

What Buyers Should Ask Catering Suppliers for in 2026

Supplier assurance is shifting from trust in process to proof of what happened.

Boundary: GCCAP reports observed temperature behaviour and evidence quality. It does not certify food safety, declare legal compliance or assign liability.

The buyer question is changing

For years, supplier assurance has leaned heavily on facility standards, audits, procedures and traceability. Those still matter. But they do not fully answer the next question: what happened while the food was moving?

Airlines should ask this question about the catering ground leg. Hospitals and aged-care groups should ask it about delivered meals and internal distribution. Premium food-service clients should ask it about insulated delivery. The form changes. The buyer risk is similar: food leaves a controlled environment and travels in a passive container.

Questions worth asking

Ask suppliers how they identify the container, not only the batch. Ask how temperature is recorded after cold-hold release. Ask whether readings can be tied to a cart, box or crate. Ask whether the raw record is retained. Ask how missing data is reported. Ask whether coarse readings are separated from precise readings. Ask what happens when a sensor is swapped.

These questions are not designed to catch suppliers out. They are designed to make the evidence expectation clear before there is an incident. Good suppliers benefit when the required record is defined early.

What weak answers sound like

Weak answers usually rely on summaries: the truck was cold, the fridge was checked, the dispatch sheet was signed, the receiving team accepted it. Those statements may be true, but they do not reconstruct the passive-container journey. They leave gaps exactly where review teams need detail.

A stronger answer provides an exportable evidence package. It shows asset identity, timestamped temperature records, exception logic, evidence limitations and a review-safe summary.

What this means commercially

The buyers that set this expectation first will improve supplier assurance without waiting for a regulator, insurer or incident to force the issue. The suppliers that can answer early will look more professional, more defensible and more prepared.

GCCAP's position is simple: do not just ask where the food went. Ask what happened to it while it moved.