



Hosting for hui

Catering for hui, and/or on marae, is largely the same as providing food and drink for anyone but with a few additional considerations.

Top tips

- **Choose mana-enhancing food** – Basically that's done by following the Food and Drink Traffic Light highlighted in the article [Manaaki at mahi – kai to enhance hauora/wellbeing at work](#), as providing food that supports wellbeing also uplifts people's mana. Select locally grown, organic and seasonal kai, which helps the environment and the people.
- **Serve food separately** – Food is noa (common), as eating is an everyday activity free from the restrictions of tapu, as opposed to formal meetings, discussions and sharing knowledge, which can be considered tapu (or sacred). So don't offer food during the meeting. Some kai at the start may be okay, but it's generally best practice to serve food at the end of the hui.
- **Say a karakia** – In whatever language, it's important to acknowledge and bless the food.
- **Kaumātua/elders and tamariki/children eat first** – In a buffet setting, invite any kaumātua and/or tamariki first, with others following behind.



- **Don't put food where people sit, or sit where people eat** – Don't place food on top of chairs or benches, avoid placing chairs on tables, and don't sit or lean your backside on tables.
- **Don't pass food over people's heads** – The head is tapu and food is noa. Out of respect for others, pass food from the side rather than over someone's head.
- **Offer to clear tables, and wash and dry the dishes** – In cases where the haukāinga (people from the marae) are catering, helping out in the kitchen is an opportunity to socialise and build rapport. Even the greatest chiefs will sweep the floors and peel the potatoes.

Catering on marae

Each marae will have a different tikanga/way of doing things so make sure you know how each marae operates in terms of catering and hosting visitors. Check if the marae offers its own catering, as many marae consider it their responsibility to manaaki/host visitors, then check if it has its own food and drink policy (including alcohol).

- **If the marae has its own policy:** Check it lines up with your organisation's food and drink expectations, then discuss and negotiate any differences.
- **If the marae has no policy:** Discuss your food and drink needs with the marae organiser, but be very tactful and considerate. Honour the marae tikanga/practices.

Include the tangata whenua, the local people from the marae, in your function

Often the tangata whenua from the marae like to come along and take part in what's going on.

Bear this in mind and invite them if appropriate. You may need to include some extras in your catering.

Tobacco and alcohol

Most marae are smokefree and often alcohol free these days. Check the marae's practices around smoking and drinking alcohol, ensuring your own workplace practices are also followed.

Not on marae?

When not on marae, it's still recommended to follow these tikanga/practices when catering for and with Māori.

Koha

A koha is a gift given on behalf of the manuhiri, or guests. Koha is a reaffirmation of the importance that you, as manuhiri, place upon the relationship with the tangata whenua and the marae community. It shows appreciation for the work and pride the marae has put into hosting your group.

In the end, it's the intent and thought behind the koha – the whakaaro – that counts. Most often, a koha is a financial offering to the hosts, and how much you pay depends on several factors.

Hired venue or generous host

Some marae will charge a service fee for your organisation to hire it, essentially like any other venue. Others may consider hosting your group is just part of its responsibility to manaaki the community. Even if you pay a service fee, offering a koha is still appropriate, as this is about building and maintaining a valued relationship.

When considering your koha, keep in mind how much service fee you have already paid.

Government, corporate or non-profit

Organisations are generally expected to pay a rate/koha in keeping with their ability to pay. Therefore, a larger koha may be expected of a corporate or government organisation, with less expected of a not-for-profit. Pay what's likely to be expected of your organisation.

Be fair

Think about how much you are paying to be hosted and how much you think it's worth, then koha the difference. In other words, if you feel you're getting a really good deal, consider a more meaningful koha. If you think the rate is already about right, the koha may be of less value. But always koha something.

It's okay to ask: If you are unsure how much is fair, ask your contact at the marae as some marae will tell you how much to koha, or ask someone appropriate in your team for support.

How to koha

Check with the marae how they prefer to receive their koha as marae have different practices.

However, in general:

- If you are formally welcomed onto the marae with a pōwhiri, there are specific tikanga and protocols to follow. If you don't know these, seek some cultural advice before you go. Generally, before the pōwhiri starts, it's usual to gather at the waharoa where the nominated speaker will collect and combine all the koha. This is then gifted to the marae tangata whenua on behalf of everyone at the end of the whaikōrero, or formal speeches. The act of laying a koha is tasked for the final speaker representing the manuhiri.
- In all other cases, hand over the koha privately to the person you have been dealing with. This is generally done near the end of the hui.
- Put the koha (in cash) in an unmarked envelope.
- Don't put the envelope in your back pocket – keep it in a front pocket, jacket pocket or handbag
- Don't ask for a receipt – find another way to record the expense with your organisation.

For more

Find these resources on the [Manaaki at Mahi resource page](#) on [Wellplace.nz](#)