

“Will you
marry me?”

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However many times we have heard this question, our hearts have always melted away... But little do we realise at the time how much work it is going to be to get to the actual wedding day!

The bride and her mum will concentrate on the dress, but there will also be the flowers to sort out, the transport, the venue, the menu and the entertainment for adults and younger guests... what a journey!

But what a pleasure to undertake this journey! This is all for the most amazing day in the life of two people and their closest family and friends. On the menu side, it could be as simple as throwing a barbeque or as elaborate as a fine gourmet experience, and anything in between these two!

So then, how can we help?

The Empty Plates team is here to assist at each step of the way. We will primordially see you through the difficult task of choosing one menu that would suit all your guests, with one tasting for the bride and groom to make sure about the choice made.

And we can supply a marquee and have it set at your chosen location. We can help with the hiring of the tables and chairs as well as the linen needed, if that is not provided by the venue you have chosen. We can organise all the beverages you would like to have available for your guests, whether you want to treat them to it or leave at their own discretion. ... You tell us what you need and we can help you organise it!

The following pages are here to give you some ideas about the food side. As you browse through, please bear in mind that nothing is set in stone and these are only examples of how things could be organised for you.

You have attended weddings before and you would already have a little idea of what you want, so just tell us and we will tailor this to your party!

Enjoy and see you soon!

The team at



Canapés

Canapés would often be in the order of the day to accompany the glass of bubbly you have selected to welcome your guests at the reception, right after the ceremony.

There are many options for you, depending on how long you would like the reception to last. Our canapés come in two items per portion, which means that we will always prepare two per person of each item you choose.

For one hour only, which would be the typical reception before a more hearty meal, you should consider giving six bites to your guests. This is three different canapés.

For a longer reception before a meal, consider a choice of 5 canapés, which represents ten bites. We would not recommend serving anymore, or your guests will not be able to eat their meal!

You may also want to consider offering your guests a "cocktail dinatoire", which means that canapés would be served during the whole evening. For this purpose, some canapés are a little more consistent than just a bite. A good quantity of food for this option is a choice of 12 different canapés, which represents twenty-four bites.

Do not forget that there will always be the cake and the evening buffet, so the "cocktail dinatoire" may well be a different way to surprise your guests!

Consider the various options and see what you would prefer to do... it is entirely up to you!

Canapés Choices

Fish

Fresh tuna and cherry tomato skewers, basil dip
Smoked salmon and crème fraîche blinis
Mini Thai fish cakes with sweet chilli sauce
Salmon brochette with dill cream
Marinated salmon with honey, mustard and dill sauce
Salmon and goats cheese profiteroles
Fish goujons with tartar sauce (hot)
Roulade of fruits de mer

Meat

Cream of green pea soup with crispy bacon (hot)
Grilled asparagus and pancetta
Mini roast (hot)
Bury black pudding with glazed apple (hot)
Smoked duck breast on toasted brioche,
shallot compote
Wild boar sausage with sweet plum chutney
Jerk chicken skewers with raita (hot)
Chicken curry with yogurt (hot)
Thai beef and glass noodles salad
Dried figs with Parma ham

Vegetarian

Cold melon and mint soup
Gazpacho (cold tomato soup)
Olive tapenade on grilled pitta bread
Roast vegetables and Shropshire blue tartlet
Roast butternut squash and Parmesan risotto cakes
Creamed leek and wild mushroom tartlet
Hummus dip and grissini sticks
Waldorf salad in grapes

Sweet

Macarons
Selection of mini pastries
Madeleines – choice between lemon, vanilla
and orange
Strawberry pavlova with whipped cream
Chocolate brownies
Apple and cinnamon crumble (hot)
Mini tartlets – choice between lemon meringue,
passion fruit meringue, seasonal fruits, chocolate or
raspberry
Chocolate fountain with mini pastries – doughnuts,
cookies and fresh fruits

Wedding breakfast

However puzzling as the name might be nowadays, a wedding breakfast is the very traditional meal option. Back in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a Bride and Groom would not have been allowed to eat before they took communion at their wedding mass. Henceforth, the priest had to "break their fast" at the end of service, with some wine, cakes and sweetmeats.

If we are not observing these very strict religious rules anymore, we have nevertheless kept the name, and still serve a breakfast at a wedding, whatever the time of the day!

This meal is normally served as all guests are sitting down at a table, which gives the opportunity to serve them all at the same time. For this reason, there should be one meal only and not a variety of options. We will always cater for dietary restrictions, whether it is for vegetarian guests or anyone with food allergies.

The number of courses you decide to serve your guests depends on your budget, but also on how long the day has been! If you have asked your guests to be extremely patient, with a rather long ceremony and a longer reception to give enough time to the photographer, you may want to treat them to a four- or five-course meal.

A four-course menu can be any of the following combinations:

- a soup, a starter, a main course and a dessert;
- two starters, a main course and a dessert;
- a soup, a sorbet, a starter, a main course and a dessert;
- a first starter (fish), a sorbet, a second starter (meat), a main course and a dessert.

The sorbet is a simple sorbet that can be served on its own or soaked in a liqueur that complements its flavours. Think about a Granny Smith sorbet in Calvados, for example.

A five-course meal would normally add to the above a second main course.

The most regular choice is for three-courses, as bride and groom also have to share their cake and offer a late night snack to all guests.

The choices on the opposite page are far from exhaustive, so do not hesitate to simply tell us what you would prefer to have!

Wedding breakfast options

Soups

Leek and sweet potato soup, drizzled with basil oil and served with toasted garlic croûtons - v

Chilled Charentais melon soup with champagne sorbet - v

Roast vine tomato and red pepper soup, crème fraîche and chives - v

Chicken and spring vegetables consommé, truffle oil

Starters

Selection of mezze - v

Fan of melon with hedgerow berries, lemon and raspberry coulis - v

Roast pepper, cheese, cherry tomato and walnut salad, basil dressing - v

Asparagus and avocado on a bed of rocket, balsamic dressing - v

Filo parcel of mushrooms and leeks, tomato sauce - v

Goosenagh chicken, smoked bacon and herb terrine, spiced orange compote

Confit of Gressingham duck Caesar salad, hoisin dressing

Smoked salmon, avocado and cream cheese roulade, lemon oil dressing

Main Course Vegetarian Options

Baked half aubergine with Provençal vegetables, spicy couscous

Tower of roast pepper, pan-fried marrow and field mushrooms, chive sauce

Wild mushroom, courgette and cheese risotto, spinach and garlic sauce

Main Courses

Fillet of salmon on braised leeks, lemon and chive sauce

Breast of free-range chicken, woodland mushroom sauce

Braised Spatchcock, red wine and thyme

Roast loin of pork filled with spinach and apricots

Roast hand-carved sirloin of beef with traditional garnish

Chargrilled rib-eye, vine tomatoes, pommes Pont-Neuf and vintage Port jus

Medallion of aged Highland beef, fondant potato malt whisky sauce

Roast leg of Welsh lamb with traditional garnish, apple and mint jelly

Roast rump of lamb with fondant potato and asparagus, honey and thyme jus

Desserts

Exotic fruit platter, passion fruit sorbet

Tuile basket with fruit of the forest compote and Chantilly cream

Iced Cointreau and orange parfait with chocolate cream

Champagne and strawberry mousse, mint crisp

Apple and marzipan tart, caramel sauce

Baked peach with mixed berry compote, orange syrup

Poached pear with red wine syrup and chocolate sauce

Dark Belgian chocolate pudding, milk chocolate sauce

Baileys bread and butter pudding, Devon clotted cream

Buffet

Taste buds and eating habits do go together and they have evolved immensely since the tradition of serving a breakfast. Many weddings are now catered for with a buffet, including the last wedding at royal level!

Buffets offer the bride and groom the possibility to give a choice to their guests without overtaking the budget. Everyone can just help themselves to their favourite amongst a large selection of items... and have as much or as little as they feel like!

We recommend choosing a selection of four starters / salads, one hot main dish and one dessert.

However, if choice is what is of importance, just add another hot main course and another dessert. Consider having a cheese board instead of a second sweet option, as it could stay on display until the evening buffet is served.

Service time would be a little longer with a buffet as opposed to a served meal. However, we would still need to clear it all as soon as all guests have helped themselves. There is indeed a set of rules that we need to follow for health and safety reasons.

You may consider various options for service from a buffet. One idea is to get people to help themselves from the whole buffet at once, and allow them to come back for seconds... and possibly thirds!

However, depending on the layout and the space available at your chosen venue, we could also organise different service stations in the room. With the starters / salads in one area, the main course in another and the dessert in yet another corner of the room. This would help with the flow of people, allowing each guest to avoid queuing at each stage of their meal.

Buffet choices

Soups

Roasted parsnip & honey - v
Chowder - v
Country vegetables - v

Salads

Carrot and raisin with cinnamon
Potato and vinaigrette
Greek salad
Waldorf salad
Dill and cucumber
Roasted parsnip, zucchini and eggplant
Potato and herring
Niçoise salad
Saffron rice, anchovies and roasted bell pepper
Pork with coriander
Penne pasta with cured ham and Parmesan
Chicken curry with apple and mango

Cold Dishes

Mozzarella with tomato and basil - v
Mussels with turmeric rice and coriander
Marinated salmon
Marinated sardines
Smoked pork loin
Marinated chicken
Tandoori pork loin
Selection of cold cuts

Hot Dishes

Grilled salmon with ratatouille
Fish pie
Chilli con carne with tortilla chips
Chicken fillet curry, shredded coriander and poppadums
Lamb Hot Pot topped with Sliced Potatoes
Scouse, mixed pickles and crusty bread
Slow braised beef pie
Mediterranean grilled vegetables -v
Wild mushrooms & spinach carbonara -v
Quiche Lorraine
Cheese and onion quiche - v
Vegetarian lasagna -v
BBQ of your chosen meat (beef, lamb, pork, chicken) or shellfish (langoustines, lobster)

Desserts

Sacher torte
Dark chocolate mousse
Fresh fruit salad
Chocolate brownie with whipped cream
Selection of mini cheese cakes
Tart Tatin with crème fraîche
Home made fresh fruit salad
Assorted British cheeses and biscuits

Evening Buffet

Bride and Groom will often invite close family and friends to attend the wedding breakfast, and ask work colleagues and more casual friends to join for the evening. In this respect, an evening buffet is normally set-up to cater for those who have only come for the evening.

This said, it may be a good idea not to cater only for the late-comers, as all guests will often take a pick at the food on offer in order to fill a little hole!

A very simple selection is normally all that is asked for, with some strong British signatures like a bacon bap, which will satisfy all.

One should not forget that it is also a good opportunity to serve the wedding cake, as it would have been cut down into portions during the evening.

This time is also an opportunity to remember the younger guests, and offer them an opportunity to indulge in a chocolate fountain! Needless to say that this would suit very well some of the less young ones as well!

Evening Buffet

Sandwiches

Selection of mini continental breads filled with your choice of fillings:

Honey glazed ham

Cream cheese and chives - v

Salmon pâté with rocket

Smoked chicken

Cheddar cheese and onion chutney - v

Salads

Jersey Royal potato with capers - v

Classic Caesar salad - v

Baby spinach, watercress and orange segments - v

Mediterranean rice - v

Penne pasta with fresh tomato and red onion salsa - v

Salade Niçoise

Hot nibbles

Mini fish and chips

Sticky glazed baby back ribs

Cajun chicken wings

Bacon bap

Marinated haloumi cheese skewers - v

Sweet

Platter of mini desserts

Chocolate fountain with mini pastries – doughnuts, cookies and fresh fruits

A word about the service

To finish off the service of the meal, may it be the traditional wedding breakfast or the more casual buffet service, we serve coffee or tea and mints.

You will be taken through the service schedule as your preparation advances. We will go through all the various stages of the service you have chosen, so that you can always have a reference point on the day and there will be no surprises!

We prepare a function sheet detailing all the arrangements, and you will have your own copy as a reference. As soon as there is any change in the service of the day, we will forward you an updated function sheet.

Please remember that nothing is set in stone, and there can be some changes made on the day!

At Empty Plates, we pride ourselves in recruiting the help of people from the local community. We are based in the Halton district of North Cheshire, and for all the functions we service in the area, we enrol local qualified hands.

Your budget for the service of food

We do need to mention something about the cost, as this is often at the base of any choices made with regards to a wedding.

We do like to cater for you as an individual couple, and the options you will pick may have to be altered according to your individual tastes... So, giving a price is a difficult task!

However, we can most certainly use the guidelines below as a rough reference to build your budget:

Canapés reception – starting from £8.25 per person

Wedding breakfast menu – starting from £25.50 per person

Wedding buffet – starting from £14.95 per person

Evening buffet – starting from £8.25 per person

These prices are given for the food service only. Please remember that we would also be happy to organise the service of drinks before, during and after the wedding breakfast, if you would like.

Your other needs, our partners!

We would be delighted to assist you with regards to other services. The list below has also been drawn out as a source of inspiration for the organisation of the day!

We can recommend people for the following services, because we know them and work with them:

Wedding dresses

Photography

Make-up artist

Flowers

Balloons

Wedding cake

Ice sculpture

Equipment hire – from the chairs to the marquee

Music – bands and DJs

Specialist lighting

Wedding car and group transport

Specialist ice cream and ice cream vans



Your contacts:

Gary McDonnell

Anne Lambelin