

20 Questions to ask a wedding caterer before you hire one.

- 1. What can you recommend for my budget, based on the style, time and date of my wedding? How much does it cost per person?**
A caterer usually charges on a per-person basis. You will need to know the number of guests you plan to invite. The caterer should also give you a date deadline for submitting your final number of guests.
- 2. Do you specialize in a particular type of cuisine? Will that style fit my budget? Can I request a special recipe?** Be sure the style of food fits what you envision for your wedding reception. Maybe there's an appetizer or entrée that is special to you and your family. It would be a definite plus for the caterer to work it into the menu.
- 3. Do you have other weddings booked for the same weekend or the day and time?** Be sure your caterer has a concrete plan for handling all the business they have lined up for the time of your wedding.
- 4. Do you hold a license?** This applies to health department requirements and liability insurance. Beware of a caterer that doesn't readily provide this information.
- 5. Does the cost-per-person work differently for a buffet style setup versus a sit-down dinner?** The answer is probably "yes," but it is worth asking.
- 6. Do you include all charges in the cost-per-person?**
Some caterers include the cost of the staff, rentals, linens and food in their cost-per-person. Find out if this is the case, so you can comparison shop smartly.
- 7. Can you provide a detailed list of included and additional charges?**
Caterers are going to charge you for every service provided (at a premium price). Be sure you know what all the charges are. A good caterer will list out all charges including for-instance charges in case the reception starts late (overtime charges), gratuities and set-up/clean-up charges.
- 8. Do you provide any extras?** Some caterers provide the glasses and other dinnerware, linens, tables, chairs, serving dishes, etc. You will want to know their price and find out the price it would cost for you to arrange these items from a wedding equipment vendor. It may be worth the extra money to have the caterer handle it.
- 9. If you do provide linens and dinnerware, do you provide options in color and style?** Caterers often have a selection of dinnerware and linens in a limited range. It may be possible for them to obtain a special request from a wedding equipment vendor. The price will increase if this is the case.
- 10. Who will be responsible for the catering the day of my wedding?**
You will want to meet the person who will be in charge of your wedding catering. It's important to insist on this because you want to trust they will do the job you are hiring them to do.



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11. How long will it take you to set up and break down?

You will probably be allotted a timeframe by your reception location for setup and cleanup. Be sure the caterer can work within these timeframes.

12. Do you make wedding and/or grooms cakes?

This may be a plus if the caterer can either arrange for a baker to create your cake(s).

13. If you don't provide cakes, can you cut and serve one that we provide?

The caterer may charge you a cake cutting and serving fee, but it may also be included in the catering package price. Be sure to find out because you will have to enlist some help if they do not provide this service.

14. How does your beverage service work? Can we provide our own alcohol?

Some caterers require you to buy the alcohol through them. Others will just charge you a corkage fee for the stemware and service.

15. Will you setup a station for the other wedding vendors to eat (photographer, musicians, DJ)? The caterer may include a vendor food area, but they may also charge for it. Check out what pricing is involved. These vendors do not have to eat the same meals as your guests. A simple beverage and hors d'oeuvres station may suffice.

16. Can you provide meals that are "kid friendly"? The caterer may be able to provide a discounted "kid's meal" option that you can use in a children's area. This is a good way to save some dollars if you are expecting a lot of families with children.

17. Will you let us look at your standard contract?

This should be a no-brainer for an experienced caterer. A caterer who operates without a contract on an event as large as a wedding is not practicing good business judgment. Be sure to get everything in writing just in case circumstances change. You never know.

18. What is your required deposit to hold the date? When do we pay the rest of the bill? This is a very important question because the deposit seals the deal. You should receive the contract with these terms outlined.

19. Will you let us sample dishes proposed for our wedding?

Sampling the food is a great way to determine whether a caterer is worth hiring. A caterer should receive a major plus if they do let you sample. Most should.

20. Do you have any former clients we can call?

Word of mouth is the best way to find out about a business' true dealings. Speaking with a former client can help you make the decision on this very expensive wedding cost.



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