



## Reception Flavors

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The reception is certainly the most important facet of the entire wedding celebration. It is a time for the bride, groom, family, and friends to share together in celebration of a new union. When planning an event of this importance, certainly the most important consideration is the culinary expression.

## Choosing the Menu

The Location can in some ways dictate the offerings appropriate, but the most important influences are time of day and budget.

In our culture with have become accustomed to eating certain types of foods at certain periods of the day (e.g. Breakfast -omelets pastries, fruit; Lunch -sandwiches, salads, light fare; Dinner full meals with an entree, vegetable, starch etc.) When serving during the meal times the it is important to respect guests "internal body clocks" to provide a full meal.

Budget is of course the most important consideration for the culinary offerings of the grand affair. Guest count certainly plays a primary role in the budgeting process. If your budget is small you may consider only inviting close family members and friends. Serving at times between these meal times can help with budget constraints. Most caterers offer their cuisine in three basic service formats; full service, limited service and delivery. Full service is certainly the preferred choice as it gives the bride, groom and family a chance to relax and enjoy one of the most memorable days of their lives. A way of providing the foods on a tighter budget without compromising on quality is to simply have the food delivered and set up by the caterer. Then have a family member or friend help with serving and keeping the dishes restocked. The offerings here are more limited and usually constricted to what can be served on a tray or can be kept in a chafer. Limited service is generally a delivery with hired attendants for maintaining the buffets. Generally, perhaps the simplest way to have a reception on a very small budget is to serve only champagne and cake.

After the budget, time of day, and location are determined, it's time to choose a menu. The most popular menus of our area include the ever present ham biscuits, hot crab dip, fresh fruit displays, vegetable cascades, cheese boards, chicken wings, steamship rounds of beef with fresh rolls and cocktail shrimp. Many brides choose more exotic items and it is usually a good idea to showcase local fare in your menu especially if many guests are from outside of the area. In some situations it is important to consider the dietary choices of the guests attending. You may want to ask your caterer what offerings can be provided for vegetarians, children, or people on religious or health restricted diets. If you are having trouble deciding your menu, your caterer can help you decide what menu is appropriate for your type of reception and budget.

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### **Choosing your caterer**

The first question to ask of your caterer is "Do you carry a health permit and liability insurance?" This is the single most important consideration you can make. People serving food to the public without a health department permit are doing so illegally. Such events can be closed down by health officials leaving the host embarrassed and the guests without a meal. Liability insurance is another big consideration. The person you engage to serve your wedding must carry a comprehensive policy. This insurance is for your benefit and should cover food products, property damage and workman's compensation. In today's litigious society even a perfectly run event can lead to a legal nightmare

Because every reception is a unique event, it is important to iron out with the caterer all services provided at the reception.

The food provider should offer you a chance to taste the cuisine to be served at your big event. Plan this tasting as early as possible in case you need to make any adjustments.

If price is more important than reputation when choosing a caterer, it is important to "compare apples to apples" using the same menu for all caterers to bid on. The one you choose should also guarantee the food price given in the proposal. This should be regardless of any food cost changes the caterer should incur.

Above all plan, plan, plan, it is never too early to start and you can never over plan your event. A well-designed wedding day will help all concerned enjoy it more.