

# Questions for your wedding caterer

A great caterer will do more than just make good food. He or she will pay great attention to details, making sure the presentation is just right, the food and wine are served at the right temperature, the servers are well-groomed and attentive and that clean-up is efficient and thorough.

So how do you make sure the caterer you hire is a great one? By asking the following questions:

• May I have references?

Most caterers get their business from word of mouth. Ask for at least 10 former clients and call as many as you can. Ask questions such as:

\* Was the caterer easy to work with?

\* Was the service efficient and non-intrusive?

\* Was the food delicious, and did it arrive hot?

\* Were there any problems that came up and how did the caterer deal with them?

• Do you have a business li-

cense and liability insurance?

Caterers should be licensed by the state. Usually licenses are displayed in the office, but if you're not positive, then ask to see it. Make sure you see proof of liability insurance as well.

• Can we sample from a typical wedding menu?

Catering can be a large part of your wedding budget. Make sure you know what it is you'll be getting for your money. Take your spouse-to-be and a friend with you to the tasting so that you can get varied opinions. Some caterers will charge a tasting fee, but it's worth it.

• May I see photographs of your table displays?

Some caterers who provide buffets or food stations include floral arrangements and other decorations. It's also a good idea to discuss your color theme so that decorations and floral arrangements coordinate

• What does the price per person include?

Is the cost strictly for food,

or does it cover tables, chairs, linens, tableware, punch service, table displays, etc.?

• What other fees do you charge?

Are tips and taxes included in the price? Some caterers will charge a cake-cutting fee or corking fee for wines. Make sure you get all fees in writing up front.

• Do you handle special menu requests?

You may have guests with special menu needs, such as food allergies, vegan or kosher requirements. Make sure your caterer will accommodate these needs. Some couples want to have a special family recipe at the reception — grandma's meatballs or foods from the family's ethnic traditions. Find out if your caterer will personalize your menu with these kinds of items.

• Do you offer cakes?

Ask if your caterer offers wedding and groom's cakes, and find out if they are included in



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the price.

• Will you pack us a "doggie bag" for after the reception?

Sometimes the wedding couple is so busy at the reception that they have very little time to eat anything. Attentive caterers will prepare small boxes of food for the couple to enjoy when they are finally alone.

• What are the payment arrangements?

You need to find out how much of a deposit is required, and if it's refundable or not. Ask

when the final payment is due and what the caterer's preferred form of payment is.

When you finally settle on a caterer, make sure you have a written contract to sign. This guarantees that they will provide the food, timelines and details you discussed.

Asking these 10 questions will help you choose the right caterer to help make your wedding a truly special celebration.

*Source: Family Features.*



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