

June 2008

# Catering magazine

the magazine for catering professionals

SPECIAL EDITION

INSTITUTIONAL  
CATERING

breaking  
the traditional  
expectations

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BY SARA STURGES

## finding the right vehicle for your needs

**D**elivery vehicles are an essential purchase for any off-premise caterer or company that offers drop-off service. Whether the caterer is small or large, manufacturers have developed vehicles to accommodate the needs of food and supplies transportation.

Vehicle manufacturers acknowledge the catering market's need for maximum storage space and are now adding interior details that make traveling easier and safer.

### Open highways

General Motors Marketing Product Manager Tim Cavanaugh says GM has several vehicles suitable for caterers. He adds, however, that it is up to caterers to decide what image they want to portray and how much space they will need.

One new GM option is the Chevrolet HHR and the Chevrolet HHR Panel. Both are small, easy to maneuver, fuel-efficient two-seat vehicles. The HHR Panel offers commercial options like an interior partition, commercial grade cargo net and a slide out tray to make transporting food and drinks easy and safe.

Cavanaugh says the HHR Panel was designed with small business' in mind, because the uninterrupted side panels provide a rolling billboard for a catering company's logo or other marketing message.

The vehicle gets 30 mpg on the highway and features a cruising range of up to 450 miles on a single tank of fuel.

Inside the HHR Panel are 63 cubic feet of storage space. It has a flat, ribbed floor for easy loading and unloading.



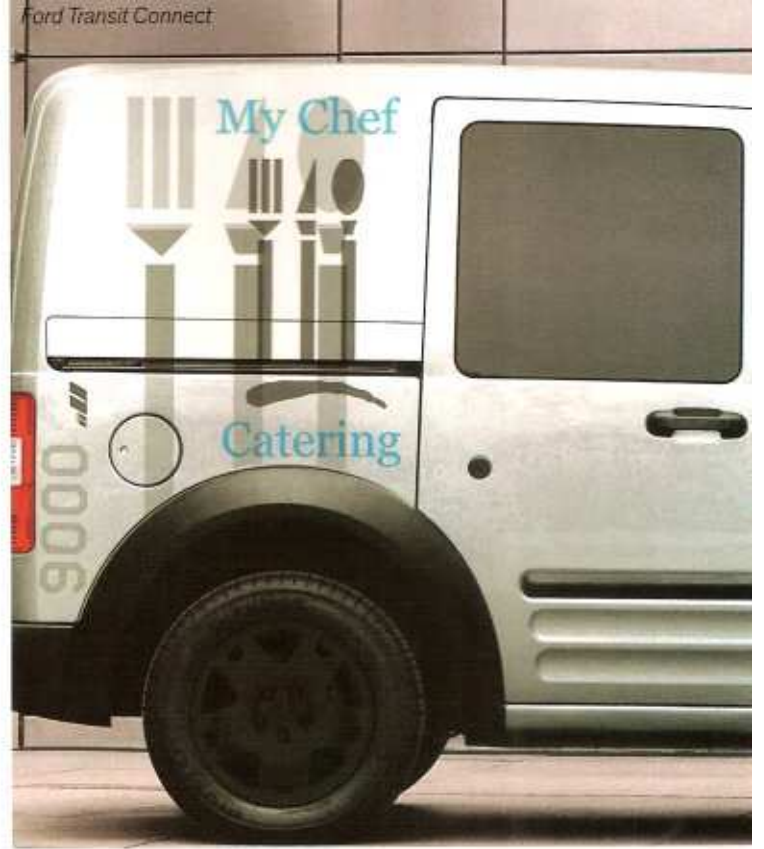
Isuzu N-Series



Ford Transit Connect







General Motors Corporation, Chevrolet Express Cargo Van





General Motors Corporation, Chevrolet Express Cargo Van



## TOPPING IT OFF

Rising gas prices are a concern for all Americans, but for caterers who rely on off-premise events or drop-off services, the fueling costs can be devastating.

Here are some ways caterers are dealing with rising gas prices.

#### LIMELIGHT CATERING, CHICAGO

A surcharge – usually \$10 to \$25 – is placed on nearly all deliveries. “We try really hard to group deliveries and get clients to change their times to accommodate our delivery schedule,” says the company principal Rita Gutenkanst.

“We have had to raise our delivery fee 15 percent, and even that is not enough,” Gutenkanst says. “Corporate drop offs haven’t diminished, but we are cutting back on the number of trucks we send out.”

#### JEWELL EVENTS CATERING, CHICAGO

A delivery charge on contracts has always been added, but the company is trying not to increase those rates. It does not charge for delivery of corporate drop offs within the city limit.

“We’ve made a real effort to coordinate and consolidate delivery trips,” says Operations Manager, Gerry Dillon. “We’re careful how we pack the truck and use the smallest truck possible for the delivery. We have also worked with the event consultants to reduce having to run back-up trucks to events,” he says.

#### MY CHEF CATERING, CHICAGO

To manage costs, the company has a corporate credit card account with BP Business (British Petroleum), which tracks the fuel consumption.

My Chef Owner Bill Garlough says a standard delivery fee is charged on all accounts.

Rising gas prices have not forced My Chef Catering to cut back on corporate drop off service.

“Corporate sales are a significant and valuable part of our business, but as gasoline prices have climbed, we have had to absorb the difference which adversely affects our bottom line,” Garlough says.

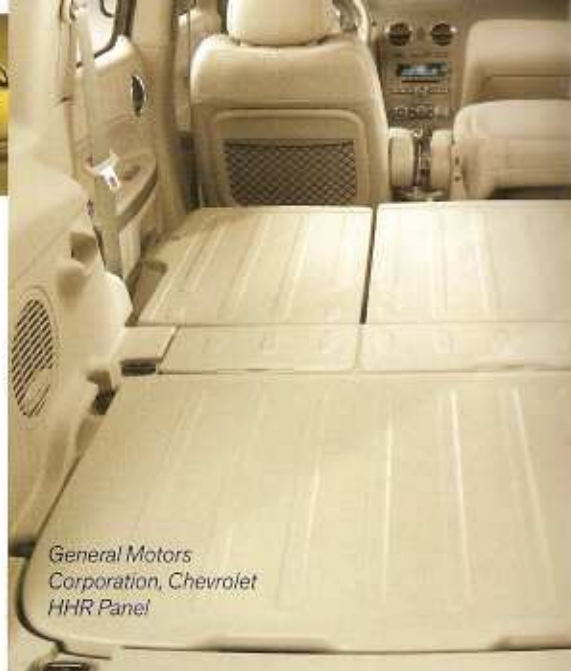
#### CULINARY CONCEPTS, PHILADELPHIA

No gas fee or increased charges have been necessary, says Matt Lallo, director of operations.

“Unlike certain food prices, which can spike astronomically at times and revert to established norms, we feel that gasoline prices will never revert; these levels are here to stay,” Lallo says. “If that is the case, a gradual escalation in costs to the client will happen inadvertently.”

Lallo also says that the increases are a “price of doing business” rather than something that needs specific attention.

The fuel cost increases do demand that the company monitor overall costs to get the big picture on the profit line, he says.



But space isn't the only thing Cavanaugh says caterers are looking for. “What we're seeing is that caterers who used to order just four tires and a steering wheel are now considering a lot of the other features important to drivers, like a driver-side airbag and nicer interior.”

The HHR Panel features driver and passenger side airbags, air conditioning, cruise control, an audio system, power windows and all the other little luxuries we expect from our daily-driving vehicles.

#### Watch out for yields

The Ford Motor Co. has introduced the successful Transit Connect, a light-duty commercial van, which has had tremendous success in Europe, where it was named Europe's Most Reliable Van by *Fleet News* last year.

It will be launched in the United States next summer. But U.S. consumers got its first peek of the vehicle during the Chicago Auto Show, where Ford picked My Chef Catering, of Chicago, to showcase it.

The catering company's owners Bill and Karen Garlough say the vehicle is fuel-efficient, and because of its low lift height, loading and unloading is easier on their staff.

“Transit Connect would allow us to make long-distance runs with smaller loads quicker and more economically than with our box trucks,” says Bill Garlough.

Ford designed The Transit Connect with small business owners in mind, such as caterers who use vans as their primary vehicle. It has 143 cubic feet of flexible





"Space isn't the only thing caterers are looking for," says Cavanaugh.

cargo space and available uplifts allow for easy customization.

While the vehicle has extensive interior, its compact exterior allows for easy city parking.

The Transit Connect has 180-degree rear doors, and its aftermarket shelving system makes for less jumping in and out of the vehicle.

In the meantime, GM's Chevrolet Division also is designing and testing its new Astro Body Catering Package, which is a truck designed to keep food frozen, cool or hot from departure to arrival at an event.

Cavanaugh says the Astro Body Catering Package has significant volume to get catering jobs done with quality delivery every time. The Astro body, with 173 cubic feet and a payload of 1,500 pounds, is ideal for caterers, he adds.

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### Oncoming traffic

Ford's E-Series includes four models that suit caterers' payload and towing needs. These include:

- E-150 commercial van with a 3,240-pound payload
- E-250 commercial van with a 3,620-pound payload and a towing capacity of 7,400 pounds
- E-350 super duty van with a payload of 4,090 pounds and a towing capacity of 10,000 pounds
- E-450 can handle a payload of 9,100 pounds

Chevrolet's Express cargo van is another option for caterers needing to transport big loads of supplies and food. It has sliding doors on each side, which create easy accessibility.

Cavanaugh says the Express is a common choice for catering companies

because of its size, maneuverability, visibility and spanning sides that are perfect for advertising and company logos.

### Pedal to the metal

The catering market is an important niche for Isuzu's medium duty trucks, says Isuzu's Vice President of Fleet Operations and Marketing, Todd Bloom. Its 2008 Isuzu N-Series is well suited for caterers, as it can accommodate 10- to 20-foot body lengths and payload combinations ranging from 6,829 to 9,411 pounds.

Because of the low cab forward design, these trucks have a tighter turning radius than most cars, which makes it easy to maneuver around traffic and in tight event areas, Bloom says.

Isuzu's "hexapod" cab offers increased head, shoulder and leg room, and three people can sit in it comfortably.

The trucks have inside overhead storage shelves and a little detail of map pockets



General Motors Corporation, Chevrolet Astro Body

Consider how many miles you drive per year when choosing a vehicle.

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built into it's the fully trimmed door panels. The N-Series has panoramic windshields to provide its operator maximum visibility.

#### Mile marker

Caterers should consider how many miles they drive per year when choosing their vehicles. A good "dividing line" in choosing between a gas-powered or diesel-fueled vehicle is 30,000 miles, Bloom says.

He recommends that if a caterer travels more than 30,000 miles per year, he or she should opt for diesel, because diesel vehicles typically have longer operating lives, although they have higher initial costs, says Bloom.

The Isuzu N-Series is ideal for caterers that drive their delivery vehicles 30,000 miles a year or less, as it is gas operated.

#### Pimp my ride

The Food Express Delivery System is a new, flexible transporting system for the

catering industry. One of the developers, Mike Collins, of Winkel GMC Commercial Truck Center in Nevada, says the No. 1 thing the system does for caterers is maximizes space and time.

Collins has 30 years experience in the catering and restaurant business. He knows how much strain a caterer's body takes when loading or unloading their vehicles.

The FEDS system slider is capable of holding up to 10 filled hot/cold food containers per slide (five deep and five on top.) A caterer can access two of them through the side door and the other three are accessible through a sliding platform, giving complete access without having to climb into the van. This permits delivery or transfer of containers without removing the food, which can affect holding temperatures.

The custom bases the containers sit on are held down for transporting purposes, but they can be removed easily for cleaning.

FEDS makes loading and unloading organized and fast, Collins says, adding that since there is no need to figure out where each food container is going or where to strap down each container.

Other features of FEDS include:

- A gravity-flow hand-wash system with paper towel holder and soap dispenser. The hand-wash system is great for off-site caterers and is conveniently placed off the floor so a bucket or pan can go underneath to catch the soapy water.

- A table holder, which goes over the wheel house so tables can be loaded, unloaded and transported safely without sliding on the floor while driving.

- A shelf system, built onto the slider, for utensils, towels, condiments, linens and other items.

Collins says his company can up-fit existing vans or caterers can order any of the new GM vehicles with FEDS already installed. ■



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