

# Creating healthy food platters



Here are some tips for creating tasty platters for workplace meetings or other events.

The secret to creating a healthy, affordable, appealing platter is simple – choose colourful vegetables and fruits, and other foods that are minimally processed or as close as possible to how they're found in nature.

Platters are a perfect catering option for meetings, social club events and shared lunches. They are also an easy, healthy and appetising way to cater for people with a variety of food requirements or preferences.

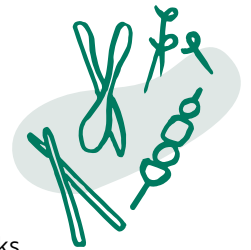
Creating a platter is quick and involves minimal food preparation and kitchen equipment. By using these healthy ideas, you can be creative with what you offer.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

You don't need fancy equipment to create a platter – a plate is all you need to build it from.

To make your platter appealing:

- use large serving plates and bowls to separate the different foods
- use a wooden board or baking paper to give your platter a more rustic look
- provide a selection of serving utensils, such as spoons, knives, toothpicks, skewers and chopsticks
- decorate with fresh herbs or colourful serviettes.



## WHAT TO PUT ON YOUR PLATTER

Aim for bite-sized foods that are easy to eat with fingers. The following are a few ideas for food choices. But remember, sometimes 'less is more' and you won't need all these foods on your platter.

### A base food

Popular base foods to dunk in dips or to add toppings to include:

- fresh veggie pieces, such as carrots, cucumber, capsicum and cherry tomatoes. Choose a variety of colours and prepare the pieces in different shapes, like sticks, rounds and spirals
- whole grain bread, toast, oat cakes, rice crackers, whole grain crackers, pita pockets or wraps, cut into appropriate shapes and sizes, such as fingers or triangles.

### Dips and sauces

Make your own dips and sauces in advance or choose from plenty of good options at the supermarket. Some appetising choices are:

- hummus
- vegetable dip
- plain yoghurt – very versatile as it goes with both sweet and savoury
- pesto
- tzatziki
- chutneys.

### Something savoury

Your savoury offerings might include:

- cooked lean meat, such as meatballs or cooked chicken pieces
- cooked fish, such as hot smoked salmon
- boiled eggs, halved
- falafel
- cheese, such as rounds of brie or cubed cheddar
- mini sandwiches or vegetable muffins
- sushi
- small vegetable fritters.

### Something sweet

Healthier options to satisfy a sweet tooth include:

- small, fresh fruit served whole, such as grapes, strawberries or blueberries
- peeled and chopped fresh fruit, such as mandarins or kiwifruit
- small portions of lower-sugar sweet treats.





## Other goodies

Fill any gaps with one or more of these tasty morsels:

- roasted chickpeas
- olives
- plain popcorn
- marinated vegetables, such as gherkins, artichokes or peppers
- nuts or seeds.

## Garnishes

Easy but appealing garnishes are:

- fresh herbs
- lemon wedges.



## PLATTER PRESENTATION TIPS

To create an especially attractive platter:

- start by laying out the bigger items of food
- fill the gaps with small items
- go for contrasting colours
- keep presentation clean and tidy.

## KEEPING COSTS DOWN

A healthy and impressive platter doesn't have to be expensive. To keep costs down:

- choose vegetables and fruit that are in season
- look out for platter foods (that are in line with these suggestions) on special at the supermarket
- make your own dips
- offer a smaller selection of foods and repeat these across the platter.

## KEEP HEALTH AND SAFETY IN MIND

- **Food safety:** Some foods should not be at room temperature for longer than two hours. Add chilled food to the platter just before serving. Strictly follow food safety practices. For more information on food safety, go to: [www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/food-safety-for-consumers/resources/](http://www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety/food-safety-for-consumers/resources/)
- **Allergies and food intolerances:** If you're catering for people with food allergies or intolerances, avoid cross-contamination by using separate dishes for 'safe' food and food containing allergens.
- Provide sufficient utensils to minimise food handling where appropriate.

