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Questions to Ask Your Wedding Caterer

When planning your wedding reception, it's crucial to ask the right questions of your reception site manager or caterer. Make sure you have all your concerns written down when you meet, and you can never ask too many questions during a meeting. The success of your wedding breakfast is depending on it, so it's no time to be shy.

Making a list of questions before you meet is a great idea. Here's a sample of the sort of questions you want to ask when you're meeting with caterers and site managers:

- Are menus set, or do you have some flexibility? Can you customize your own menu or use a family recipe?
- What are their most popular dishes?
- Can you see photos of other wedding receptions at the site?
- Can you see the standard contract?
- Do you have to pay a deposit to hold the date? If so, how much is it and what does it cover?
- What's the cancellation policy? Is the deposit refundable?
- Do the waiting staff receive a gratuity? Is that gratuity in the contract?
- Does the cost cover just the food, or does it include linens, utensils, dishes and glassware too?
- Does the per-person cost include the service staff and cleaning up?
- Is VAT included in the contract?
- If you provide your own wedding cake, do you have to pay an additional fee for cutting and serving the cake?
- Can you arrange for a tasting at which you try some options for each course of the meal, the cake, the wine and the champagne?
- Can they accommodate dietary restrictions if guests have any?
- Do they require any special kitchen arrangements?
- Do they have any other events or weddings the same day or weekend?
- For how long is the site available, and is there a minimum time requirement? Do you have to pay extra if the reception runs over?
- Do they provide a children's meal? If so, is there a reduced cost per person?
- Do they provide a less expensive meal option for the band, DJ, photographers and videographers?
- Do they have a drinks licence, and, if so, do they provide brand-name drinks? Can you purchase your own? What are the prices for a cash bar? Is there a corkage fee for bringing your own wine or champagne? If so, how much is the fee?
- Can they provide bar staff? If so, what are the charges?
- Do they have insurance? If so what does the insurance cover?
- Will a catering manager be on site during the reception? If so, do they charge an additional fee?
- Can they give you a final per-person estimate if they know the details of the reception, such as the time of day, location and number of guests?
- If you have a list of certain foods you absolutely don't want, can the caterer comply?
- Is there an additional fee for staff overtime?
- What are the shapes of the tables, and how many people can sit comfortably at each?
- What's the ratio of waiting staff to guests?

- Are any types of decoration forbidden?
- Is there dedicated space for the bridal party, either for pictures or for freshening up before the party?

This list is certainly not exhaustive, but it sets the very least you should be asking your caterers.

Congratulations on your forthcoming wedding, and have a wonderful day!

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Member of the Executive Guild of Toastmasters and Town Criers