



UNIT-6

Food and Beverage

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

Unit 6

Food and Beverage

Food and beverage are generally the most expensive wedding elements, taking up a significant portion of the amount allocated to the budget category of reception and rentals. Most couples are not accustomed to making detailed menu decisions or serving large numbers of people; accordingly, the guidance and advice of a wedding consultant and caterer are sought. Wedding planners and caterers work as a team. While some vendors do not like working through a liaison, others often prefer working with knowledgeable consultants. This is particularly true for caterers, who often become the planner by default if a professional wedding consultant has not been hired. Many consultants have ongoing relationships with caterers, which saves both the couple and the caterer valuable time. This chapter offers an overview of essential considerations pertaining to food, beverage, and the wedding cake.

Food and Beverage

Finding and working with a caterer is a sales process from start to finish. When helping a couple select a caterer, typically a wedding consultant first suggests a number of caterers who vary in services, style, and price. Once the group is narrowed to three or four, initial meetings take place. During the initial meeting, the caterer provides information regarding service options and packages. Some caterers focus on food and nonalcoholic beverages, but most can also provide alcohol service. Other services can include the cake as well as staffing and rentals. During this meeting, logistics such as time of day, number of guests, and the site are provided, as well as information regarding other vendors that will influence catering, such as tent rental.

Dietary restrictions and other specialized needs should be introduced during this meeting because some caterers may not be able to accommodate specific requirements. For example, it is impossible for caterers who work from set menu selections to create a menu that follows strictly kosher Jewish dietary laws, also known as Glatt kosher. Three of the many requirements for Glatt kosher are as follows: (1) shellfish, pork, and rabbit are forbidden; (2) dairy and meat cannot be eaten together; and (3) grape products, such as wine, must be produced by those who follow the Jewish faith.

Couples who wish to have a Glatt kosher meal must work with caterers who are kosher certified. Caterers may be able to address some unique dietary requests, such as specialized vegetarian meals, but will generally charge additional fees for specialized services. The wedding planner should be aware of menu restrictions in advance and can limit the initial listing of caterers to those who will be able to attend to the needs of the couple.

In some cases, the couple will have dietary requests that pertain to one or two guests, while in others; the couple may impose their preferences on all the guests. For instance, a bride who is allergic to nuts may request that no nuts or nut extracts be used in any part of the meal. A diabetic groom may have a separate sugar-free cake, or the entire wedding cake might be sugar-free. It is critical that the couple and the

consultant clearly communicate special needs to the caterer in advance of the formal proposal. The consultant should determine if substitutions can be made for individuals with special dietary needs.

Importantly, the initial meeting is an opportunity for the caterer to get to know the couple and their food and beverage preferences. This information can be used to build a targeted proposal, the contents of which are well explained by Rachel Gittins, an event designer at Ridgewells, which caters events such as weddings, corporate meetings, and professional sports.

The catering proposal is presented shortly after the initial meeting and generally includes the food costs, staff costs, equipment costs, taxes, gratuity and delivery. You should also ask if there are setup costs and overtime charges. In the proposal, the caterer sells to the desires outlined in the initial meeting. This document should be organized, accurate, and thorough and contain no grammatical or spelling errors. The names of the bride and groom, their venues, and other details given during the meeting must be correct. Notes regarding any specialized needs that were mentioned should be included.

Rachel explains that the proposal stage is an opportunity for the caterer to “wow” the couple by including special touches that signal to the couple that the company can and will treat each wedding as a unique event. For example, if the caterer learned during the initial meeting that the groom proposed in Australia and the wedding is going to have an outback theme, the caterer can suggest a signature drink called the koala café to accompany the cake. If the couple loves to garden, the proposal can be presented on elegant paper with a floral design. An outstanding proposal proves to the couple that the caterer listened during the meeting and really understood the focus of the event. Upscale caterers particularly enjoy working with what they call foodie brides—those who both understand and appreciate fine cuisine. Even if the proposal is going to the wedding consultant instead of directly to the couple, the caterer should still include the special touches. The caterer and consultant can then coordinate and put together a global proposal that incorporates the catering elements. A consultant will be more eager to work with a caterer who was clearly listening during the meeting.

When meeting with potential caterers, it is critical that your clients taste the food they are considering, for they will not want to randomly select items that they may ultimately dislike. Top caterers host formal tastings two or three times a year, where they invite couples and consultants who have expressed an interest in their services to an event that show cases their food, presentation, and service. This savvy marketing technique exposes couples to specific hors d'oeuvres, entrées, pastries, and other items they may not have otherwise considered and also serves to highlight the caterer's newest linens and tableware in a festive atmosphere.

Food and Beverage Trends

Cutting-edge caterers are trendsetters. These trends are witnessed at weddings and other events. As suggested with the outback theme, signature drinks are particularly popular at the moment. This trend is fun and flexible, as beverages are versatile and a simple drink can have flair if given a clever name and presented in a fun glass with a unique straw or nontraditional garnish. Chocolate fountains, drinkable

desserts, monogrammed tuxedo and wedding gown strawberries, and cookies with scanned, edible pictures are stylish ways to offer sweets as favors or prior to cutting the wedding cake. Edible place cards made out of white or dark chocolate are another fun and unexpected treat.

Trends are also evidenced in the style and presentation of entrées. Specialty entrées can be designed and named to fit the theme. A growing trend is to provide split entrées, which blends the diversity of the buffet with the elegance of a plated service. Sushi boats and bridges have resurfaced in popularity and allow for an Asian flair, with spectacular presentation opportunities.

Trends can also be evidenced in the equipment used by the caterer. Cutting-edge tableware can leave a lasting impression on the guests. For example, cocktail stations are a unique alternative to a traditional reception and present an opportunity to showcase unique and funky plates, bowls, and cutlery. For instance, while guests would not normally expect soup at a cocktail station, the use of stylish shot or cordial glasses readily creates this opportunity.

In general, the more upscale the caterer, the more likely that their managers can make things happen. Some caterers will have set menus with little flexibility, whereas high-end businesses will often operate a la carte. Furthermore, if a couple wants specialty equipment that the catering company does not own, the managers may buy it if they see it as cutting edge. They can then rent it to the couple and keep it as inventory for further use. High-end caterers are also more flexible in working with support caterers. For example, if the couple wants one specialty ethnic food item that the caterer does not carry, the primary caterer will work with the support caterer to obtain and showcase the food. By law, the primary caterer cannot pick something up from another restaurant and bring it to the reception; however, if that restaurant delivers the item to the site, the primary caterer will present it in a consistent manner. This flexibility allows the couple to know that the caterer will make the effort to ensure that their food and beverage are perfect.

Types of Service

The type of service used during the main meal is dictated by the food choices, the formality of the occasion, and the reception site. Three primary types of service presentation are buffet, plated, and French. The necessary wait staff skills vary significantly based on the type of service. Buffet service is less formal and is chosen by couples who value offering a variety of foods from which their guests can choose.

The servers are skilled in maintaining the cleanliness of the buffet and making sure that dishes coming close to empty are quickly changed. The caterer does not want guests to look at a chafing dish and be embarrassed to select what looks like the last one of any item or, if standing back a few spots, fear that a given dish will run out before they reach it. The goal for a well-presented buffet is for each guest to see it looking full and beautiful, as if it was in the original state. The buffet style is not convenient to all venues, however. For example, if the reception is held in an historic house that has numerous small rooms with tables situated throughout, negotiating the guests back and forth to a buffet line would cause considerable confusion. For venues such as this, plated service would be recommended. The majority of the work for

plated service is done behind the scenes in the kitchen. Plated service allows for an elegant arrangement of food, where each plate is quickly but carefully prepared and then covered. At the moment the meal is ready to be served, the cover is removed, any sauce that is accompanying a dish is added, and the servers proceed with their plates. Using a technique called a sweep; two or three waiters may work each table to get all the plates out as quickly as possible. This type of service is common to formal weddings but may still be impractical for some venues. For instance, if a site layout is such that the kitchen is on a different level from the dining area and each staff member needs to carry four plates at a time, a considerable amount of movement back and forth would have to occur. If the site is not conducive to plated service, and yet a formal atmosphere is still desired, then French service would be the suggested alternative.

French service is the least common of the three service styles and requires significant skill among the wait staff. With French service, the entire meal for everybody at one table is brought out and served from a single large dish or platter. Each server is white gloved and has to be able to operate a fork and spoon with considerable dexterity. The server must be able to maneuver the platter, utensils, and the food skillfully so that each element of the meal is presented in an attractive manner. This type of service is not very common in the United States because even when carefully done, it is difficult to get the presentation effects that are possible with plated service. However, French service allows each guest to receive individualized attention. When considering service, it is important to ask the caterer the staffing ratio. At premier venues, you can expect a 1 : 8 or 1 : 10 ratio, which means there will be one server for every 8 to 10 guests. At venues that are less customer-oriented, you are likely to have a 1 : 12 ratio or higher.

Buffet meals will require fewer servers than plated or French service. If there is a cocktail hour, often servers will be on hand to pass hors d'oeuvres. For this service, a 1 : 30 or even 1 : 35 ratio is acceptable. In some cultures, food service for weddings is an all-day affair. Countries such as Portugal are famous for their bountiful wedding feasts,

Food and Beverage Costs

The costs associated with food and beverage vary considerably based on the quality, quantity, and variety desired and, perhaps even more significantly, the geographic location of the wedding. Cost of living in the general vicinity will affect food and beverage pricing, and customs within a given locale can dictate expectations of reception fare. For example, in West Virginia the average expenditure is £4,300 for food and service and £1,200 for beverage and bartender, while in Massachusetts the cost is essentially double, with food and service averaging £8,400 and beverage and bartender £2,400. In general, per-person costs can range from £15 to £500 and up, so it is important to familiarize yourself with the range in your community. For couples on a budget, there are some ways to cut reception costs. Some caterers will allow the couple to purchase the alcohol and then will just charge to pour. You will need to verify this arrangement with the caterer before advising clients to consider this route. Alternatively, your clients may opt to limit the alcohol to beer and wine; however, the price of a good wine can be more expensive than liquor and has fewer servings per bottle. Some couples forego alcohol altogether or just have a champagne toast, which is common in some regions and time frames such as afternoon receptions. A cash bar, where

the guests pay for drinks containing alcohol, is another way to save on costs, but this approach may offend the guests and should only be considered if it is a common practice in the region.

If the reception includes a cocktail hour, the couple can save by having the most expensive hors d'oeuvres passed rather than set out on a table. For example, if shrimp are presented on a table with an elegant ice boat, guests will flock to the table and devour this pricey item. On the other hand, if a server is walking around with a tray of shrimp, most guests will not take more than one piece at a time. The less expensive items such as vegetables, cheese, and crackers can be set on a table for guests to graze, and considerable savings will result. Savings should also be realized when feeding children and vendors. When you are sitting down with the caterer, your clients need to be able to estimate how many children will be in attendance. If it is a plated meal, less expensive options should be available to children, who often will not appreciate or even enjoy the adult meal. Similarly, your clients should not feel compelled to feed their vendors the same £65 meal that their guests will receive. This is not to say that they can overlook the vendors, who expect and deserve to be fed. Usually, the caterer can put together a tray of sandwiches, chips, and cookies for the vendors. Keep in mind that all the vendors will want a meal, and whether the band has 2 people or 20 people, you have to include all of them in the budget.

Related to food and beverage are the associated rentals, which also must be considered in the reception budget. Rentals such as chairs, tableware, and linens may come from the caterer but could be significantly less expensive with an outside vendor. You will need to know the policies of both the caterer and the venue before enlisting outside vendors for these items. Beyond feasible ways to save, there are perceived cost-cutting measures that should be avoided. Having an unlicensed caterer or a family member acting as chef or bartender may seem like a way to save money, but ultimately this is compromising the safety of the guests. Having food stations instead of a full meal may appear to be cost effective but this is not necessarily the case. Individual hors d'oeuvres can be priced at \$5 per piece or more, which will quickly add up if a couple wants six different stations.

Style of Catering

First and foremost, the couple needs to decide upon the style of reception and catering that they wish to have. There are several options to choose from including:

- Afternoon Tea
- Buffet (sit down or standing)
- Cocktail Style
- Finger Food
- Luncheon
- Sit down formal dinner

Once the style has been decided upon for the reception, ensure that your caterer can accommodate for this. Some caterers specialise in only one particular style (such as buffet or finger food only), so ensure that you choose someone who is experienced in the type of catering you wish to have. In addition to this,

some caterers specialise in catering for certain numbers (for example, less than 100 guests or more than 100 guests), so it's important that you have an idea of how many will be attending your reception.

Questions to Ask the Caterer

Regardless of the type of reception you are having, you should consider asking the following questions when meeting with your caterer.

- What style of catering do they provide (buffet, sit down dinner, finger food etc)?
- Is there a minimum or maximum number of guests that they will cater for?
- What are the meal or food options available?
- Do they cater for special dietary needs (vegetarian, diabetic, gluten free etc)?
- Are menu changes possible?
- Are wait staff provided and, if so, what will the ratio of staff to guests be?
- Do they provide cutlery, dinnerware, napkins, tablecloths and glassware?
- Do they provide drinks (if required)?
- Is there anything that they do not provide?
- Is there anything that they need in order to set up or operate?
- Do they clean up after the guests have eaten?
- Are they insured?
- What is the final cost and are there any added costs?
- What deposit is required and when is the final payment due?
- What is their cancellation / refund policy?
- Is there anything else that you should be made aware of?

Beverages

Once the food has been taken care of, it is time to consider the 'beverages'! There are several options and costs associated with serving beverages at a wedding and it is important to consider all of them, and the pros and cons associated with each.

Open Bar

An open bar gives the guests the opportunity to drink an unlimited quantity of beverages throughout the length of the reception. The bar staff keep track of the guests orders and then issue a bill at the end of the reception. From a guests point of view an open bar is the 'ultimate' when it comes to wedding receptions. Whilst this may be the case, at the end of the day, it is not the guest who will be paying the bill.

Tray Service

In order to minimise the cost the couple may wish to opt for a tray service. The advantages of this option are that it helps to keep the cost down, and it prevents over consumption of alcohol among the guests. The

disadvantages are that if a guest misses the drinks tray they may have to wait until the next round, and secondly they may feel as though they'd like a few more drinks.

Placing Beverages on the Table

By placing bottles of beer and wine (along with soft drinks and juices) on the tables, guests are able to serve their own drinks when they wish.

Cash Bar

The cash bar option allows you to be free of any expenses associated with beverages. This option requires the guests to pay for their drinks, as they would at any other bar. Many couples use this option in combination with some of those already mentioned above.

Bar Tab

A bar tab gives you the option of setting a pre-determined amount of money (the 'bar tab') to cover drinks for your guests. Throughout the reception, bar staff keep note of the drinks being ordered by your guests. Guests are free to order whenever they wish throughout the reception and once the bar tab is reached, they must purchase their own.

Self-Catering Beverages

There may also be the case where your caterer or reception venue does not cater for or provide alcohol. In this case it may be possible for you to arrange to purchase the beverages and organise wait staff to serve it.

The History of the Wedding Cake

The tradition of the wedding cake is one of the oldest, dating back to over 3000 years to ancient Greek and Roman times. In its original form, the wedding cake was a mere offering of fruit, nuts and honey to the Gods. It was believed that, by partaking in such a practice, the Gods would bless the marriage and bestows good luck and happiness upon the bride and groom.

In ancient Rome, wheat was viewed as the food of fertility. The Romans baked loaves of wheat bread, which were presented to the couple to share. Any uneaten pieces were tossed over the bride's head as a blessing of fertility. Similarly, in ancient Greece, the tradition developed into the practice of showering the newly married couple (predominantly the bride) with small cakes. The wedding guests would then gather around the bride and eat any leftover crumbs as a sign of good luck, wealth and happiness. Julius Caesar introduced this custom to Britain, where it changed into a practice of sharing wedding cake among local villagers. The wedding cake was usually reserved for those from wealthy families.

As time went on, the wedding cake tradition began to slowly transform. In England and Scotland, guests began to bring small cakes or buns as gifts for the happy couple. The sweet delights were piled one by one on top of each other until they formed a grand, sweet and sticky structure. The bride and groom were

then encouraged to kiss over the top of the piled cakes. If they managed to do so successfully, it was believed that the couple would be blessed with fertility, prosperity and life-long happiness.

Legend has it, that whilst witnessing the wedding cake ritual at an English wedding, a French chef came up with an ingenious way of serving a sweet tower of cakes. He viewed the cake-piling practice as tedious and unhygienic and decided to bake a unique, yet delicious tower of sweet tasting buns, held together with sweet and sticky toffee. And so, the first edible wedding cake, the croquembouche, entered the world!

From the croquembouche, came various adaptations and designs. Wedding cakes began to take on a more three-tiered appearance, which was not only based on the croquembouche shape, but also from that of the spire of St. Bride's church in London. Chefs and bakers gradually changed to fruit as a base of their sweet masterpieces, and moved away from the pastry base of the croquembouche. The cakes were iced with white (marzipan) icing as a symbol of the bride's purity. At the time, sugar was regarded as a valuable item, being extremely expensive. It was believed, that the whiter and sweeter the icing, the wealthier the family of the bride.

The three-tiered iced fruitcake has become the wedding cake as we know it today, and it's tradition lives on. In modern wedding receptions today, the bride and groom usually cut the cake towards the later half of their reception. Traditionally, the cutting of the cake symbolised the bride's impending loss of virginity, however it is now seen as a gesture of the happy couple's commitment to their new life together. The cake is usually served as dessert or with coffee, or may be given to the guests at the end of the evening. Tradition also has it that, should any single guest place a piece of wedding cake under their pillow, they will dream of their future bride or groom.

Choosing the Wedding Cake

Today, in more modern times, many couples have moved away from the traditional three-tiered fruitcake, to more personal and unique designs. Trends in cake flavour, style and decoration are continually changing and modern cake artists are able to create almost anything that one's heart desires. From a traditional iced fruitcake, to chocolate mud, vanilla crème or strawberry mousse. From a three-tiered masterpiece, to a 3D replica of the wedding cars. The possibilities are unlimited when it comes to choosing the sweet sensation that is the wedding cake.

When deciding upon the wedding cake, consider choosing something that reflects couples' personal style and taste. You may also wish to tie the cake in with the colour, style or theme of the wedding.

Style and Shape

As mentioned, whilst the traditional tiered style cake remains a popular choice by modern brides, many are moving towards more personal and individual styles when it comes to choosing their wedding cake. Circular, square and oval shaped cakes, either on their own, or staked one on top of another remain the most popular choice for modern wedding cakes. Over the past few years, it has also been popular among some brides to choose tiers of different shapes. They may for example have a square tier for the base, an oval for tier in the middle and a circular tier on top. This can create a lovely effect.

Another trend that is in style amongst brides of today is to choose a wedding cake in line with the theme or colour of their wedding. As an example, if you are having a wedding on the beach, you could have a cake in the shape of a star fish, or another similarly shaped 'beachy' design.

Alternatively you could match a pattern on your cake to that of the fabric of your wedding dress. For example, an intricate lace design featured on the bodice of your gown could be replicated as the detail on the icing of your cake, or draped down the side. You may wish to use your imagination and come up with something truly unique for your wedding day.

In recent times the 'present' cake has been yet another popular design. This cake is a creation of approximately three tiers all in the shape and style of gift-wrapped presents, stacked on top of one another. The presents can be created in any style, shape or colour, with matching edible bows for you and your guests to devour. This style of cake is really quite lovely, and is a great alternative to the traditional three-tiered wedding cake.

As you can see, the style of your cake really is only limited by your imagination. Anything is possible. So be creative with your design, and have fun.

Flavours of Wedding Cakes

As with the style of your cake being limited only by your imagination, so too is the flavour! Traditionally speaking, the fruitcake is by far the most popular base of all wedding cakes. It is known for its rich flavour, excellent keeping qualities and its symbolic representation of fidelity and longevity. The fruit cake is also strong and sturdy, making it especially suitable for heavily decorated or large cakes and is also an excellent choice if your wedding is to be held in the hotter months, as it is less likely to melt!

So, when choosing the flavour and base of your cake, don't completely wipe out the fruitcake as an option. It is also one of the only cakes that may be kept and stored for future use (as in the event of your first wedding anniversary or the Christening of your first child).

In recent years, cake artists have become more adventurous with wedding cake flavours and textures and so too have modern brides. Many have opted against the traditional fruitcake and are choosing from a variety of flavours for their cakes. The chocolate mud cake possibly comes equal first with the fruitcake in terms of its popularity amongst modern day brides. Not only does it taste fantastic, but it too also makes a very versatile and strong base for a wedding cake. The mud cake may also be kept frozen for a few months (usually two to three) after your big day, so you can still enjoy it when you return from your honeymoon. In saying that, if you want to keep it for your first anniversary or child's Christening, then you should settle for fruitcake (unless, of course, bubs is already on his/her way)!

Mud cake can be decorated and covered in virtually any type of icing including, fondant, ganache, traditional 'heavy' icings, chocolate, confectionery and fruit, to name but a few. It is also another great option for weddings being held during the hotter months (provided that you choose an appropriate topping/icing)!

Now, if you think that neither fruitcake nor mud cake are quite what you're after, then how about looking over the following list of flavours on offer by various cake artists around town. This list is sure to satisfy even the sweetest of sweet-tooths. And if your flavour's not on the list, just ask!

- A wedding cake made of crepes
- Banana
- Black forest
- Butter cake
- Caramel mud
- Carrot cake
- Cheesecake
- Chocolate mousse
- Crème brûlée
- Croquembouche
- Cupcakes (made into a tower)
- Ice cream
- Marble mud
- Meringue
- Mocha
- Nougatine
- Orange/Madeira
- Sponge
- Strawberry Mousse
- Vanilla Crème
- White chocolate

The list goes on...Keep in mind that it is also possible to have multiple flavours for your wedding cake. As an example, your bottom layer could be dark chocolate mud, followed by a white chocolate mud middle layer and a caramel top layer.

In addition to selecting the flavour of your wedding cake, you may also wish to consider whether you would like a filling within your cake. Popular choices for cake fillings include, white, milk or dark chocolate, mocha, coconut, strawberry crème, mousse (chocolate, strawberry, orange), hazelnut, caramel and a selection of jams and preserve fillings.

It's a good idea to meet with your cake artist and sample a few of their culinary delights before you commit to a particular flavour. If you have a favourite cake or dessert that's not on their list, don't be afraid to ask. More often than not, they'll be able to create something that suits both your individual needs and tastes.

Choosing Size of the Cake

The number of guests attending your wedding will generally determine the overall size of your wedding cake. There are however a few tricks of the trade that cake artists and bakers can use to make your cake 'look' bigger or smaller if that's what you're after.

If it's the big 'showstopper' that you'd like, however only have a small guest list then it is possible to achieve this. One way of doing so, is to have false tiers or sections of cake that are decorated with icing to give the illusion of a 'real' tier. When the cake is cut, the false section is merely removed and the remaining edible layers may be served to your guests. By choosing a reputable cake artist, you and your guests will be unable to spot the difference between the two.

If it's a small design that you'd prefer, however you have a large guest list, you may wish to have a separate cutting cake made. By choosing to do so, yourself and your groom can choose a small design in which you can cut during your reception and then have a spare cutting cake (left in the kitchen) cut and served to your guests. These above two options, allow both yourself and your groom to choose the cake of your dreams no matter what the size of your guest list.

When deciding upon the size of your cake, you should also consider whether you would like to have the cake served to your guests for dessert, with coffee, or to take home with them. Generally speaking, allow a 5cm square slice of cake for dessert, and a 2.5cm slice for coffee or take home servings. Your cake artist or baker will be able to work this out with you, and ensure that your cake is large enough so that neither you nor your guests are left hungry.

You may also like to allow for a few extra slices for parents or special guests who may have helped out in some way with your wedding.

Choosing the Decorations

When you have decided upon the style, flavour and size of your cake, it's time to consider the decoration. Whilst fruitcakes and mud cakes will allow for pretty well any decoration, others may limit you. This is especially the case with cheesecakes, mousse cakes, or sponges, where they will only be able to accommodate lighter weight icings and decorations. Traditional 'heavy' style icings will simply crush your cake under their weight.

Popular types of cake icings or toppings that are available to choose from include:

- Traditional soft white icing (which may be coloured to match that of your wedding theme)
- Chocolate
- Rolled fondant icing (especially for a smooth and elegant look)
- Ganache
- Cream
- Confectionery
- Fruit
- Cream cheese (especially for carrot or banana cakes)

- Marzipan

When choosing your icing you may wish to tie the colour in with that of your bridesmaids' dresses or other wedding colour schemes. With the icing out of the way, you can consider your final finishing touches with more specific decorations.

Modern cake decorations are becoming more unique and personalised in order to reflect the personalities of both the bride and groom. Old-fashioned cake toppers such as the plastic bride and groom are on the way out and many brides of today are choosing to decorate their cake with something that is 'different' and like no other. Plastic cake toppers have been replaced with more sentimental items such as hand made replicas of the bride and groom or intricate crystal designs that may be kept as a memento for years to come.

Many wedding cakes continue to be decorated with flowers made of either edible icing or silk. Fresh flowers are also very popular and may be ordered by your cake artist. It is also possible in many cases for your florist and cake artist to work together to ensure that the flowers on your cake match those of your wedding bouquet, or other floral arrangements.

Fresh flowers provide a lovely touch to any style of wedding cake and can be made into various formations from a cascading bouquet to a small arrangement. You can discuss this further with your cake artist to decide upon the most suitable flowers and arrangement for your cake design.

Other popular decorations include ribbons, lace, tulle which may also be chosen to compliment your wedding colour scheme. Ornaments representing the bride and groom's interests (such as a surf board or snow ski) are also a popular choices amongst couples today. Obviously, it's up to you how you wish your wedding cake to be finally presented on your big day. The important thing to remember is that when it comes to wedding cakes, you have so much choice that it is, in fact, possible to have your cake and eat it too!

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Food, Beverage, and the Wedding Cake

- Make sure that the caterer and pastry chef are licensed and insured; permits may also be necessary when using an off-premises caterer.
- Bring up any dietary or menu restrictions in the first meeting with any caterer to determine if they can accommodate specialized needs.
- Schedule tastings with the caterer and the pastry chef.
- Consider a signature drink to match the wedding theme.
- Ask caterers to indicate the staffing ratio.
- Make sure that taxes, staffing, equipment, delivery, gratuity, and other fees are included in the caterer's proposal estimates.
- Determine how long the caterer will need for setup and teardown.
- Consider both the formality of the reception and the restrictions of the venue when selecting a service style.

- Have the most expensive hors d'oeuvres passed rather than set out on a table.
- Consider downsizing the ceremonial cake and supplementing with a sheet cake for cost cutting.
- Avoid butter cream icing during warm months due to its tendency