

How to Host a Vegan Wedding Dinner (even if most of your guests aren't vegan!)

Lindsay Meister August 31, 2022.



Wedding season is upon us and with more and more people choosing a plant-based vegan lifestyle it's only natural that more weddings will serve a fully vegan meal.

However, wedding planning is stressful at the best of times, throw in a seemingly never ending Panini (and I'm not talking about the delicious sandwich ;)) and toss in several dozen non-vegan wedding guests and you may be feeling a little overwhelmed!

Fear not – in this article we will go over how to host a beautiful, delicious and satisfying vegan wedding meal that will have your guests drooling and give you peace of mind on your special day.



Finding a caterer

Your best option is to choose a vegan caterer who is experienced in creating delicious and satisfying vegan options for the big day. Find someone who is passionate about creating a delicious menu that isn't just a sad plate of veggies. Hiring a vegan caterer means that they will know to avoid all animal products including sneaky ingredients like; honey, beeswax, lard and anchovies.

Larger cities will have several options for vegan caterers, but if you're in a smaller town with limited options try to find one that has at least some experience with catering vegan food and who will work with you to create a great menu! If using a non-vegan caterer, don't be afraid to give them some recipe suggestions to help them come up with a menu that is personalized to you.

Before setting out to find a caterer, it can be very helpful to figure out your budget per guest. This will help you to narrow down potential caterers and figure out whether you want to have plated meals vs a buffet. Don't be afraid to look at several different places within your budget to get an idea of what your menu options are. Most caterers will offer tasting sessions to allow you

the chance to taste your menu options and make any changes or adjustments to the menu before the big day.

It never hurts to look at reviews online to see what others have to say about the caterer – it is a big chunk of money that you are potentially spending so making sure others have been satisfied with their food and service is a good idea. That being said, local vegan groups on Facebook are a great place to get recommendations from others who have been through the process of planning and hosting a vegan wedding.

Make sure to ask whether your caterer comes with wait staff and dishes/cutlery – and if not look into how to acquire these (possibly through your venue) Also make sure to check in with your venue – some places limit catering options to caterers they are already familiar and comfortable working with.

If you are catering your own wedding (or having a family member or friend cater) make sure to use tried and true recipes so that you don't have any disasters on the big day. While there are an endless number of vegan recipes online, use recipes you are comfortable with and know will turn out well.



Have options!

The options are endless when hosting a vegan wedding meal; you can choose to serve casual finger foods, fancy canapes, small plated dishes, or a family style buffet. A popular option is having a “grazing station” for appetizers. This gives people the opportunity to try several different things and allows them some choice in what they are eating – great for picky eaters and those who may be skeptical of vegan food. As a bonus, this also provides something for people to do in between the ceremony and dinner.

For the main course, you have several options. Some people opt for individual plates where each guest chooses their main beforehand. If budget is a concern, serving a meal family-style where each table receives several dishes to self-serve and share is a great option. Alternatively, a buffet allows for unlimited choice (and seconds for those with a big appetite).

Keep in mind that many cultural cuisines are very vegan friendly or have dishes that are easily veganized. Mediterranean, South and East Asian cuisines such as Indian and Thai, Mexican and even Italian cuisines can provide you with familiar yet delicious vegan options.



Nibbles: vegan cheese, fancy crackers/chips, crudité's, vegan dips and spreads, bread, nuts and dried or fresh fruit (aka vegan charcuterie – super Instagram-able!) stuffed mushrooms or tomatoes, falafel bites, bruschetta, dumplings, spring rolls, zucchini fritters, cauli wings, vegan mini tofu quiches, vegan sliders

(Don't forget you may want to include some late-night refreshments too!)

Salads: beetroot carpaccio, a seasonal salad highlighting seasonal ingredients like peaches, fennel, asparagus, basil

Mains: vegan risotto, stuffed squash, linguine in butternut squash sauce, mushroom stroganoff, mushroom Wellington, creamy sundried tomato pasta, vegan ravioli. Sides can be couscous, rice pilaf, quinoa, roasted potatoes, and seasonal vegetables like asparagus. When in doubt, pasta and potatoes are always crowd-pleasers.

Lastly, don't be afraid to make the menu personal – are you pasta lovers? Did you take a trip to Morocco and fall in love with Moroccan cuisine? Do you want to include a family recipe

(veganized) that means a lot to you? Do you want to include a regional dish or cuisine? Perhaps a special cocktail? Make the menu your own.



Have your vegan wedding cake – and eat it too!

I don't know about you, but the first time I turned down a piece of cake after going vegan I nearly had an identity crisis. Luckily, I had little to worry about as I soon found that veganizing a fluffy vanilla or decadent chocolate cake was ridiculously easy and just as delicious.

If possible, find a vegan bakery that can create your perfect cake. If this is not possible, many traditional bakeries are able to accommodate different dietary needs and are comfortable making delicious vegan baked goods. As long as you communicate your needs well and go to someone who understands your needs, you can still enjoy a beautiful vegan wedding cake.

I have even seen some vegans online who baked their wedding cake themselves or had it baked by a loved one – using a trusted recipe of course! Vegan baking is actually quite easy and there are also many recipes online if you choose to make your own.

Many couples opt to have a cute little cake alongside their individually plated desserts or a dessert bar with lots of options to satisfy that sweet tooth.

Dessert options: fruit crumble, tart, or pie, chocolate brownie or sticky toffee pudding (served with vegan ice cream or whipped cream), cheesecake, tiramisu, seasonal fruit sorbet

Be honest & upfront with guests

Informing your guests ahead of time that your wedding is vegan is a great way to mitigate any confusion on the day of.

It is courtesy to ask your guests if they have any food allergies and/or dietary restrictions, and if you have chosen to have plated meals to ask for their choice of a main dish. This is a great time to let guests know that the food served will be vegan – it may be tempting to just let them find out on the day of but I personally believe that being upfront and honest with people tends to work out better in the long run.

Plus with so many food allergies, intolerances and dietary restrictions it is better to be clear about what you are serving your guests. Fortunately, serving vegan food often make things easier for people who have common food allergies and intolerances to things like dairy, eggs, shellfish.

You may also want to include clear labeling so that people know that they are eating vegan meatballs, cheese, etc. particularly if you are having a buffet or any self-serve food stations.

Another way to combat any negative feelings towards your vegan wedding menu is to have a trusted non-vegan friend or family member go over the menu or even come to a tasting with you and provide valuable feedback.



Am I the (Gr)a\$\$hole for making my wedding vegan?

The short answer is no, you are not. Weddings are all about choices and unfortunately you are never going to please everyone – and not just with the food (ex. Décor, music, religious ceremony, etc. etc.)

As long as you keep in mind that many people have food allergies and other dietary restrictions and do your best along with your caterers to accommodate their needs, you are doing a great job.

Some guests may say that they don't like vegan food or would prefer an option with meat, for example. Keep in mind that people often eat more vegan food already than they realize e.g. soups, salads, and bread.

Having a few different options for appetizers and mains gives your guests some choice in what they are eating. Adding things like caramelized onions, balsamic glaze, garlicky bruschetta, and nut-based cheeses will contribute to that savory-umami flavor that will please plant eaters and meat eaters alike.

The worst case scenario is that they don't enjoy their meal, but chances are they will try some new dishes they haven't been exposed to and may find something they didn't expect to like becomes a new favorite!

Take a look at the bigger picture. The most important part of the day is likely the ceremony, the meal is simply a bonus and serving food that aligns with your deeply held values is more important than trying to please everyone.

And remember, wedding food is often not that great – most people don't go to weddings for the food or expecting an excellent meal. If it is great, that's a bonus!

At the end of the day, you may never appease those who are unwilling to try vegan food, but for many non-vegans their hesitancy may simply come from the unfamiliarity with vegan dishes and
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an opportunity to show them that vegan food can be both delicious and satisfying.



A note about alcohol

Many people don't realize that not all alcohol is vegan-friendly. Unfortunately animal by-products are used during the processing of some beers and wine. Hard liquor is typically a safe

bet. Barnivore.com is a great resource to check out or pass on to your bartender to figure out which alcoholic drinks are vegan-friendly. It can also be nice to include a fancier non-alcoholic option for those who don't consume alcohol.

Your wedding is a celebration of the love between you and your partner and offering a vegan meal to your guests is a way of sharing an aspect of your life and core values with your loved ones.

A common concern when hosting a vegan wedding is that guests will be unsatisfied, hungry or disappointed. Your wedding is an opportunity to show your guests that there is so much more to vegan cuisine than rabbit food (although can we admit that veggies, if prepared well, can be super tasty?).

It is totally possible to host a vegan wedding and wow your guests with a delicious and satisfying meal. People may complain, however keep in mind that is just one meal for them but for you it represents your values as a couple.

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Ideally your loved ones will respect and honor your choices, and they may even be surprised at just how amazing vegan food can be. And please, prioritize yourself and make sure you get to try that delicious food too!

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