

Super Seminar Tips & Tricks[®] by Frank Maselli

Episode 19: **Snacktime Do's & Dont's**

Seminars are "SNACK-TIME!"

No matter what, it's mandatory to have something to eat and drink at your workshop. Obviously, if you're doing a dinner or lunch event, there will be food. But even if you're doing an educational event at the local library or a classroom, you need to serve something.

The reason is simple: people love to nosh on something. It just puts them in a much better mood and you want your audience happy! Serving snacks elevates the whole experience.

What should you serve?

The possibilities are endless and range from common fun food like chips, pretzels, and sodas to more elaborate and potentially healthy items like granola bars and fruit juices.

I usually recommend snacks that are on the higher end of the quality spectrum. That sends the audience a compelling message about the nature of my business. My go-to snack combo is Fiji or SmartWaters and Kind or Clif Bars. Those have an upscale image, and even though they are a bit more expensive, the branding difference is worth the price.



Try to avoid...

I try to stay away from potato chips, popcorn, pretzels, and cheese puffs. As much as I obviously enjoy them myself, they are somewhat less classy than a nice snack bar. I also avoid peanuts for allergy reasons. Chocolate snacks are also a favorite, but chocolate causes excess saliva production. People will start coughing and chortling to clear their throats, which can be very distracting.

I will sometimes make a chocolate exception with small bags of chocolate chip cookies. Oatmeal raisin is also a hit. There's just something about a nice cookie that says "Welcome!"

Single serve packs

Whatever you serve, it should be individually wrapped to prevent contamination. No one wants strange hands touching their food. And all drinks should be single serve as well...not in those large dispensers.

You also don't want people standing in long lines to get a drink. So if you plan to serve coffee or other beverages from larger dispensers, set up more than one station to alleviate the crowding.

Set up early & clean up well

In most educational-type facilities, prepping a nice snack table adds some time to your pre-show routine. So be sure to arrive at least 90 minutes before start. And have plenty of napkins, cups, and nice quality paper or plastic plates on hand.

As for clean-up, you want to leave the room in perfect condition. If you're at a library, classroom, or community center, the worst thing you can do is make a big mess. You might never be welcomed back. So bring trash and recycle bags and haul everything out yourself. It's a professional touch.

Please don't skimp!

I was the guest speaker at a breakfast seminar years ago where the advisor cut the donuts in half! What horrifying message did that bizarre move send his prospects? Very sad!

I prefer to have more food than I would ever need. At my lunch and dinner events I had doggie bags made with my company logo and encouraged people to take home the extra items I had planned for in advance. Think abundance, never scarcity. Maybe that just my Italian upbringing, where Sunday dinners were mega-feasts. But it works.

Your ideas?

I would love to hear your great snack ideas. Maybe you have a local bakery or some specialty shop that could be a big hit. At a recent Raleigh event, the advisors served a BBQ buffet after the seminar. That was a HUGE hit and people stayed to talk!

Shoot me an email if you are doing something interesting. I'm at frank@maselligroup.com.