

Eat, Drink, and *Be Married*

THE INS AND OUTS OF CRAFTING A MENU
THAT'S BOTH DELICIOUS AND SENTIMENTAL.

DECIDE HOW TO SERVE THE FOOD.

Before you even start thinking about what food to put on your menu, you need to figure out how your meal is going to be served. Choosing how the food gets from the kitchen to your guests is a much more important decision than most couples might think. Food service sets the tone for the rest of the reception, so take the time to mull over your options before you pick.

Full service: for couples who want the meal to be the star of the show. If you don't mind dinner taking up a good part of your reception, having individual courses served directly to your guests is definitely the way to go. Pair beautifully plated dishes with wine, have your DJ or band leader read a little description of each plate as it's brought out, and give your guests the time to savor each and every bite.

Buffet: for couples who can't wait to get dancing. Opting for a buffet-style dinner gives you enough time to enjoy your food and a few toasts, but also gets the party started much sooner. Once dinner wraps up, everyone is free to hit the dancefloor or go back for seconds. Let your guests decide whether to stay at the tables and chat over dessert or hit the dancefloor and get their groove on.

Combo: for couples who want the best of both worlds. If you can't decide if eating or dancing is more important to you, stop stressing out and get the best of both worlds with a combo style service. Have the main course served directly to each guest, but skip wait staff for dessert and have your guests serve themselves. This way, you get all the elegance of a full service dinner plus the added expedience of a buffet.

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“There are so many ways to personalize a wedding and food is absolutely one of those ways! From exploring different cuisines to recreating old favorites in a new and exciting way, we’re in love with the challenge of helping create a menu that reflects the personality of our clients. Food should be both beautiful and delicious and “typical wedding food” is something with which we are not familiar.”

– Kristin Kramer and Jenna Cook, **Jewell Events Catering**

MAKE YOUR FOOD MATCH THE SEASON.

When picking out your food for your reception, take into account the time of year. The same way certain flowers can only be used at certain times of the year, food is seasonally dependent as well. If you’re tying the knot in the middle of

January, serving a summer strawberry salad is going to be not only pricey but confusing for guests who are probably expecting soup and other warm, hearty dishes. Do your budget, your caterer, and your guests all a favor and stick with a menu that matches the weather. Your menu will make the most sense this way, and



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you’ll also be ensuring that everything is in-season and therefore tastes amazing.

PICK DISHES THAT HAVE MEANING TO YOU.

Go the extra mile and work with your caterer to create a menu that has meaning. It might sound a little strange, but take some time to reflect on food in general before deciding what to serve. What are your favorite meals to cook together as a couple? What foods conjure up happy memories for both of you? Come up with a list of foods that not only taste great but have a special meaning to you, then talk to your caterer and see what they can do. However, keep in mind that you and your partner won’t be the only ones dining out on your wedding night. Make sure you choose dishes that your guests will actually want to eat. Beef tartar might be your soon-to-be hubby’s favorite meal, but not everyone is comfortable with uncooked meat. Avoid making your guests uncomfortable by offering a variety of main course options that are delicious but won’t feel outlandish to guests with less adventurous palates.

GET PERSONAL.

There’s no point in serving foods that have special meaning to you if your guests have no clue about the backstory that makes the dishes so important to you! Work with your stationer to personalize the menu that gets put in front of each guest at the reception. Add little notes about how ravioli was the first dinner you ever cooked for your new spouse or how lobster bisque always reminds you of your summer trips to Maine. Using your menu to let your guests in on a few special moments from your relationship will make them feel even more connected to the wedding, and it’s got the additional perk of giving them something to read while they wait for their food.

CELEBRATE YOUR CULTURE AND BACKGROUND.

One of the most beautiful elements of marriage is its ability to unite people who come from different places and upbringings. This type of melding is definitely something to be celebrated, so whether you're Hindu and marrying an Italian Catholic or you're a Cubs fan tying the knot with a Sox fan, consider using your menu to showcase your unique blending of cultures. Serving foods from your

various backgrounds side by side is a creative and touching way to signify how you and your partner have bridged the gap in your backgrounds and come together to create a love that's brand new and one-of-a-kind.

BE CONSCIOUS OF ALLERGIES AND FOOD RESTRICTIONS.

Nothing says disaster more than a guest going into anaphylaxis in the middle of dinner. Your entire reception doesn't



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need to be peanut free just because your boss's husband is allergic, but do make the effort to talk to your caterer and ensure that any guests with allergies or food restrictions will have something to eat. If you include a card in your invitation that lets your guests choose their entrée, make a note at the bottom with instructions for guests with allergies. In fact, it's a great idea to let them get in touch with the caterer directly. Most people with food restrictions feel best when they're able to talk to the people who are preparing their food, and the majority of caterers are more than happy to make sure that these guests get served meals that are not only delicious, but safe.

ENJOY YOUR MEAL.

Most brides and grooms are so distracted during their reception that they just pick

at their food or forget to eat completely. Don't pass up a delicious meal! Allow yourself to really enjoy the food you spent so much time picking out. Also, remember that food is fuel. How are you going to tear up the dance floor on an empty stomach? Avoid burning out early by taking care of yourself and making the most of your dinner.

Feeling a little overwhelmed? We don't blame you – planning a menu for a big group of people can be super stressful, and it's easy to get panicky. Our best piece of advice is to trust your caterers. Feeding large crowds is what they're best at, so once you communicate your vision, it's A-okay to step back and let your caterer take the reins. Relinquishing that control might feel a little scary, but the end result is well worth it: a room full of your favorite people, eating some absolutely amazing food. 🍴

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PLANNING NOTES

Sipping Solutions

Bubbly, Beer, Bourbon, and Other Drinking Matters.

At more and more of today's weddings, the bar is limited to beer, wine, and one specialty drink, like a martini or a signature cocktail. Some trendy couples are opting for an array of micro-brewed beers or an ice luge, but the majority are sticking to the basics – plus one stand out drink. Here's some helpful information about stocking your bar and keeping your guests happy.

Go for a Splashy Presentation

Ask the caterer or reception hall manager to serve the drinks in specialty glasses, like tulip or fluted glasses for champagne, large-bowled glasses for red wine, and curved top glasses for white wine.

Tiny Bubbles

Champagne is a festive beverage, perfect for hors d'oeuvres, toasts, and wedding cakes. Technically, the real thing is produced in the region of France called Champagne. Imported French champagne is considered the finest. According to the experts, everything else should be called sparkling wine. Until medieval times, French monks tended the vines and prepared the drink for mass. Over the years, it was used to celebrate the marriages of the monarchs. So order up. You're basically royalty.

The Golden Rule

Do not let your guests drink and drive. It's smart to plan some alternative