

Choosing the Best Caterer for your Wedding



Catering Checklist

Remember this is your day, so you'll want to work with a caterer who is most willing to work with you to put together a that fabulous reception you've been dreaming about that is also within your budget.

Food Style

- _____ Does the caterer specialize in certain types of food or service?
(They should provide you with sample menus to review.)
- _____ Does the caterer work with fresh (vs. frozen) food?
- _____ Can they prepare vegetarian, kosher, or kids meals for certain guests?
- _____ Will the caterer be willing to include a recipe you provide, like a special family dish, or an appetizer with some sort of sentimental significance?



Cost

- _____ What kind of deposit do they require to hold a wedding date?
- _____ What are the payment schedule options?
- _____ What is the refund or cancellation policy? What is the caterer's average price range?
- _____ Are costs itemized depending on the foods you choose, or is there an all-inclusive flat rate?
- _____ Does the caterer have printed price sheets for food selections?
- _____ Are gratuities already figured into the total price?
- _____ Do they require a minimum or maximum number of guests?

Menu Tastings

- _____ Do they offer menu tastings?
- _____ Can the caterer arrange for a tasting of the specific foods you're interested in prior to hiring? (If a caterer you're considering doesn't offer you a tasting, taking the time to check their references becomes all the more important)
- _____ You might also want to ask about paying for a sample menu for two. With so much of your wedding budget at stake, it isn't a bad investment, and you and your fiancé can make a date of it.

Notes

Logistics

- _____ Will the caterer provide tables, chairs, plates, table linens, silverware, salt-and-pepper shakers, and more?
- _____ If not, can they coordinate rentals, including pick-up and return, with a third party?
- _____ Can I bring in my own rentals if the cost is less?
- _____ Does the caterer handle all table settings? Will they put out place cards and favors?
- _____ Where will the food be prepared? Are there on-site facilities?
 - _____ If the caterer must bring in his own equipment, is there an additional fee?
- _____ How will the caterer arrange the food on the buffet table or on plates? Can you see photos of previous work displays? Can you speak to previous clients?

Staffing

- _____ Who is the main contact?
- _____ Will the same person you work with when planning also oversee meal service on the day of the wedding?
- _____ Will the caterer provide wait staff? Do you provide bartenders?
- _____ How many would they recommend for the size of your wedding?
- _____ Who will oversee the event and catering staff?

Alcohol

- _____ Can the caterer provide alcohol? Or can you handle the bar separately?
- _____ If you bring your own alcohol, is there a corkage fee? How and when will you get the alcohol to the caterer?
- _____ If the caterer will provide it, do they have an flexible wine list, and can you make special requests?
- _____ Do they provide liquor? What is the cost per drink/bottle? Will you buy back unopened bottles?
 - _____ Can I bring in my own liquor, and if so, is there a corkage fee?

Cake

- _____ Does the caterer also do wedding cakes? Can you use an outside baker if you desire?
- _____ Can you provide a wedding cake? Can you provide a groom's cake?
- _____ Is there a cake-cutting fee? Will they box the cake for guests to take home? Will they box the top tier of the cake for freezing?

Final Details

- _____ How much time do you need to set up and break down?
- _____ Will the caterer provide food for the photographer, videographer, or musicians?
- _____ When does the menu need to be finalized? When will you provide the final per-person cost?
- _____ When will they require the final head count?

Notes
