

# Agudas Achim Congregation

## Bnai Mitzvah Catering Policy & Guide



**1. PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE** – The purpose of this guide is to provide parents of upcoming bnai mitzvah at Agudas Achim Congregation (AAC) important catering information to assist in planning their celebratory event(s) at AAC and to answer frequently asked questions.

### **2. RULES OF KASHRUT**

- a. All food (i.e., items of sustenance including, but not limited to, beverages and other consumables) served by the synagogue must be kosher.
- b. Food served at the synagogue must be either:
  - 1) Prepared by the synagogue kitchen under supervision of AAC kitchen staff,
  - 2) Prepared by an AAC approved kosher caterer under supervision of AAC kitchen staff, or
  - 3) Delivered to the synagogue in sealed packages that are certified kosher by an AAC acceptable authority.
- c. Any receptacle (pots, pans, plates, platters, bowls, etc.) or utensils not from the AAC kitchen used for the preparation or serving of food must be new and in their unopened original packaging.
- d. Food may not be cooked on Shabbat. Prepared foods may be warmed in an oven that has been set to 200 degrees Fahrenheit 20 minutes prior to the beginning of Shabbat. Warming ovens shall remain on until the end of Shabbat.
- e. No food or event related items may be purchased, delivered, or removed from the synagogue building during Shabbat or holidays.
- f. Decorations may not include non-kosher elements (e.g., sea shells, feathers, or fur from non-kosher animals, etc.) and must comply with halachic rules (e.g., no cutting or tying or lighting of flames on Shabbat, etc.). Use of water beads and loose glitter is not

permitted. It is highly recommended that candles and other decorations involving open flame not be used on children's tables.

- g. AAC kitchen staff will not store, prepare, warm or otherwise serve food prepared by outside caterers.

### 3. CATERING SERVICES

#### a. Customary Events

- 1) **Oneg Shabbat on Friday Evening** – AAC holds a Shabbat service on Friday evening from 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. It is AAC custom that the family of the bar/bat mitzvah host the Oneg on the Friday prior to the bar/bat mitzvah. The Oneg is a simple pareve snack such as hummus, pita chips, olives, vegetables, dip, grapes, water, and juice following services. AAC charges a flat fee (approximately \$250 - \$300) for the Oneg.
- 2) **Kiddish on Saturday Morning** – It is an AAC custom that the family of the bar/bat mitzvah host a Kiddish for the congregation and non-AAC guests of the family on Saturday morning following the service. The Kiddish is typically a light lunch although families may host a heavier meal if they so desire. The Kiddish generally ends at 1:30 p.m. AAC kitchen staff develops a customized menu to meet your culinary desires and budget. Sample menus are found below. At your request, AAC staff will also prepare a family platter with samplings of the food served and place it on the table reserved for your family.

#### b. Add On Events

- 1) **Friday Evening Shabbat Dinner** – Some families elect to host a Friday evening Shabbat dinner before or after services. The kitchen staff can customize a menu for your Shabbat dinner. Sample menus are found below.
- 2) **Saturday Evening Party** – Some families elect to host a Saturday evening bar/bat mitzvah celebration at AAC. Parties vary greatly from simple game and snack receptions to formal seated dinners. AAC kitchen staff will work with you to plan your evening event. Unless commencing with Havdalah, Saturday evening

events may not begin until the conclusion of Shabbat. Sample menus are found below.

- 3) **Sunday Morning Brunches** – Some families elect to host a Sunday morning brunch at AAC during the bar/bat mitzvah weekend. AAC kitchen staff will work with you to plan your event. Sample menus are found below.
- c. **SPECIALIZED MEALS & DIETARY CONCERNS** – AAC kitchen staff do their best to accommodate dietary needs (e.g., allergies, intolerances, etc.) of congregants and guests. Dietary concerns should be communicated to the Kitchen Manager. Specialized food options often cost more than conventional products and require additional shopping trips or visits to specialty stores by AAC kitchen staff. When possible, AAC will

provide specialized meals or food items for your family and/or guests at an additional cost.

- d. **SERVICE POLICY** - Food service including, but not limited to, beverage service will not begin until the service is complete and the bar/bat mitzvah family has entered the room where the event will be held.

#### 4. EVENT PLANNING – PROCESS & DATES

- a. **IMMEDIATELY** - You should begin thinking about:

- what events you plan to host at AAC,
- the number of guests you plan to invite,
- your target budget, and
- the general category of food you would like to serve (e.g., traditional Jewish, Mediterranean, Italian, Soup and Salad/Sandwich, etc.).

One of the best ways to get ideas for your event is to observe and assist in preparation of other AAC bnai mitzvah by volunteering in the kitchen. Additionally, kitchen staff is available to assist you and make suggestions.

When planning, please keep in mind meat meals generally cost more than dairy meals due to the price of kosher meat. Additionally, there may be additional costs for switching the kitchen from dairy to meat mode and vice versa.

AAC will not cater an event unless the host agrees to and guarantees payment for a minimum of 40 attendees.

The number of attendees at the Saturday morning Kiddish is calculated by adding 150 congregants to the number of non-AAC guests you plan to invite.

For evening events, please remember to add to your guest count the number of band members, DJs, photographers, videographers, crafts people, or other vendors if you intend to provide them food. It is important to review vendor contracts carefully as many vendor contracts require that you provide a meal.

- b. **SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR EVENT** – You should contact the Event Coordinator to communicate your initial ideas regarding your event. The Event Coordinator will answer questions, discuss pricing, and email a draft plan for your event. You should discuss the

draft plan with your family and contact the Event Coordinator with changes, ideas, and questions. There will likely be multiple conversations and iterations of the plan before a final plan is in place.

- c. **THREE MONTHS PRIOR TO YOUR EVENT** – A deposit of 50% of the estimated cost of your event is required to secure your catering event date. The remainder of the charges are due no later than two weeks before your event.
  
- d. **ONE MONTH PRIOR TO YOUR EVENT** –
  - 1) **IF YOU ARE USING AN OUTSIDE CATERER** - You should provide the AAC Kitchen Manager with the name of your AAC approved caterer, their contact information, and a copy of the menu. AAC will coordinate delivery, make sure all food is in compliance with AAC kashrut policies, review food preparation and storage requirements, ensure the kitchen is in the proper mode for your event (i.e., meat, dairy, or pareve), and confirm entry and set up policies and needs with your caterer.
  
  - 2) **IF AAC IS CATERING YOUR EVENT** – One month prior to your event, you will receive an email with a final event plan and a price quote. You should reply indicating you approve the final plan. Upon approval, the synagogue office will prepare and issue an invoice for your event(s).
  
  - 3) **ELECTRONICS** – You should notify AAC if you plan to use any electronic devices or audio-visual equipment owned by the synagogue. It is highly recommended that you test such equipment several weeks prior to your event to ensure compatibility and proper functioning of equipment.
  
- e. **TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO YOUR EVENT** – You must provide a final number of guests attending your scheduled event(s) and pay the balance of your invoice in full. AAC will not order or purchase food for your event until the invoice is paid in full or payment arrangements have been approved by the AAC Executive Director.
  
- f. **PRIOR TO SHABBAT BEFORE YOUR EVENT** – Your event plan will identify the time Shabbat begins and ends on the weekend of your event. You may deliver any items or decorations for your event to the synagogue prior to the beginning of Shabbat. Hosts may want to bring liquid soaps and/or decorative hand towels to place in the three washrooms on the day of their event(s). All such items should be placed in the Brides' Room in boxes that are clearly labelled with your name and event (e.g., Goldblatt Bat Mitzvah). It is your responsibility to decorate all tables and event spaces (including

placing soaps and towels in the washrooms) unless prior arrangements have been made with the Event Coordinator and are expressly recorded on your event plan.

- g. **DURING YOUR EVENT** – Have a good time! AAC kitchen staff will be on hand to help. To avoid overcooked, cold, or melted food, it is helpful if you are mindful of the agreed upon food service and activity schedule for your event.
- h. **AFTER YOUR EVENT** – To control costs, AAC kitchen staff tries to prepare the exact quantity of food required for your confirmed guests. Leftover food, if any, will be wrapped, placed in the kitchen behind a refrigerator door labelled with your name, and may be picked up after Shabbat ends.

## 5. FINANCES & PRICING

- a. All families should have the honor of celebrating their simcha at AAC irrespective of personal finances.
- b. AAC kitchen staff will work with you to develop a menu that comfortably fits your budget.
- c. Funds are available to assist families who require financial assistance to host an Oneg or Kiddish.
- d. **FOOD PRICES**
  - 1) Food prices quoted are per person and generally include rental of the social hall, gallery, and/or lobby; food; guest and service tables and linen; chairs; guest place settings; service utensils; table numbers and holders; and labor.
  - 2) Kiddish quotes include five guest tables, up to nine food service tables, and a hand washing table. Fees will be charged for additional tables and linen. The synagogue has four high top cocktail tables available for rent. The rental fee for such tables with linen is \$20 per table.
  - 3) Estimated food costs are discussed during the planning process with the AAC Event Coordinator. A firm food quote will be provided with the final event plan.
- e. **ADDITIONAL FEES** – Food prices do not include decorations or fees for decorating; non-food related tables and linen (e.g., gift tables; place card tables; tables used by vendors such as DJs, crafts people, or photo booths, etc.), table toppers; use of AAC vases or non-food wares; excessive clean up (e.g., confetti or other decorations whether on

tables or otherwise); fees for supervision of outside caterers by AAC kitchen staff; use of the AAC sound system, microphones, power cords and strips, computers, projectors or other electronic or audio-visual equipment. Parents should be careful to supervise their guests. Additional cleaning or maintenance charges may be incurred for vandalism, destruction, or acts requiring excessive cleanup.

Included in Per Person Food Quote	Not included in Per Person Food Quote
Food listed in the event plan	Decorations or decorating (including, but not limited to, table toppers, use of AAC vases or non-food wares, placement of host supplied decorations, etc.)
Place settings, paper napkins and flatware	Entertainment, sound system, electronics.
Beverages listed in the event plan	Soft drinks and alcoholic beverages unless otherwise specified in the event plan
Food related tables and linen, chairs, table numbers and holders, service utensils, a hand washing table, and benches	Non-food related tables or linen
Labor to prepare, serve & clean up food	Excess labor and staffing (e.g., bar tenders, coat check, babysitting, parking, extra janitorial staff or hours, switching kitchen modes (dairy/meat), etc.)

- f. **BEVERAGES** - Due to the wide selection of product and variety of tastes, AAC generally requests that hosts select and supply soft drinks and alcoholic beverages at any event at which such items will be served. The cost of such items is not included in the food quote provided. AAC does not charge a corkage fee. Kitchen staff can recommend local vendors that will accept returns and issue a credit for unused product. As a rough guide to calculate quantities of beverages needed, guests will consume approximately 36 ounces of a non-alcoholic beverage during a four hour party, two to three beers, and a 750 ml bottle of wine will produce 6 pours.
- g. Under no circumstances is money to exchange hands on Shabbat.

## 6. CELEBRATIONS

- a. No delivery or set up by vendors of celebration-related items (e.g., flowers; decorations; tables; linens; photo booths; games; lights, music or sound equipment; etc.) may occur during Shabbat or any holiday.
- b. Bnai mitzvah celebrations are held in the social hall, gallery, and lobby. Use of any other area must be approved by AAC in advance and is subject to additional fees. At no time

shall any events extend into or food or party related items be brought into or stored in the memorial alcove.

c. A hand washing station and benchers are available at no charge upon request.

**d. TABLES, LINENS, & CHAIRS**

- 1) AAC has 60 inch round guest dining tables, 8 foot rectangle banquet tables, a limited number of 6 foot rectangle banquet tables, four high top cocktail tables and a few small specialty tables often used as a handwashing station, Motzi and Kiddish table, sign-in table, cake table, candle lighting table, etc.
- 2) A 60 inch round table comfortably seats 8 people. AAC's social hall can accommodate a maximum of thirty-five 60 inch round tables for a total of 280 seated guests. A scale drawing of the social hall with tables is attached. Please keep in mind the drawing does not reserve space for dancing or buffets. The scale drawing is a useful tool to lay out tables and assign table numbers and guest seating for your event.
- 3) Tables of more than 8 people are discouraged. However, if you are going to seat more or less than 8 people at a table, it is important that you notify AAC kitchen staff in advance which tables will have more or less than 8 people so we can set the appropriate number of place settings at each table.
- 4) AAC contracts with a linen service to provide table cloths. Cloths provided are not floor length and will show the legs of the table.
- 5) AAC has skirting available for food service tables in the following colors: royal blue, plum, burgundy, and white.
- 6) AAC does not own or supply cloth napkins.
- 7) AAC can refer you to local vendors that rent table linens.
- 8) AAC has brown metal folding chairs available for guest seating.

**e. DISHES, FLATWARE, & GLASSES**

- 1) **HIGHER PRICED OPTION** – AAC rents off-white porcelain place settings including dairy and meat dinner plates, salad plates, bowls, dessert plates, cups and saucers. AAC also rents footed clear water and wine glasses and dessert dishes. Use of these dishes is an attractive but costly option due to the additional staff and labor required to polish, bus, scrape, rinse, wash, dry, and store these dishes.
- 2) **LOWEST PRICE OPTION** – AAC can provide compostable thick paper plates, plastic cups, paper hot cups, and disposable plastic flatware. This is the cheapest option and is commonly used for the Saturday morning Kiddish.
- 3) **COMFORTABLE MIDDLE GROUND** – AAC can provide heavy white plastic place settings with an attractive silver rim, realistic plastic silver flatware, and footed clear water and wine glasses and dessert dishes. This option provides an attractive place setting without the additional labor charges required to use all glass dishes.

**f. JANITORIAL AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

- 1) Your event plan will clearly list the start and stop time of your event. AAC will hire staff to begin cleaning at the conclusion of your event. Such costs are included in the quote for your event. Failure to conclude your event at the scheduled time may result in additional labor charges.
- 2) It is important that you police your guests. Excessive mess or destruction to AAC property may result in additional cleaning and/or repair charges.

**7. KITCHEN DUTY**

- a. One way AAC attempts to lower the cost of your event is by using parent volunteers to help prepare, serve, and clean up Kiddish meals on Saturday morning in lieu of paid staff. Additionally, working in the kitchen is a great way to see different menus and event set ups, get ideas, and make lasting friendships.
- b. Each parent in a family is expected to work 6 Kiddish events prior to the bar/bat mitzvah of his/her child. In other words, in a 2 parent home both parents are expected to work

6 Kiddish events each for a total of 12 work days. The Kitchen Manager will notify parents if an alteration to this schedule is required due to class size.

- c. Parents can sign up for kitchen duty using the “Sign Up Genius” application. Parents will receive a sign up link from the Kitchen Manager via email.
  - d. Parents have the option, in lieu of working in the kitchen, to pay \$125 for each obligatory kitchen session missed. For example, a 2 parent family that does not work in the kitchen at all would owe \$1,500.
  - e. Parents are required to report to the kitchen at 9:30 a.m. and work until released by the Kitchen Manager. A session only counts towards a parent’s kitchen obligation if the parent arrives on time and does not depart until released by the Kitchen Manager.
  - f. AAC kitchen staff relies heavily upon the assistance of the volunteer parents. Kitchen staff is aware that families have multiple obligations and conflicting schedules and make every effort to release parents by 1:30 p.m.
  - g. If a parent is unable to work his/her assigned shift, he/she may find a parent (including, but not limited to, another parent in the household) to fill in for his/her shift or notify the kitchen staff two weeks in advance and pay the \$125 fee so that paid staff may be hired in his/her absence. Parents must enter changes to their work schedule in “Sign Up Genius” two weeks prior to their scheduled assignment. Failure to show up or remain as required places a greater burden on other parents and prolongs their work day.
  - h. The kitchen can be busy and dangerous. Only kitchen staff and volunteers approved by the Kitchen Manager are permitted to enter the kitchen during an event. Children are not permitted in the kitchen at any time during a parent’s kitchen duty nor are children, regardless of age or majority, permitted to fill in for a parent’s kitchen obligations.
- 8. CANCELLATION** – A party may cancel an event by handing written notice of cancellation to the Executive Director of AAC. Cancellation within two weeks of the event will result in forfeiture of 50% of the deposit as liquidated damages. Cancellation within one week of the event will result in forfeiture of the entire deposit.

## **9. POINTS OF CONTACT**

- a. **Kitchen Manager** – Diana V. Weil; [dweil@agudasachim-va.org](mailto:dweil@agudasachim-va.org); (703) 998-6460 office; (Areas of responsibility: facility reservations; ordering, purchasing and preparing food

and related supplies; securing and oversight of kitchen staff; ensuring compliance with rules of kashrut)

- b. **Event Coordinator** – Jack H. Weil; ranchoelencanto@yahoo.com; (760) 554-4108 cell; (Areas of responsibility: menu development and pricing, event planning, preparation and distribution of event plans; room set up and dining operations; coordinating with outside vendors; ensuring compliance with rules of kashrut)
- c. **Kitchen Assistants** – Cheryl Nelson; Allen Foreman
- d. **Kitchen Administration** – Barry Nove; bnove@agudasachim-va.org; (703) 998-6460 office; (Areas of responsibility: Kitchen Administration & Finances)

## APPENDICES

1. Sample AAC Catering Menus
2. List of AAC Bnai Mitzvah Class Members and Dates
3. Sample AAC Event Plan
4. Social Hall Scale Drawing with Tables

## **SAMPLE AAC EVENT MENUS**

*Below are sample menus. We welcome your ideas. All menus can be customized.*

*Per person prices shown are estimates for general planning purposes. Actual prices will vary based upon menu variations and market price at the time of your event.*

### **Friday Shabbat Dinner #1 - Traditional Shabbat Dinner** (approx. \$45 - \$60)

*Roasted Chicken Pieces*

*Seasonal Roasted Vegetables*

*Israeli Rice, Roasted Baby Potatoes, or Couscous*

*Dressed Green Salad*

*Challah*

*Fresh Fruit Platter*

*Sorbet with Berries*

### **Friday Shabbat Dinner #2 – Hearty Italian Meal** (approx. \$40 - \$55)

*Penne & Fettuccine*

*Marinara Sauce*

*Alfredo Sauce*

*Parmesan Cheese (on the side)*

*Mock Caesar Salad*

*Crusty Bread*

*Fresh Fruit Platter*

*Assorted Cake Slices*

**Saturday Morning Kiddish #1 - Basic Bagel** (approx. \$22.50 - \$37.50)

*Assorted Large Bagels (Plain, Sesame, Everything)*

*Lox Spread*

*Cream Cheese*

*Sliced Cucumber, Tomato, Red Onion Platter*

*Dressed Green Salad*

*Fresh Fruit Salad*

*Basic Cookies (Chocolate Chip; Oatmeal Raisin; Sugar)*

**Or**

*Premium Cookies (Harvest Oatmeal, Cranberry, Walnut; Peanut Butter; White Chocolate*

*Macadamia; Ginger Snaps)*

**Saturday Morning Kiddish #2 - Tuna & Egg Salad** (approx. \$24.50 - \$39.50)

*Tuna Salad*

*Egg Salad*

*Small Sandwich Rolls*

*Lentil Soup*

*Dressed Green Salad*

*Potato Chips*

*Fresh Fruit Salad*

*Basic Cookies (Chocolate Chip; Oatmeal Raisin; Sugar)*

**Or**

*Premium Cookies (Harvest Oatmeal, Cranberry, Walnut; Peanut Butter; White Chocolate*

*Macadamia; Ginger Snaps)*

***Other Dessert Items (e.g., brownies, cakes, etc.) Available Upon Request***

**Saturday Evening Israeli Party** (approx. \$45 - \$60)

*Falafel*

*Pita*

*Hummus*

*Tahini*

*Israeli Salad*

*Assorted Pickled Vegetables*

*Olives*

*Fudge Brownie Sundaes*

**Sunday Morning Brunch** (approx. \$41 - \$60)

*Quiche, Frittata or French Toast Casserole*

*Yoghurt Parfaits*

*Fresh Fruit*

*Assorted Pastries*

*Breakfast Beverages (e.g., Milk, Assorted Juices, etc.)*

**Commonly Requested Add-Ons** (approx. \$3 - \$7.50 per person)

*Gefilte Fish*

*White Fish*

*Vegetable Platters with Dip*

*Stuffed Grape Leaves*

*Kugel*

*Macaroni & Cheese*

*Plain Pasta*

*Black Bean Salad*

*Quinoa or Orzo Salad*

*Pasta Salad*

*Potato Salad*

*Cabbage Salad or Cole Slaw*

**Beverages Commonly Served With Menus Above**

*Lemonade or Iced Tea*

*Water*

*Coffee (Regular or Decaf)*

*Assorted Teas*