

# **Alamo Catering Etc.**

## *Planning the Reception*

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CATERER**

- What type of food items do you recommend for my budget and the number of guests?
- What type of service, sit-down dinner or buffet, would be best?
- Discuss menu selections, ask the cost per person.
- Do you provide linens?
- Is there an additional fee?
- Is there a color selection?
- Is there an additional fee?
- Do you supply glasses, plates and silverware?
- Is there an additional charge?
- Do you handle all rental equipment such as tables, chairs, serving pieces?
- Would it cost less if I handle the rentals myself?
- How much time will you need to set up?
- Can we go over the table locations and seating arrangements ahead of time?
- Do you handle the clean up?
- Rental Returns?
- Will you personally handle and attend my reception?
- If not, what is the name of the person who will?
- Do you make arrangements for flowers, decorations, and music?
- Do you provide the wedding cake?
- Is there a cake cutting fee?

- If not, is there a cake cutting fee?
- Do you charge extra to pour coffee?
- Will you provide the groom's cake, if we want one?
- Do you provide the liquor?
- What is the cost per drink?
- Is it cheaper if we provide our own liquor?
- Do you charge a corkage fee per bottle if we provide our own wine and champagne?
- Do you require a guaranteed number of guests?
- What is the last date I can give you a final guest count?
- Do you have a contract?
- When will you provide the final per person cost?
- What is the payment policy?
- What is the deposit to hold the date?
- What is your refund or cancellation policy?
- Are gratuities already figured in the total price?
- If so, what percent is being charged?
- Do you provide food for the photographer, videographer or musicians?
- Is this an extra per person fee?
- Will you pack a to-go snack for the bride and groom?
- Will you pack the top tier of the wedding cake?

## **CATERERS**

As tradition has it, some types of refreshments are served to celebrate after the wedding ceremony. It is customary to at least serve a wedding cake and punch and to provide champagne with which to toast. Most people choose to serve something more than this, depending on the time of the reception and their budget. The food and beverage portion of the wedding is usually the greatest

expense. Remember, the simplest or most elaborate reception can be wonderful if you plan carefully, use good taste and common sense.

If your reception is being held in a hotel, club or restaurant which does the catering, be sure to meet with the person in charge. Review the menu selections and services provided. Make sure the establishment has catered other weddings. If possible, taste the food before committing to the location.

### **Selecting a Caterer**

When your reception is being held in a home, garden, or hall which allows you to provide a caterer of your choice, the options are numerous. Caterers' services and fees vary. Determine what your needs and desires are. Then interview several caterers until you find one you feel confident can give you what you want. Good caterers are reserved months in advance. Start interviewing early and be prepared to leave a deposit in order to reserve your particular date and time.

When interviewing caterers find out what services they provide. Some companies specialize and merely handle food preparation, delivery, and service. Some provide every service and take care of the details and coordination of your wedding, including food preparation and serving, all rental equipment, setup and clean up, liquor, beverages, bartenders, floral and other decorations. They may provide the cake or recommend a baker. They may also be helpful with suggestions of photographers and music coordinators. Other caterers may not provide all the above services, but may recommend competent people you can contract directly.

Most caterers have pictures of weddings they have done. Look at them, check their references or the Better Business Bureau and taste their food before signing a contract. Read the contract carefully to be sure it includes everything you agreed on and states the total price and check the cancellation policies. The catering fee is usually a flat fee based on the number of guests or a fee per person, depending on the type and amount of food provided. A 15% service charge plus sales tax is usually added to the total. Be sure to check. You wouldn't want any surprises. Most require 50% to 75% of the money and a total guest count a week or two before the ceremony. Do not pay the balance until after the reception and only if you are satisfied that you received what was agreed upon.

### **Selecting a Menu**

Your caterer is the expert and will make menu suggestions to fit the style, budget and number of guests of your particular wedding. The time of day will determine what refreshments are appropriate.

A good caterer will be flexible and offer a variety of items with varying prices to enable you to serve something appropriate and stay within your budget. Serve chicken breast rather than filet mignon or have a beautiful display of fruit or cheese rather than one of expensive shrimp and crab. Try to offer a variety so there will be something suitable for everyone's taste.

Use the following worksheets to help you select a caterer and record the menu you plan to serve.