



Top 10 Questions to Ask a Caterer

1. *Who am I meeting with?*

Let's start with the basics: Are you meeting with the owner of the company? A manager? Someone in the sales department? Were you able to meet in person? Knowing whom you're meeting with can paint a picture of the relationship you will build with the company during the planning process. The most important part of this question is the next part: Whom will I be *working* with? It is important to meet with the "point person" early on and ensure they are the person you will be working with for the entire wedding planning process.

2. *Are you available on my event date?*

This seems like a simple question, but tends to be overlooked much of the time. The caterer may seem like a good fit for you and your event, but they may not be available. If they are not available on your date, is your event flexible? If not, who else would they recommend?

3. *How will you run this event?*

Your prospective caterer will ask you a lot of questions about how you want your day to be run, but it is important that you ask the caterer similar questions. Ask how many staffers the caterer estimates will be working the event; ask if the catering staff will serve the food (if the meal is buffet style); and specify who will be in charge of the cake cutting ceremony. It is not your job to tell the caterer how to do their job, but it is important for you to know how the catering staff will be operating on your event day.

4. *Where do you get most of your ingredients?*

The answer to this question can tell a lot about the catering company. If the caterer lists local farms and farmers' markets it means two things: one, that the caterer makes using fresh, local products a priority, and, two, that the caterer's menu is adaptable and reflective of the seasons and your taste. This adaptability means that the caterer is probably more willing to tweak their recipes and dishes to accommodate allergies or personal preference.

5. *Are You Able to Provide an Array of Menu Choices for People That Have Dietary Restrictions?*

This is regarded as one of the most important questions you can ask caterers, as the needs to meet dietary restrictions increases on a daily basis. Caterers need to serve people who are dairy free, gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, etc.

6. *Do You Provide Rentals Equipment and Staff or Do I Need to?*

Most days you'll be hosting the event at your location or a venue that's already got a plethora of chairs, tables and other equipment. However, there may be instances where you need a unique set up or extra

equipment to ensure a successful event. During these times, your caterer should assist you with it, dealing with the various rental vendors themselves so you don't need to.

7. Have You Ever Catered for this Preferred Venue?

Caterers who have never worked at a venue may find the logistics a bit of challenge. They may have to walk stairs because there's no offered elevator. If a caterer has previously worked with the venue or within your company, they may be able to better maneuver the location with little effort.

8. Can You Deal with Any Last-Minute Requests?

No matter how prepared you are, things do come up. And, this means your caterer should be able to handle these last-minute needs. A caterer who can do this will reduce your stress levels and help to establish a great working relationship between the two of you.

9. What Kind of Prices Can I Expect to Pay For Menu Items? Are you able to provide "themed" menus?

Many times, a caterer will throw in hidden fees – condiments, sides, napkins, plates, and more – and you won't see it until you've gotten the proposed menu. Ask them right at the beginning to find out what's in their prices. How much do they charge for delivery? Is there a cost for set-up? If you require staff to be present at your event, ask for their hourly rate per staff member.

10. What are the guidelines such as: cancellation policies, cost, contracts and what is needed to secure my date.

A great caterer will have contracts for you to sign, a good contract will have your costs in detail, any additional add-ons will be mentioned as well as the down payment needed to secure your date.

Bonus question: Do you have a list of Client Testimonials?

Caterers want to build up their clientele and often ask for testimonials about their services from their current clients. When they're looking for new clients, they'll happily share this information with them. Keep in mind that happy and even disgruntled clients will leave online reviews. Check for reviews through Google, Yelp, and even the company's own website. Ask the caterer for references to help make your decision.

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