

## 28 Questions to ask your wedding caterer

Besides your location, the food and drink for your wedding bash will probably consume the largest portion of your wedding budget.

Catering costs are usually presented as “per-person” charges, sometimes abbreviated in wedding brochures as “pp” after the amount.

But be aware—the per-person charge often doesn’t include everything: Tax and the gratuity (sometimes called the “service charge”) might be extra, and there may also be separate per-person charges for the meal, drinks, hors d’oeuvres, and even setup. So your actual per-person charge might end up being considerably more than you expect. Bring your calculator along when meeting with potential caterers to help you arrive at the real bottom line. There’s more to consider. Nowadays, many caterers offer a range of services in addition to catering.

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Do you have my date open?
2. How many weddings do you do per year, and how long have you been in business?
3. Have you done events at my location? **TIP: If you haven’t chosen your location yet, ask the caterer if they can help you select one.**
4. Are you licensed to serve alcohol?
5. Will I need any permits for my event? If so, will you handle obtaining them?
6. Will you provide a banquet manager to coordinate the meal service or an on-site coordinator who will run the entire event?
7. Can you assist with other aspects of the wedding like selecting other vendors, event design (e.g. specialty lighting, elaborate décor, theme events, etc.)?
8. If the catering station involves multiple pieces, can you assemble them? If so, is there an additional fee? How will the assembly affect my delivery date?
9. Given my budget, guest count and event style, what food choices would you recommend? Do you specialize in certain cuisines?
10. Do we have to work off a **pre-set** menu or can you create a custom menu for our event? If I have a special dish I’d like served, would you accommodate that?
11. Do you offer event packages or is everything à la carte? What exactly do your packages include?
12. Do you use all fresh produce, meat, fish, etc.? Can you source organic or sustainably farmed ingredients?
13. Can you accommodate dietary restrictions, such as kosher, vegan, etc.?
14. What décor do you provide for appetizer stations or buffet tables?
15. Do you offer package upgrades such as chocolate fountains, ice sculptures, cappuccino machines or specialty displays?
16. How much do you charge for vendor meals?
17. What’s the difference in cost between passed appetizers and appetizer stations? What’s the price difference between a buffet and a sit-down meal? If we have a buffet, are there any stations that cost extra, like a carving station? **NOTE: Don’t automatically assume that a buffet is going to be the less expensive option. Ask your caterer which type of service is more affordable for you, given the menu you’re planning**
18. If I decide not to serve cake, can you provide a dessert display instead?
19. If we use an outside cake designer, do you charge a cake-cutting fee?
20. Do you do wedding cakes? If so, is this included in the per-person meal price or is it extra?
21. Do you do food tastings and is there an extra charge for this?
22. Do you handle rental equipment such as tables, chairs, etc.?
23. Can you do themed menus (e.g. barbecue, canapés, traditional etc.)? Would you also provide the décor?
24. How much do you charge for children’s meals?
25. What types of linens, glassware, plates and flatware do you provide? **NOTE: Some low-budget caterers have basic packages that use disposable dinnerware instead of the real thing, so make sure you know exactly what you’ll be getting.**
26. Can you provide presentation upgrades such as chair covers, lounge furniture, Chiavari chairs, etc.? What would be the additional fees?
27. If there is leftover food from my event, can we have it wrapped up for guests to take home or have it delivered to a local shelter?
28. What is your policy on clean-up? **TIP: Be very clear about what “clean-up” means and who’s responsible for handling it—and be sure to get it in writing. We’ve heard many tales about caterers that left dirty dishes, trash and uneaten food behind. In most cases, when you rent a location it will be YOUR responsibility to leave the place in acceptable condition. You want to spend your wedding night with your honey, not picking up empty bottles from the lawn!**

