

How to plan the perfect wedding meal

How do you pick a menu that suits everyone? We've asked one local venue The Old Tollgate Hotel & Restaurant in Bramber to share their top tips on how to keep everybody happy at the wedding breakfast.

Offer what's in season

Today we can pretty much eat anything all year round, but there's no doubt that food tastes even better when freshly picked from local harvests in peak season. Don't settle for anything less, ensure the chef has the same attitude and only picks the finest ingredients available.

Provide lots of choice

According to Maggie Parsons, General Manager at The Old Tollgate Hotel near Brighton, set menus are too restrictive. "Often bridal parties are stuck with a staple diet of chicken or beef, and you run the risk of being bland or even a bit boring. At The Old Tollgate we have a visual a la carte Carvery. Surely all your guests are happier when they can choose what they want to eat and mix and match to suit their appetite. We believe we have a unique offering, not what one thinks of in the traditional carvery."

Stay within budget

Ask any bride and groom, wedding costs can quickly spiral out of control. But food is one area where you don't want to sacrifice on quality, yet still want to keep the prices realistic, so the bridal party can enjoy a stress free meal.

"The overall cost of food and drink is the main part of any wedding couples budget" explained Maggie, "but your wedding breakfast should be one of the highlights of your guests' day. You've got to balance between what's affordable but what's also enjoyable and memorable."

Keep all palates happy

Wedding parties have sadly grown used to next-to-no choice – and it's even worse if you are a vegetarian. Why put up with that? Step away from the one choice vegetarian dish and offer a selection like mushroom stroganoff or roasted vegetable gratin instead, and let the meat-lovers enjoy mouth-watering delicacies like braised steak with brandy and peppercorn sauce or oxtail casserole. These dishes and more will also be available with a selection of four roasts and, of course, a fish option not to mention the mouth-watering offerings for desserts.

Choose your seating plan wisely

If you're lucky enough to be blessed with friends and family who all get on this won't be a problem, but if not, take time to ensure that certain factions are far from each other. Think about seating all those with babies and toddlers around the one table. Another popular choice is putting teens in charge of the younger children – it's amazing how grumpy adolescents can enjoy being little kids again given the chance.

Consult the experts

It's impossible for any wedding couple to organise everything themselves. Make sure your venue has an experienced Wedding Planner who will anticipate every question and, better still, have all the answers.

The team at the award-winning Old Tollgate Hotel and Restaurant, in the quaint picturesque village of Bramber near Brighton, believe they have the perfect recipe not just for the wedding meal, but the entire day. They are licensed for weddings and civil receptions.

For more information on their 2016 wedding packages:

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