

The Catering Contract

No matter who is catering your wedding - a restaurant, caterer, on-site caterer - you will need a contract. Catering takes an average of 45 to 50 percent of your wedding costs, so be sure to choose a caterer carefully.

After deciding on a caterer, make an appointment to discuss the menu. Let the caterer know whether you would prefer a buffet, sit-down dinner or cocktail and hors d'oeuvres reception. At a sit-down dinner it is easier to control the flow of events (cutting of the wedding cake, dancing, etc.). A buffet dinner allows your guests to mingle. A buffet dinner isn't necessarily cheaper than a sit-down dinner because the caterer must prepare more food per person to keep the buffet looking presentable.

Here are some of the items that should be covered in your agreement:

- Be sure to include the exact location and room for the event and if more than one wedding going on at the same time. Make sure your wedding date and time are listed.
- List the type of service you are having (whether it be a seated meal, buffet, tea, cocktails, etc.)
- It should outline the staff-to-guest ratio. Make sure it will cover the type of service you want.
- It should include the name of the person who is representing the catering company and your main contact person.
- Get a proof of license that they can conduct events like yours in the location you have selected.
- It should list your exact food selections (including any liquor) in detail.
- The total cost and what the payment schedule will be needs to be clear. Make sure any sales tax, gratuities, bar and waiter fees over-time expenses are all clearly spelled out.
- Date when the final payment is due.
- Date when the caterer will need the final head count.
- Be sure to get phone contact information for the morning of the wedding (cell phone number where person can be reached in case you need to get in touch).
- Know the cancellation and refund policy