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## Home Based Catering an Entrepreneurship for Women Empowerment

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**ABSTRACT:** With increase in standard of living and ability to spend, there is rise in catered events in Indian society. This has inspired many people to start their catering business. Home based catering business is an affordable option and a perfect entrepreneurship which is booming in present scenario, as it saves most of the earned profit from paying rent for the business's location. India is one of the world's largest producers as well as consumer of food products, with the food sector playing an important role in contributing to the development of the economy. In a population of more than one billion and food constitutes major part of a consumer's budget. The food processing sector has a prominence next to no other business in the country. Initially starting a catering business does not involve higher investment, thus making it well-paid for people who are thinking of initiating something of their own, especially the homemakers.

Today in this fast going life for all, happiness is homemade food. Cooking traditional, simple home-cooked delicacies that just not suit your bellies but also pockets is requirement for many. Indian women's aspirations of embarking on an entrepreneurial journey and gaining financial independence with a less capital investment and professional education degree makes home based catering very demanding startup. This is also very challenging but catering to people working in essential sectors such as medical staff and chemists along with students and working professionals in hostels and PGs, facing healthy food problems as they are unable to cook either because of lack of skill or time is the need of the hour. So, if one loves to cook and plans to start a business, then initiating it with a systematic planning can develop it into a home based catering business.

**Keywords:** Home Based Catering, Startup, Entrepreneurship, Women Empowerment

### I. INTRODUCTION

Food catering as a home based business can be quite overwhelming. The estimated size of the catering industry is about 15,000-20,000 crores in India with an approximate annual growth of 25-30%. Starting a catering business does not involve higher initial investments which make it lucrative for people who are thinking of starting something of their own, especially the homemakers [1].

Catering is more than cooking. A Home based catering service is a flexible business which allows a lot of creative freedom without having to keep standard hours. One can start this business on a small scale by taking local orders and slowly move on to providing service for social gathering or corporate events. In the initial stage focus should be on the size of your business and target audience. The planning to start a small scale catering business begins with getting orders for 12-50 people initially [1]. Catering has now become an important factor for the success of any event like social gathering or marriage. Earlier, family members used to take care of catering services during any social event. The trend has changed almost since last decade. People tend to avail catering services even for their small social functions, so that everyone can enjoy the event.

Over the last few years, high-speed internet and mobile applications have made working at home a reality for millions of people around the world. The work from home using internet and online marketing has increased multifold after Covid 19. The dreams of working at home and being your own boss are very much alive and go hand-in-hand in the modern workforce. It is now possible to start many kind of business from home immediately, obviating the need of investment on rents and other expenditures on hiring business space. A food catering business like any other business requires a systematic approach as detailed below.

## II. BASIC REQUIREMENTS TO START HOME BASED CATERING BUSSINESS

### *A. Market Research*

Once you plan to start the Home based catering service business, do a detailed Market Research. Market research will tell you if there's an opportunity to turn your idea into a successful business. Find out the requirement product wise in local markets, student hostels, nearby offices etc. and the prices of these products. Market research may be carried out by interviewing target customers, meetings with focus group, surveys or observations. Target customers are Individuals, organizations and businesses who use catering companies for special events and occasions, such as birthdays, kitty parties, tiffin services, resident welfare association events, weddings, and business conferences etc. As the demand for catering services increases, entrepreneurs can start catering ventures designed to reach specific target markets. While interviewing target customers or business, note down taste preferences, type of food products needed, packing requirements, marketing needs etc. [2].

### *B. Business Plan*

A good business plan guides through each stage of starting and managing a business. A business plan is used as a roadmap for how to structure, run, and grow the new business. It's a way one thinks through the key elements of the business. List out the target consumers; explain the competitive advantages that will bring success to the planned home based catering business. A good business plan helps to figure out the positive and negative outcomes of the functioning of your company and also helps to identify the potential difficulties as well as the solution towards sustainability. The business plan must cover all your investment costs and expenses for the initial few months, storage facility and cooking facility [3].

### *C. Food License*

A food license from FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) to sell homemade food is required but if it is a small scale, only registration is required. Homemade food or Hotel food each and every Food Business Operator (FBO) is required to either register or get a Food License. As per Food Safety and Security act, 2006 every FBO is required to obtain an FSSAI Food License. If the FBO is tiny or small it only requires registering itself with FSSAI [4]. The FSSAI maintains and promotes public health by regulating and supervising food safety across the country. They do this following the guidelines of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which is an Act with information about food safety and regulations. It is mandatory for all food business operators in India to obtain a license from the FSSAI. Every business that has something to do with food-related operations has to make sure that they fall within FSSAI License or Registration guidelines. Obtaining Registration or License depends upon the annual turnover of the FBO, a food business that has an annual turnover of up to Rs. 12 lakhs, only a basic FSSAI registration is needed. A food business that has an annual turnover of up to Rs. 20 crores and operates in only one state, a State FSSAI license is needed. A food business that has an annual turnover of more than Rs. 20 crores and operates in multiple states, a Central FSSAI license is needed. The best part of the fssai license at the moment is that it can be applied online, which saves them the time of having to coordinate with the office and make multiple trips. The entire process is two-step, firstly to and needs people to register their establishment to the website before they can apply for the license that they would need. All they would have to do is fill out the details asked in the forms. At some points, they have to upload supporting documents that make the process easier and the entire processing and verification process would take place in the backend. On registration, a FSSAI number is given to the business [4].

### *D. Business Name and Website*

Use a name that conveys some meaning associated with your catering business. The selected business name should also get a similar domain name. Developing a website is highly required in a catering business. A website is a showcase of your work through a catalog to people so that they are attracted to your catering service and also develops trust within the customers. Also create a logo that can help people easily identify your brand. Along with that, your website could play a major role in getting your prospects for potential customers [1].

### *E. Make Menu*

The goal is to keep the Menu simple and memorable. Try to keep few items in the menu for optimal productivity, and to minimize confusion and anxiety among your customers. To develop an interesting menu, it requires brain storming. It's important to understand your concept and target market while working with the menu. Make a plan to facilitate the said menu for a typical event scenario. Cost of ingredients is an important factor to be considered while planning a menu. Initially most home-based caterers should not have a menu that is full of expensive ingredients. Give each item a few different twists and decide which is best. Involve others in the process of menu development and try to seek feedback form your initial customers. Use pictorial depiction in your menu and also display them on social media to gather popularity. Also note down preparation time taken in each food item. At the end of the day, the key to a profitable and memorable menu is to keep it small and focused with items that you want to be known for

– while differentiating your concept from local competition and offering a balance in pricing. This is the recipe for success [5].

#### *F. Identify Vendors*

Put together a list of the core ingredients required for your menu. Consider to do bulk purchasing of raw ingredients to save cost. This also depends on working capital available with you. Identify vendors for the regular supply of good quality ingredients; try using locally available supply – for example, seasonal vegetables from a vegetable vendor in your area. Make a list menu item wise for all the ingredients, so that at time of placing the order you are aware of the quantity required. Tie up with local suppliers to supply items just in time to save inventory cost and storage space. Prepare an exhaustive market order, keeping the menu in consideration.

#### *G. Cost Out the Menu Items*

Inputting available data into a spreadsheet will allow you to analyze your menu concept, its portions, and each associated item with its core list of ingredients. Based on the noted ingredients and each supplier's cost, menu items can be priced accordingly for your target customers [5]. Further one need to add labor cost, fuel expenses, space rent, taxes and expected profit to reach final price for each item.

#### *H. Kitchen and Storage Plan*

To run a successful business, one needs to be organized. Proper layout of kitchen and proper storage space for ingredients and finished material is required. Necessary modifications in your kitchen may be necessary including provision of extra gas burners, washing & storage space, refrigerator capacity. For use of ingredients "First in First out" policy needs to be followed and kitchen layout/ storage should be designed accordingly. Plan a proper storage space, organize your ingredients and put neat labels also follow the first in first out (FIFO) principle.

#### *I. Packing Food for Delivery*

Good packaging of food items to be delivered keeps food intact and upright so, when it reaches the customer it will look as appealing as it would in a restaurant. Attractive packaging encourages repeat sales too. Packaging is a brand touch point too that helps the caterer to connect with customers through the smart use of color, design, and copy [6]. Hot and cold food should be packaged separately so that each dish arrives at the temperature it's meant to be served at and is also safe for consumption. Food packaging isn't only about practicality; it is also about safety. The various food packaging materials generally used are as below:

Plastics containers are strong and offer excellent protection for food. However, plastics also holds moisture well, leading to soggy dishes. And again, plastics are not very environmentally friendly.

Aluminum/foil has the advantages of being durable, sealable, and non-absorbent. It also holds heat well, making it perfect for foods like burritos and grilled sandwiches. The downside is that the material is not microwavable and on the expensive side.

Paper/cardboard is biodegradable, cost-effective, easy to customize printing, and sturdy when folded correctly. Many restaurants offering pizza delivery use corrugated cardboard boxes that provide heat insulation and regulate temperature. The box closes firmly to minimize the amount of heat that's released and has small holes on the side, allowing some air to escape. This prevents condensation and saves the pizza from getting soggy [6].

#### *J. Tax Compliance*

Any business needs to do GST registration and get a GSTIN number in India. Other compliances to start a small business in India include PAN and/or TAN in the name of the business or in the name of the individual (in case of a Sole-Proprietorship) in whose name the transactions are to be made. PAN and TAN are ten-digit unique alphanumeric numbers issued by the Income Tax Department. Every person who deducts or collects tax at source has to apply for the allotment of TAN.

#### *K. Financing the Business*

There are typically two types of costs involved in a business i.e. Fixed Cost & Variable Cost. The fixed cost includes purchase of additional utensils, gas burner, chimney or hiring the monthly paid helping staff. The variable costs are the purchase of ingredients, Electricity/ gas charges, packing material, irregular help based on work etc., which depends on supplies to be made [7]. Thus after making necessary modifications in the kitchen for home based catering, one needs working capital to meet requirements of purchase of ingredients. In case there is shortage of working capital, one can tie up with ingredients supplier to pay with some delay. Other alternatives include small loan from bank or use of credit card for these expenses. However, it is important to access the money requirements correctly for the business with surplus for few days.

#### *L. Marketing*

Basic marketing techniques that create an impact in home based catering are word of mouth, networking, use of powerful social media platforms like Instagram, Whatsapp, and Facebook.

#### *M. Networking*

Business-to-business advertisements or B2B advertisements to grow your network is very effective. B2B advertisements can be done with event planners, decorators, bakers, DJs etc. The constantly expanding network brings success to the home based catering business in presently growing competitive market.

**Target your consumers:** Constant efforts should be made to retain the customers by giving different offers, campaigns and other upgrades that help you attract referrals. Email and Whatsapp also helps in marketing and popularizing the service as well as in retaining the customers. Make the customer realize that you care for them.

**Online Selling with Zomato, Swiggy etc:** Home food can be sold online on Zomato and Swiggy etc., after registering with these sellers a home based caterer can start selling the food online. Online food ordering platforms such as Zomato, Swiggy are fulfilling the demand for food delivery, by listing restaurants / kitchens on their app and website, and allowing consumers to place online orders in just a few clicks. Partnering with these online food marketplaces has become critical for the cloud kitchens, or delivery-only food businesses since these platforms enable them to generate orders from day one [1]. Selling Long Shelf Life Products on Amazon, Flipkart, Grofers etc: Selling of long shelf life food products can also be done by registering with various online platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, Big Basket, Grofers etc. These online websites have all India reach and can help in expanding business quickly.

**Marketing by using Online Shared Recipes:** Online shared recipes helps in engaging the existing customers, adding new customers and help in creating & maintaining Brand name. These also shows the chef skills which helps in marketing the products. Further direct earning from online channel is also possible by sharing Recipes through YouTube etc. YouTube earns through advertisements shown along with recipe video and shares the money earned with content providers.

### III. CONCLUSION

For woman home based catering business can be a good entrepreneurship option. Cooking has always been traditionally identified with women and it's well recognized that among small scale businesses, women mostly opt for a home catering business. Passionate about sharing their expertise and with some support, woman entrepreneurs who step into it usually fare well in developing their business onto bigger models [8]. Woman cooking for her family is often taken for granted, appreciation of her personal style can motivate her towards creating a home catering business. A woman with expertise in cooking and with a dream of financial independence can make home based catering a skill based entrepreneurship. In the initially stage of business, orders are usually erratic and less too, but only by staying focused on the goal can a new caterers attain success.

Over the last few years, high-speed internet and digital marketing have made working at home a reality for millions of people around the world. One can start home based catering as part-time work, and later expand to full-time as the number of clients increases. It is utmost important to start a business with proper market research and good business plan. With well thought menu to match needs of your customers and good marketing skills, you can keep expanding this business. Thus if one loves to cook and is thinking about starting a business, combine the two and start a small catering business to empower yourself. Being goal-oriented and providing professional customer service are important cornerstones for a sustainable business.

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