



**CHEF'S CATERING**

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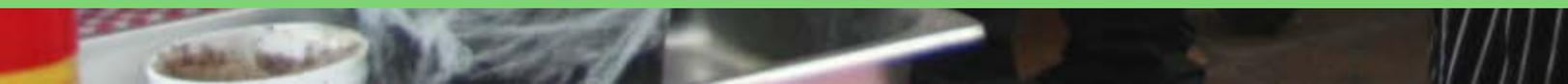


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# CHEF'S CATERING

## Fantastic Fresh Food

Chef's Catering is a full-service event caterer that has served the Toronto market for more than 30 years. Founded in 1973 by chef Peter Siklis, Chef's Catering began as a developer of subsidized cafeterias, where it initially grew its understanding of the corporate dining environment.







Young people building a dream. Our executive team: (left to right) Vice President Jonathan Leaman, Executive Chef Chris Ridsen, Senior Partner Ross Collins, Event Director Carly Hansen, President Justin Siklis, Sales Director David Chambers, Director of Operations Adam Brown.



Setting up a corporo

**FROM A SINGLE** office cafeteria to more than 40 locations across Greater Toronto by the 1990s, Chef's Catering has seen substantial growth over the years and is today led by President Justin Siklis. The son of Peter Siklis, he joined the company with the goal of pursuing market opportunities in corporate and social catering.

"I made a push for corporate catering because I recognized that there was a lack of it in the city as far as good catering for meetings," Siklis told *The Canadian Business Journal*. "Instead of the typical pizza or Chinese food, we wanted to offer clients a good variety of healthy, hot foods, and we've grown considerably ever since that time."

## Client Care

With the objective of growing its event management division, Chef's Catering added Ross Collins as a senior partner to secure corporate parties, large events, local festivals, holiday functions, and large scale accounts for its catering business. It's one of the areas where Chef's Catering distinguishes itself in the diverse and competitive food services industry.

"Many companies in this industry are the same size as us, so we were deadlocked," Collins explained. "We then started reaching out to other Canadian-owned companies to form alliances, so this way we can compete with the big consortiums to bid on bigger jobs and fulfill large requests."



ate summer BBQ

Siklis added, “There are a lot of local caterers but what sets us apart is our flexibility. We’re not the type of caterer to say ‘no’, because you never know where an opportunity will come. We found that by accepting small jobs they often turn into larger volume accounts.”

It is this philosophy of customer satisfaction that has made Chef’s Catering a growing success over its longstanding history. Clients appreciate that with Chef’s Catering they can customize their order to their needs, rather than tune their choices to a standardized menu. It’s an approach that spans more than the kitchen at Chef’s Catering, where clients can customize their food choices to as far as the food packaging and their delivery options.

“We always follow the idea that if we can do it, we will do it,” Collins summarized. “If someone calls me in an emergency and needs to feed 25 people in two hours, I can contact one of our kitchens and ask what we can get to them quickly.”

In fact, it was only a year ago when the company helped a desperate client in need, who interestingly enough has since joined a firm and has pointed their corporate event needs in the direction of Chef’s Catering.

Integral to its success, Chef’s Catering acknowledges a key industry partner, Samko Party Services, an industry leader with more than 50 years of experience in the event planning business. Siklis commented, “Samko is definitely



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a big part of our business right now. We have taken their brand and helped make them one of the largest event planning companies in the city. That relationship will only continue to grow.”

## Next Steps

Chef's Catering believes there is plenty of opportunity to grow its subsidized cafeteria segment, but also recognizes the challenges it faces in competing with the major players in the market, simply due to size. Nevertheless, Chef's Catering feels it has an advantage where more and more clients are selecting local caterers and prefer personalized service compared to the big box approach.

“It's a fun business to be in because what we sell is great and everybody loves talking about food,” Siklis detailed. “Today, people have a greater knowledge about food than they did even 10 or 15 years ago. Everybody is a self-professed foodie. Everything used to be straightforward and cookie-cutter where if you catered an office meeting, there were strict guidelines – no onions, no heavy spices, nothing that has any kind of scent – and it basically had our chefs serving bland foods.



“Nowadays, people want flavours, they want jerk chicken, curries, and all kinds of interesting things that we can put on a buffet table in the boardroom, so it’s a pleasure to be able to do that.”

That means an inspired team at Chef’s Catering and an enthusiastic approach toward each client project. Tenacious and creative, the team at Chef’s Catering is always working toward a common goal of continuing to provide quality and tasteful menu selections, all at a valuable price point.

“We get to be creative every day, doing things that impress people, and there is a lot of satisfaction in that,” Collins concluded. “We’re working on exciting projects and every year we’re getting bigger and better.” **CBJ**

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**GEORGE MEDIA  
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AS SEEN IN THE JUNE 2013 ISSUE OF THE CANADIAN BUSINESS JOURNAL

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