

# Smart Choices

SIMPLE WAYS TO SAVE ON CATERING COSTS

Since most couples spend about 50 percent of their budgets on catering, it's important to know where that money is actually going. **Three Tomatoes Catering**, in Denver, provided us with a sample menu; we asked the company's director of sales and marketing, Deirdre Wildman Toltz, to walk us through it and show us how to save money without sacrificing quality.

"You can reduce the cost by nixing expensive hors d'oeuvre ingredients, like lobster and foie gras, in favor of artfully presented vegetarian hors d'oeuvres. Also, make sure the hors d'oeuvres you select can be eaten in one bite—this will cut down on the quantities of food needed."

"Serving sides family-style costs more because the caterer needs to rent extra platters, and because guests tend to over-serve themselves. Instead, have the side served on guests' plates. Also, know that if you let guests select their entrée at the table, rather than in advance, you have to pay for extra food so that no one is denied his or her first choice. Instead, offer a dual entrée with small portions of two basic proteins, like chicken breast and beef roulade."

"Although it's become popular to extend the wedding reception into the wee hours, cutting out late-night snacks obviously saves money on food and labor. A great alternative is to hand out homemade granola bars and fresh fruit as parting gifts."

**\$90\***  
Per person

## MENU

*Passed Hors d'Oeuvres*  
*Smoked Salmon Cones*  
*Phyllo Wrapped Camembert*  
*Beef Carpaccio Roulade*  
*Tempura Squash Blossoms*  
*Szechuan Abi Tuna*  
*Foie Gras "Burgers"*  
*Lobster Bloody Mary Shooters*

*Stationary Hors d'Oeuvres*  
*Pan-Seared Scallop Station*  
*Warm Mediterranean Marinated Olives*  
*Bowls of Radishes & Teardrop Tomatoes*  
*Salted Almonds*  
*Gourmet Cheese Display*

*First Course*  
*Fresh Orange Salad Stack on a Beet Carpaccio Base*

*Plated Entrées*  
*Family-style Vegetable Antipasto*  
 Served with a choice of  
*Gorgonzola Stuffed Buffalo Filet Mignon*  
 or  
*Hunter's Style Rabbit*

*Dessert*  
*Wedding Cake*  
 and a dessert buffet featuring  
*Cheesecake "Lollipop"*  
 and  
*Assorted Petite Pastries*

*Midnight Breakfast Buffet*  
*Scrambled eggs with toppings, applewood smoked bacon, home-style potatoes, pastries, and fruit*

"Skip manned stations, which drive up labor costs and require renting and outfitting display tables. Instead, place finger foods—like nuts, olives, and seasoned popcorn—on the bar. It's less expensive, but still offers hungry guests the chance to nibble on something right away."

"Assembling complicated salads is labor-intensive. Instead, select one local or seasonal ingredient, like Haystack Mountain goat cheese or fresh figs, and add it to a simple tossed salad."

"Although offering guests a dessert buffet in addition to slices of wedding cake is trendy, it's pricier. If you're concerned about variety, have a small, beautifully-decorated cake for the cutting ceremony, and set up a buffet offering slices of sheet cakes in various flavors."

**New price: \$45\***

If you followed these suggestions, you could save up to \$45 per person.

\*Estimated price includes food only, and does not account for market price fluctuations, labor, beverages, or equipment.