



10 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR WEDDING CATERER

1. Are they licensed and insured for off-site catering? A food service license is valid for restaurants, hotels and clubs. If the food service is at a rented venue or your home, the caterer is required by Health Department regulations to have a separate, off-premise catering license. Caterers with these licenses have the equipment and training to safely transport and serve food outside of their kitchens. Most states do not allow catering to be produced in a home kitchen.
2. Do they have liability insurance and workman's compensation insurance? They should carry \$1-\$2 million in liability insurance for your protection. Workman's compensation insurance protects you in case one of the service staff is injured while working your event.
3. Can you visit their kitchen? Be wary of any caterer that refuses to give you a tour of their kitchen. A professional caterer will be proud to show you their kitchen and introduce you to their culinary staff. Notice if the kitchen is clean and well organized. Seeing the kitchen will tell you a great deal about the level of professionalism of a caterer.
4. Can you make changes to their menus or design your own menu? Your wedding day is one of the most important days in your life. You should be able to choose foods that you and your guests will enjoy. Your caterer will certainly have suggestions of foods that will fulfill your wishes, yet be practical to produce with the facilities available at your reception site.
5. Do they provide bartenders? Unless your group is very small, it's advisable to have a trained bartender. An uncontrolled bar is a frightening prospect. You do not want any unpleasantness to spoil your wedding day!
6. Can you provide your own alcoholic beverages and is there a corkage fee? You will spend a great deal less money for the bar if you are allowed to purchase your own beverages rather than pay per drink. If there is a corkage fee, ask to have that fee specified in writing in your contract.
7. Will they provide a tasting of their food? Most caterers are eager to have you taste their most popular items and will prepare a sampling for you when you meet. Don't expect a full meal – you just want to have a sense of their flavors and presentation skills.
8. What uniform will their staff wear for your event? Ask to see photos of their staff in action. They should look neat and crisp with their hair controlled.

9. Do they have a contract? For your protection, it is important to have a contract that is clear about financial arrangements and that specifies how payment is to be made. Along with the contract, you should receive a written estimate showing all items you will be paying for.

10. Can they arrange for rental of china, linens, tables and chairs and tenting if needed? This is one area you do not want to handle yourself! An experienced caterer will arrange for delivery and set up of any and all rental items you may need. Rental dishes, glasses and flatware need to be rinsed and re-packed before being returned to the rental company. Be certain the catering staff will handle this as part of their services. Repeat: you do not want to do this yourself!

The single most important question is one you ask yourself: Do I really like this caterer and do I feel confident she will do an exceptional job for me on my wedding day? If the answer is yes – reserve your date right away. (Premium days book up very quickly.) If you have doubts, it would be best to continue looking until you find a caterer you trust with the most important day of your life.

Sharon Snuffin is president of Snuffin's Catering, the award-winning caterer in the South Puget Sound area of Washington State. She can be contacted at sharon@snuffins.com Menu and pricing information are available at www.snuffins.com