. A function room inside a hotel is MA000009 . A standalone reception centre is MA000119 . An RSL is MA000058 , because MA000009 clause 4.4(d)(i) expressly excludes "clubs registered or recognised under State or Territory legislation" and clause 4.3 of the clubs award requires the club to be both registered and licensed under a relevant liquor, gaming, associations incorporation or corporations statute and operating on a not-for-profit basis for members and the community.

Both MA000009 and MA000119 provide public holiday rates . No dollar figures or penalty percentages appear here, because award rates reset every 1 July and a stale figure is worse than none. Use the Fair Work Ombudsman's Pay and Conditions Tool with the award code and classification. And if any staff on the function are apprentices under 18, MA000009 clause 12.5 and MA000119 clauses 12.5 and 12.6 mean you cannot require them to work overtime or shiftwork. See working hours, rosters and public holidays .

3. Plan transport, and treat the buffet as a food safety task

Transport is decided at the start of the night or not at all. Book the transport, share the details when the invitation goes out, and make it easier to take than to decline.

Buffet service carries its own risk because food sits out. Keep hot food hot and cold food cold, replace trays rather than topping up part-used ones, keep displays covered and protected, and discard rather than return anything that has been out too long.

What the Standard actually requires

Standard 3.2.2A of the Food Standards Code commenced 8 December 2023 , and its categories are activity-based, not premises-based . Category one is a caterer or food service operation that processes unpackaged potentially hazardous food into food that is both potentially hazardous and ready to eat . Restaurants, cafes, pubs and caterers are expressly named, so a venue putting on a Christmas buffet

is category one, not category two.

Only category one carries the substantiation records duty . The Standard's control temperatures are 5 °C or below and 60 °C or above for receipt and temperature control, and the span between them is the range the records exist to minimise time in. Four of the eight record types apply directly to a buffet:

Record	Why a function tests it
Display under temperature control	A buffet is display, for the full length of the service
Minimising time at growth-permitting temperatures	The bain-marie insert that has been out since seven
Cooling and reheating within specified timeframes	Festive menus are batch-cooked ahead, and large volumes cool slowly
Transport under temperature control	If the food is produced off site and brought in

Records must be kept for 3 months after being made and be accessible at the premises .

Cooling and reheating is where December failures cluster , and the cause is structural rather than careless. A full insert of anything cools far more slowly than a single portion, and then it is reheated under time pressure in a kitchen already at capacity. The controls are unglamorous: divide into shallow portions to cool, use a calibrated probe rather than judgement, and write the reading down as you go rather than reconstructing it afterwards. Procedures to calibrate a temperature probe are an assessment requirement of SITXFSA006 Participate in safe food handling practices , which is core in SIT30821 and which requires controlling food hazards at nine critical control points : receiving, storing, preparing, processing, displaying , serving, packaging, transporting and disposing.

The Food Safety Supervisor

Under the Standard, category one and category two businesses must have a Food Safety Supervisor , appointed before the business engages in a prescribed activity, holding a certificate issued within the immediately preceding five years , and remaining reasonably available , meaning on site or easily contacted, for example by phone. That last requirement is the one December tests: a supervisor on leave for three weeks while the venue runs functions is not reasonably available. Check the certificate date now rather than in the second week of December.

New South Wales adds a requirement that the certificate come from a provider approved by the NSW Food Authority . We are not on that list and cannot issue a NSW Food Safety Supervisor certificate. In that state an approved RTO issues two separate documents , the national Statement of Attainment and the state FSS certificate, and keeping only the Statement of Attainment does not satisfy the requirement. See the Food Safety Supervisor course and understanding Standard 3.2.2A .

For casual staff brought in for the season, food handler training must be completed before the person engages in a prescribed activity and must cover four topics: safe handling of food, food contamination, cleaning and sanitising of premises and equipment, and personal hygiene . It does not have to be nationally accredited, the Standard mandates no refresher period , and the business is not required to keep records of it. The accredited unit SITXFSA005 buys portability and proof, not permission, which in a casual workforce is worth having anyway. See food handling .

If functions are a regular line of business

Venues that run functions regularly may find SIT50322 Diploma of Event Management relevant: 20 units of which 13 are core , CRICOS 118427D, delivered in Victoria only per our scope records. Its core units include SITEEVT028 Manage on-site event operations , SITEEVT026 Manage event production components , SITXWHS006 Identify hazards, assess and control safety risks , SITXHRM010 Recruit,

select and induct staff and SITXMGT006 Manage projects , which between them describe the actual work of running a function season rather than a single party.

Short of a qualification, our scope carries 81 current skill sets , including SITSS00092 Event Coordination , SITSS00071 Responsible service of alcohol , SITSS00069 Food Safety Supervision and SITSS00068 Food Handling . A skill set is a defined group of units, and each unit completed still produces a Statement of Attainment on the national record. Ask which are currently scheduled via contact , and confirm current fees and intakes directly.

If you are the venue catering the party rather than the organiser hosting it, the service-side companion to this page is 5 hospitality tips to dazzle your guests this Christmas .

About us

We are Complete Hospitality Training , RTO 3722, CRICOS 04242E. Legal name Complete Hospitality Training (Vic) Pty Ltd , ABN 27 006 947 262 , ACN 006 947 262 . Registered as RTO 3722 since 1 June 1994 , transferred from the Victorian regulator to the national regulator, ASQA, on 8 September 2017 , with the current registration period running 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2032 . Level 3, 28 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, and 410 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010. Contact melbourne@cht.edu.au or +61 3 9654 1554 .

We link to the relevant course and regulatory sources in this guide. Check those sources for current requirements, and confirm course availability, delivery, fees and entry requirements with us before enrolling.

Source records and further guidance

We link the unit records and regulator guidance relevant to this page below. Check the current source before making an enrolment, licensing or employment decision.

SIT30821 Certificate III in Commercial Cookery

SITXFSA006 Participate in safe food handling practices

SIT50322 Diploma of Event Management

SITSS00071 Responsible service of alcohol

SITHCCC042 Prepare food to meet special dietary requirements

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Victoria)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Queensland)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Western Australia)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (South Australia)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Tasmania)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Northern Territory)

Responsible Service of Alcohol training requirements (Australian Capital Territory)

Food Safety Supervisor certificate requirements (New South Wales)

Food Standards Code — Standards 3.2.2 and 3.2.2A (food safety practices and food safety management tools)

Responsible Service of Gaming (RSG) training requirements (Victoria)

Hospitality Industry (General) Award 2020 (MA000009)

Restaurant Industry Award 2020 (MA000119)

Can service be refused at a private function?

Yes. The obligation to stop serving a person who is unduly intoxicated applies regardless of whether the event is private, prepaid or hosted.

Who is responsible if a guest is over-served?

The obligation attaches to the individual serving as well as to the venue. Staff cannot rely on an instruction from an organiser or a manager to keep pouring, and penalties can attach to them personally.

What does "unduly intoxicated" mean?

It is the statutory phrase used in Australian liquor law, and it describes an observable state rather than a judgement about someone's character. It is a lower bar than "drunk".

Is Victorian RSA finished once the unit is complete?

No. Victoria requires a Liquor Control Victoria approved provider and a second stage after the unit: the LCV Learning Hub pre-training survey, the SHARPR module and a post-training survey. Three-yearly currency applies to every certificate holder, through the free RSA Refresher course.

Can interstate casuals work the bar on their existing RSA?

An RSA Statement of Attainment is a national training record, but permission to serve alcohol depends on the destination's rules. NSW permits eligible temporary interstate workers; permanent movers and security or RSA marshal roles must meet NSW training and competency-card requirements, using bridging where eligible. Victoria offers bridging to eligible interstate holders. SA applies approved-provider rules to training from 1 November 2020, with earlier training not required to be repeated solely for that change. QLD and WA require suitable national RSA evidence. Tasmania distinguishes staff from licence holders; the ACT and NT have local currency and refresher requirements. Check the regulator before your first shift. See RSA recognition by jurisdiction (*/rsa/*), NSW's rules (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/business-and-economy/liquor-and-gaming/training/rsa-bridging>) and SA's rules (<https://www.cbs.sa.gov.au/sections/LGL/RSA-approved-providers>).

A provider says its RSA course is "OLGR-approved". Is that reassuring?

No. Queensland and Western Australia do not operate approved-provider registers for RSA, so the phrase describes a scheme that does not exist. Treat it as a warning sign.

Can you supply Responsible Service of Gambling training in Victoria?

No. Victorian RSG is free government training and no registered training organisation can provide it, including us.

Which award covers staff working our function?

It depends on the premises. A function room inside a hotel is MA000009. A standalone reception centre is MA000119. A not-for-profit registered club such as an RSL is MA000058, because the hospitality award expressly excludes registered clubs.

Do we have to pay public holiday rates for a function on a public holiday?

Both MA000009 and MA000119 provide public holiday rates. The figures come from the Fair Work Ombudsman's Pay and Conditions Tool using the award code and classification, and they reset each 1 July.

Is a buffet category one or category two for food safety?

Category one, if the venue processes unpackaged potentially hazardous food into food that is both potentially hazardous and ready to eat. Caterers are expressly named. Only category one carries the records duty.

What temperatures does the Standard use?

5 °C or below and 60 °C or above for receipt and temperature control. The span between them is the range the records exist to minimise time in.

How long do the food safety records have to be kept?

Three months after being made, and accessible at the premises.

Does Complete Hospitality Training issue NSW Food Safety Supervisor certificates?

No. New South Wales requires a provider approved by the NSW Food Authority, and we are not on that list. In that state an approved RTO issues two separate documents, and the national Statement of Attainment alone is not enough.

How far ahead should dietary requirements be collected?

Before the day, in writing, and in a form the kitchen receives directly. Collecting them at the table on the night is where most errors originate.

Is the venue covered by the RTO Standards?

No. Those standards apply to the registered training organisation issuing a qualification. A venue's obligations come from liquor, food safety and work health and safety law.

Does a Victorian RSA certificate expire?

It must be kept current by completing the free RSA Refresher course every three years, and that applies to every certificate holder rather than only to licensees. The refresher is online, takes about 90 minutes, and needs your original RSA certificate number.

Can casual staff from interstate work the bar at a Victorian function?

In Victoria, an interstate RSA certificate generally cannot be used on its own. Eligible holders can apply for the free RSA Refresher bridging course to obtain a Victorian certificate. LCV requires approved original RSA training completed within the last three years and, for an online course, residence interstate or overseas at the time. Allow about ten working days for the application. LCV lists a specific

exemption for interstate liquor producers at qualifying temporary or major events. Check the Victorian eligibility and event rules (<https://www.vic.gov.au/rsa-training>) before relying on a certificate.