

## 12 Tips For Your Wedding Catering

1. As far as wedding expenses go, your catering or food bill is typically your largest expense (45-50% of most wedding budgets). Therefore, choose your caterer carefully. Spend plenty of time with your caterer talking about your budget, the style of reception you'd like (i.e. buffet, food stations, sit down dinner or cocktail reception) and the types of food that you'd like to serve.
2. If you are unfamiliar with the caterer, always schedule a "tasting" to sample their culinary skills and take note that the food is attractively presented too.
3. Check References! Many brides ask for references but never call them. Make at least TWO reference phone calls. Don't be shy, remember -- brides love to talk about their wedding!
4. When hiring your caterer, be sure to ask about the dinnerware or china they will be using. Some caterers will include all the dinnerware in their price - but they may be chipped, scratched and worn out. So, ask to see samples to make sure that the place settings nicely compliment the rest of your wedding decor.
5. Service is an extremely important element when choosing your caterer. Be sure to ask about the ratio of servers to guests. Now, this can vary depending on the type of reception you have (seated dinner versus buffet). One good rule of thumb is to have one server for every 8-10 guests.
6. When determining a final head count for your caterer, you should include a meal for your entertainer (DJ or Band), photographer and Wedding Day Coordinator. But, always confirm with these vendors that they do want a meal before you include them in your head count. And, make sure to separate these from your guest head count because your caterer will usually charge you less for "vendor" meals.
7. If your caterer is providing meals for your DJ, Band or photographer, be sure to ask your caterer **where** the meals will be served for them and confirm that they will be eating somewhere **"out of sight"** from your wedding guests.
8. Ask your caterer to prepare a **"leftover basket"** that is a sampling of all the food at your reception. It's likely that the bride and groom will not get a chance to eat and enjoy all of the wonderful food at the reception. Even if you're leaving the next day on your honeymoon, it makes for a great late night snack.
9. Be sure to ask your caterer about **"guaranteed numbers"**. Many caterers will quote prices based upon a minimum or "guaranteed" number of guests. Many base their figures on a minimum of 100 guests. If your final guest count is less than a hundred, there may be an additional fee.
10. Find out what **decorations** (if any) are included in the caterer's price. Ask to see pictures of their table displays. Some caterers that do buffets or food stations will include floral arrangements and other decorations. As your

wedding plans progress, talk to your caterer about your color theme so that all decorations and floral arrangements will coordinate.

11. A recent trend when doing buffets or food stations is to have a **menu board**. This is where the names of the entrees (and sometimes a brief description) and items served are scrolled elegantly onto a piece of paper displayed on a board or in a picture frame.
12. Be careful on how many **hors d'oeuvres** you order. Do you really need eight different varieties? You'd be surprised - some caterers will suggest this! If you are doing hors d'oeuvres - four different varieties is usually sufficient.