



Seasonal delights from Easy Gourmet

Recipe for romance

Three London caterers offer their advice on keeping wedding guests satisfied



ALIX CAIGER

Head chef and owner of Caiger & Co. Catering

Tell us about the food that you offer

We offer bespoke menu design for a whole range of events, from intimate dinner parties in your home, to a wedding breakfast, canapés and cocktails and even beautiful office lunches. We always use seasonal ingredients and have worked really hard to put together a supplier list of local and artisan producers from wine and cheese to fruit, fish and bread.

How do you advise couples on their menu choices?

We like to have a meeting first to really understand what the couple are looking for and how they imagine their day. We like finding out about chefs

that they're interested in, or food they like to cook and eat, we can then base our menus around that, or even sometimes around themes.

What are your most popular dishes?

The seasonal dishes are always the most popular, English asparagus and fresh pea salad with goat's curd, or mini pork belly canapés with burnt apple sauce. Pudding wise, our chocolate and almond torte seems to walk off the menus.

What is the one piece of advice you would give to couples when choosing their wedding menu?

Go for a meal that suits your day, and really think about the serving style. Maybe a buffet or sharing platters will suit your day better than a plated three-course meal. Mostly, have fun.

What has been the most unusual request you have had?

We have had a handful of strange requests, from all of the staff to be dressed like butchers with straw hats to full vegan weddings. It is always interesting to be given creative challenges.

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ADAM NEALE

Executive chef, Boulevard Events

What are the emerging trends for wedding catering in 2015?

Family service and theatrical dining were particularly popular in 2014 and look set to continue in 2015. We have also witnessed a change from the traditional three-course, sit-down menu format. Instead, what customers are increasingly requesting is a more communal way of dining. Sharing platters are coming to the fore and are

doing so in many different shapes and sizes: meze starters with air-dried meats and cheese from Provence, tortellini dishes with flavoured duck and truffle, goat's cheese and sunblushed tomatoes to name but a few. In addition to this, live cooking has really taken off recently and I have no doubt that it will continue to go from strength to strength. Urban street foods are another emerging trend that is gaining increasing momentum. Catering stands offering options such as river prawns cooked in Thai spices, and tandoori wrap stands should also be watched out for over the next 12 months.

What are your most popular dishes in spring/summer?

During spring and summer of 2014, some of the dishes we produced that have attracted the most interest and, the best feedback are the potato-crust halibut with crab bisque and the Japanese hot smoked salmon with lotus root and avocado. Longer days and a wonderful summer of sunshine lend themselves well to fish choices at a wedding.

And in autumn/winter?

During the winter the move is back towards red meats. Slow-braised meat takes on a high demand within dishes such as slow-cooked Jacob's ladder with celeriac purée and dauphinoise potato. Venison is another popular choice this time of year. Lightly smoked venison with wild mushrooms, truffle and pancetta with a red wine reduction is a wonderful example of how best to use this meat. As the cold sets in on the outside, use this dish to bring warmth to the dinner table.

What is the one piece of advice you would give to couples when choosing their wedding menu?

Make sure that your menu appeals to your own loves and really resonates with you. You should feel excited at the prospect of your menu. Do you love seafood or the idea of live cooking? Then go for it. You will never please all of your guests, that's just human nature and is actually what makes dining such an interesting experience, if done properly. Ask your chef to create something special around your own favourite cuisine. As long as it is done to a high standard, there will always be something for your guests to enjoy.

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Caiger & Co Catering offers bespoke menus

MARIE-LAURE PREYNAT

Director, Easy Gourmet Ltd

Do your menu choices vary from season to season, or is every wedding menu a bespoke choice?



Yes, our menus change depending on seasons, we only use produce that is in season at the time the wedding is taking place. Part of our service is a bespoke wedding menu agreed with our client.

What are the most requested dishes for a wedding celebration and why are they so popular?

The most popular dishes at the moment with our clients are the feast menu sharing platter. Weddings are already filled with formality so creating a relaxed atmosphere when it comes to the wedding breakfast is essential. Sharing platters have exploded in popularity because they do just that. They provide the perfect gateway for wine and conversation to flow, while also offering a tasty and filling feast. Using a sharing platter for the

main course seems to be the most popular way with this particular trend at the moment.

It doesn't always have to be a casual affair either. Sharing platters that include meat are served on a wooden platter and can either be carved by the guests, a designated guest who will get to visit the kitchen and will be provided with a chef hat and apron with the names of the bride and groom and wedding date on them for extra effect, or a chef can be booked to take care of all the work.

A sharing platter really is the perfect way of catering for everyone's tastes, while providing something a little out of the ordinary.

If you were catering for your own wedding, what would you serve?

For the reception, definitely our famous Iberico pata negra carving ham with homemade focaccia accompanied with crab and avocado salsa, lime and chilli verrine and beetroot scotch quail's eggs with Cornish sea salt.

What is the one piece of advice you would give couples when choosing their wedding menu?

Brides and grooms need to feel at home on their wedding day and the guests need to recognise them within the menu dishes and theme, so what is your ideal menu and what is your vision?

Let your menu choice reflect your personality and you, your family and friends will be very pleased on the day.

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