



17 January 2024

Catering recommendations

One of the strategic goals of the University of Helsinki is to be a leader in sustainability and responsibility. The purpose of these catering recommendations is to ensure that sustainability and responsibility are taken into account in all catered events.

In this document, events organised by the University of Helsinki mean all events for whose organisation the University has the primary responsibility and which are organised by a member of University staff.

Recommendations:

- Where possible, serve vegetarian and vegan food or sustainably caught local fish.
- Where possible, serve healthy seasonal, local and organic food as well as Fairtrade products. As a Fairtrade university, we are committed to using Fairtrade coffee and tea in catering.
- Avoid products if research has shown they are harmful for the climate and the environment. Such products include meat, dairy and rice.
- Accommodate different diets.
- Avoid serving bottled water.
- Avoid food waste. To reduce it, require participants to register for catered events.
- Where possible, choose reusable tableware and cutlery.



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Other catering practices

Where possible, these catering recommendations should be followed also when the University of Helsinki is not the main organiser of an event organised in collaboration with others.

Although the recommendations provide a framework for event catering, the University complies with other catering policies as well. For example, only vegan food is served at events for the University leadership and at University-level receptions organised by the events and conference team. This policy acknowledges the diversity of the University community, as vegan food is suitable for most participants, including those with religious, ethical or cultural reasons for not eating animal products. Catering suitable to as many people as possible reduces food waste and, thus, our carbon footprint. In addition, a gluten-free option is always available at receptions.

Further information on event organisation and catering is available in the University of Helsinki event organisation guide.

Research-based catering

The catering recommendations are aligned with the Nordic nutrition recommendations, which advocate a more plant-based diet and the reduction of meat consumption for both health and ecological reasons.

The careful selection of raw materials and the minimisation of food waste can significantly mitigate the environmental impact of catering. The use of disposable items increases the consumption of natural resources and the amount of waste. Consequently, reusable tableware should be preferred and bottled water avoided.

The catering recommendations also aim to take into account inclusivity and social and economic responsibility. In its events, the University strives to meet individual participant needs, including dietary requirements. As a Fairtrade university, we are committed to promoting the use of Fairtrade-certified products. The reduction of food waste results in financial benefits as well.

Catering recommendations as part of the University's emissions reduction targets

The catering recommendations support the food-related measures outlined in the [Carbon neutral University of Helsinki by 2030 roadmap](#). These measures aim to ensure that the University's catering services are oriented towards plant-based food by 2030. The recommendations are part of the efforts to promote the University's sustainability and responsibility goals and emissions reduction targets.

The catering recommendations were taken into practice on 17 January 2024.

Where necessary, the recommendations will be updated based on the latest research.