

CHOOSING YOUR CATERER

Whether your budget permits an elegant sit-down dinner for hundreds of guests, or an intimate gathering of family and friends, your caterer settles the crowd and takes the worry out of wedding receptions. Select your caterer 8-10 months before your wedding. Imagine the setting and style of your wedding, and your food preference to decide what you want from your caterer.

DETERMINE WHAT SERVICES YOU NEED

Talk with your event or banquet facility coordinator to determine what catering services they offer, and what services you will still need to arrange. Some venues have their own full service catering in which they offer menu choices, services and prices, depending on the number of guests and type of catering desired. Other facilities may offer their own catering, but allow you the option to bring in some, or all of the catering. There are venues which do not offer catering at all. Each caterer offers different services for your needs. Talk to multiple caterers to determine which one will work best for you.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Do they have sample menus and price quotes for their food specialties and services? Any additional fees you should know about?
- What are their payment options and cancellation policies?
- How often do they cater weddings of your size?
- Have they catered at your venue?
- Do they provide child, vegetarian, gluten free, or kosher choices?
- Does the caterer prepare food from scratch?
- Can you schedule a tasting?
- How many servers will you need?
- What attire will they wear?
- Who will serve the meal and cut the cake? Are cake plates included?
- Do they offer cake and will they cut and serve it? Will this cost extra?
- How often do they refresh the buffet?
- What are their beverage options? Are they licensed?
- Are linens included in the price?
- What tableware do they use or offer?
- Will they set up the tables, place cards and favors?
- Do they clean up?
- Do they have references?

TASTE YOUR MENU SELECTION

After you have narrowed your choices to two or three caterers, ask for a taste testing of the proposed menu. When selecting your menu, consider keeping your meal appealing to all. You may want to provide options for those with special dietary needs.

WAYS TO REDUCE COSTS

Holding your wedding and reception during an unusual time of day, or day of the week, is one way to reduce your catering costs without reducing the number of guests. A morning wedding could offer a brunch reception, reducing the cost of food and alcohol. Guests will expect dinner after a late afternoon or early evening wedding, but you can serve a less expensive cut of meat, like chicken rather than beef. If children are attending your reception, ask if they will provide a children's meal at a lower cost.

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GET A SIGNED CONTRACT

When plans are finalized, request a complete list of the foods, services and prices you agreed upon and sign a contract. A deposit may be required at this time. Keep in touch with your caterer during the months/weeks before the wedding. Let them know of any change in plans or guest count. Your caterer will give you a date to confirm quantities. Once the final number is given, you will be obligated to pay for that number of meals or servings.

Impress your guests with a delicious meal after the ceremony! Here are a few ideas:

BUFFET STYLE

Everyone loves choices. This can range from prime rib and scalloped potatoes to simple sandwiches, fruit and veggie trays and pasta salads.

PLATED

Have a traditional sit down multi-course meal. This is an elegant dining choice that will lengthen the time spent enjoying the meal.

FAMILY STYLE

This creates a relaxed and sharing atmosphere as guests pass the tasty dishes around the table for all to enjoy.

FOOD STATIONS

Keep guests moving and mingling as they check out the different selections. This adds variety and excitement to dinner.

HORS D'OEUVERS

Presentation makes anything look fabulous. Hire waiters to walk around and serve your guests, or alternatively set up an appetizer table. You could place your appetizer tables throughout the room encouraging guests to get up and mingle. You may serve wine, beer and punch as beverages or have an open bar. Try to avoid the dinner hour.