



# Your Complete Catering Solution

## Planning a Successful Wedding

When putting together your special day, there are key things that should be considered during the planning process. Here are a few of these items.

### Menus

In order to help establish a menu type, first determine the time of day that the event will take place. Afternoon events are typically lighter and reception items often work better than buffet menus. Evening events require heavier menus as the reception will serve as dinner for the attendees (a dinner buffet or heavy reception menu.)

#### *Establishing a Per Person Budget*

In order for the caterer to put together appropriate and appealing menu packages, you should have at least a “ball park” budget for the catering.

#### *Menu Samplers*

Expecting a menu sampling prior to your wedding is a valid expectation. Keep in mind that the caterer probably will not be able to prepare all of the items that you are interested in but should be able to do three or so in small quantities for you to try.

Some caterers will charge a small fee to do a menu tasting and then apply this amount to the event balance if you confirm your wedding with them. This is common practice to avoid perpetual catering shoppers who request tastings with a number of different caterers.

Basically, a tasting should be scheduled once you have selected the caterer that you would like to contract with.

Experienced caterers should be able to share client testimonials with you.

Recommendation: Select your wedding venue before contacting caterers as many venues have an “Approved Caterers List” from which you will need to select your caterer.

## Event Staffing

Here are some staffing guidelines for your wedding, consisting of a few key points, including:

- “Disposable” or “China Service” (events on china will require more staff)?
- The number of menu items and in particular, station items
- Special services require appropriate staffing including served events, “butler passed” items, cake serving, bartenders, etc.

A good rule of thumb for staffing weddings is to figure out how many staffers are needed and add one more to ensure wonderful service for such a special event. There is no such thing as a “do over” and spending an extra \$100 or so to ensure that the service level will be ideal is a good investment.

Figure...

- One buffet attendant per every 75 attendees for “disposable” buffet service events
- One buffet attendant per every 30 attendees for “china” buffet service events
- One waiter for every three banquet tables for “served” events
- One TABC certified bartender per every 75 attendees for “host bars”

## Cost Effective Bar Service

When holding your event at a home or at a venue that allows you to provide your own alcoholic beverages, you can save some real money while providing your guests with a wonderful beverage service.

Most weddings provide beer and wine along with sodas, bottled waters, ice tea and/or fruit punch. The addition of a margarita machine is a nice touch, but avoiding mixed drinks is generally a good idea.

*Here are some purchasing guidelines (These are good for events other than just weddings)*

- Red Wine (Merlot or Pinot Noir): Each 1.5 liter bottle has 10 to 12 servings
- White Wine (Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio): each 1.5 liter bottle has 10 to 12 servings
- Imported Beer (Corona is most popular)
- Domestic Beer (Typically a light beer goes over well)

The amount of beer and wine needed depends on the length of the event as well as the profile of the attendees. A good rule of thumb is that attendees will consume between 1 and 1.5 drinks

per hour. You should purchase enough beer and wine to cover this rule of thumb as well as some additional of each item to cover potential preferences towards particular items.

Be sure and request a “TABC certified” bartender from your caterer to serve as these individuals have been trained to serve responsibly.

Your caterer should be able to provide wine glasses, bar set ups (limes for Coronas, etc.) and other items as needed at a nominal charge.

### **Deposits & Payment Details**

No wedding is “definite” until a deposit has been received by the caterer. In order to budget effectively, it is often a good idea to make periodic payments prior to your wedding date instead of making one large payment just before. Either way, all caterers and venues will expect to be paid in full prior to the event date.

Deposits are typically non-refundable and are applied to the final event balance.

There are many caterers in any metropolitan area, some of which will not be around anymore by the time your wedding will take place. If you have paid a deposit to one of these failed caterers, you will not get your money back and will be forced to secure another caterer at the last minute for your special day. Ask how long a caterer that you are considering has been in business. If they have been in business for less than five years, you may want to reconsider.

### **Event Confirmations (Banquet Event Orders)**

With weddings, there is no room for ambiguity. All event details must be noted on the Banquet Event Order, otherwise do not expect to get it!

All caterers will expect a “guaranteed” number of attendees between 48 and 72 hours prior to the event. Although most caterers state that they will not make revisions to the event details after this cut off, some will make revisions as they are able. Attendee count increases are often okay, but decreases after the cut off are generally not accepted.

### **Miscellaneous**

Caterers who specialize in weddings often have some specialties that will make each wedding extra special. Some of these items may include:

- Preparing menu plates for the bride and groom as they are often too busy to go through the buffet.
- If the bride and groom are too busy to eat during the reception, the caterer may prepare special “boxes” for them that include some food items and wedding cake as well as utensils.

- Caterers will often photograph the event and some will prepare a framed photo as a gift for the bride and groom.

If your caterer does a great job with your wedding, it is a nice gesture to send them a testimonial letter that will help them book future events.