

PLANNING YOUR FANTASTIC SHOE-STRING WEDDING MENU

By Jean Pizutelli, Caterer "Catering for the Particular"

Let's face it; your wedding is your chance to give the most creative party of your life. When on a budget it should not be as boring as a cold cut platter and macaroni salad from the neighborhood grocery store, nor should it be the standard run-of-the-mill dishes from your local "meatball caterer." With the right planning, choosing a knowledgeable, experienced caterer *that is familiar in this area* and some ultra-creativity, you can create an upscale, "Wow- 'em" menu that will fit ANY budget - no matter how small.

FIRE YOUR WEDDING PLANNER

A champagne and sweets reception is always an elegant, great stand-by in a pinch. For those who want something more substantial, be adventurous and consider including some of the following ideas when planning the fare for your special day... instead of having a sit down formal dinner, why not serve substantial "Around the World" hors d'oeuvre on a buffet? Have a "Nationality" station, where a particular dish or special dessert from both the bride's and groom's ethnic background are represented. In the colder months and climates, consider a delicious "Wedding soup" which is customary in both cultures. This is a well-received menu twist that is very personal that you can share with your guests.

As long as you offer foods that will accommodate both meat eaters and vegetarians, you will be fine. A good assortment of veggies, fruits, salads of terrific and unusual tastes with visual appeal will make your wedding the talk of the town. Instead of the same old baked ziti and sausage and peppers, serve a refreshing cold angel hair pasta salad primavera with fresh spring vegetables in a lemon/dill vinaigrette along with sausage and pepperoni breads cut in to slices. Incorporate fun and unusual dips and sauces to serve with tid-bits on the buffet line. For example, have a pineapple-vanilla or pistachio dip to accompany fresh sliced fruits. Make available a fantastic, rich cheese fondue with assorted dippers, such as cubes of crusty French bread. The New Orleans Muffellata sandwich cut into wedges or a tray of German wursts replaces that standard deli platter.

You've planned the place, whether your church or an open air wedding (God's fresh air is free!) to cut costs...so it is the same with the food and drink. Do not pay for extras like servers, bartenders etc... Ask a friend or family member to do it instead as a wedding gift to you.

LET THEM EAT CAKE

How about two entwined heart shaped cakes done in frosting accents of your wedding colors? (Simple enough for a dear one to make for you). Better yet, informal chocolate-bourbon -espresso fondue stations with assorted dippers such as cubed pound cake, strawberries, pretzels, biscotti... the list is endless and luscious.

To drink? A timed bar... such as an open until the toast, with a cash bar afterwards. You may also want to consider providing wine and beer and offer the harder stuff on a cash bar or you may perhaps consider a refreshing wedding punch (Alcoholic or non).

Again, be open and willing to try new things... there 1001 possibilities...if you need help being creative, by all means enlist the help of an accomplished, sophisticated, well-versed caterer that can help you in these areas. An elegant, well thought out wedding menu DOES NOT have to cost a lot of money.

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