

Questions to ask your wedding caterer

Catering is often the biggest single bill and the one every guest notices. Use these questions at the first proper meeting, before any money moves.

Vendor		Contact	
Date we spoke		Event date	
		Quote £	
Deposit £		Due	
		Balance £	
		Due	

Experience and fit START HERE

- ☐ **Have you catered a South Asian wedding of our size, and when?**
Cooking for 400 is a different operation from a 60-cover dinner. Ask for the date, venue and guest count of a recent one.
- _____
- _____
- ☐ **Which regional dishes do you cook every week?**
Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali, Pakistani, Kashmiri and South Indian menus are very different. You want the food you grew up with, cooked by people who make it often.
- _____
- _____
- ☐ **Can we speak to two couples you catered for in the last year?**
A short phone call tells you more than a gallery of photos.
- _____
- _____
- ☐ **Have you worked at our venue before?**
A caterer who knows the kitchen, the loading access and the venue manager will have fewer surprises.
- _____
- _____

Food, faith and dietary needs THE MENU

- ☐ **Is all the meat halal, and who supplies and certifies it?**
Guests will ask. A clear answer, with the supplier's name, saves awkward questions on the day.
- _____
- _____

☐ **Can you cook a fully vegetarian menu, and how do you keep it separate?**

For many Hindu, Sikh and Jain guests this matters as much as the taste. Ask about separate pans, utensils and serving teams.

☐ **Can you cook Jain food, or dishes without onion and garlic?**

Ask early, because not every kitchen can.

☐ **How do you record and label allergens?**

You need to know which dishes contain nuts, dairy or gluten, and who at the counter can answer questions.

☐ **Can we have a tasting before we sign, and is there a charge?**

It is the only way to judge the food. Ask whether the chef at the tasting will cook on the day.

Price and what it covers THE QUOTE

☐ **Is the price per head, and what exactly does it include?**

Starters, mains, desserts, drinks, tea, paan and late snacks can all be extras. So can staff, crockery, cutlery, linen and serving equipment.

☐ **How do you count children and people who arrive late?**

A clear rule on children's portions and extra guests avoids a surprise bill.

☐ **When do you need our final numbers, and what if they change?**

Families grow guest lists late. Know the deadline and the cost of adding or removing guests.

☐ **Can we have an itemised quote in writing?**

It is the only fair way to compare two caterers, and it becomes your record of what was agreed.

☐ **Is VAT included in the price?**

Ask for the total you will actually pay.

On the day SERVICE

☐ **Who leads the team on the day, and will we meet them before?**

You want a named person with a phone number, ideally the one you have been planning with.

☐ **How many staff will serve, and is it buffet, table service or both?**

Staff numbers decide how long the queue is and how quickly the tables clear.

☐ **How do you keep food hot through a long evening or two sittings?**

Weddings rarely run to time. Ask how they hold food safely.

☐ **What happens to leftover food?**

Some families want it packed for relatives. Ask whether the caterer and venue allow it.

☐ **What is your plan if a chef or server is ill?**

A caterer with a reserve team has thought about reliability.

Paperwork and payment BEFORE YOU PAY

☐ **What is your food hygiene rating?**

Check it yourself on the Food Standards Agency ratings site (ratings.food.gov.uk). Ratings run from 0 to 5, and 5 means hygiene standards are very good. Businesses in England do not have to display it.

☐ **Do you hold public liability insurance, and can we see the certificate?**

Many venues ask for it before a caterer can work there.

☐ **How much is the deposit, and when is the balance due?**

Get both amounts and dates in writing.

☐ **What happens if we cancel, or if you cancel?**

Read the cancellation terms before you pay. Our deposit and booking checklist (thenodus.uk/resources/deposit-and-booking-checklist) explains your rights in general terms.

☐ **Will you put everything in a written contract?**

Menu, numbers, staff, timings, price, payment dates and cancellation terms, all in one document.

Notes

Tick each question once you have the answer in writing. Before you pay, go through the deposit and booking checklist (thenodus.uk/resources/deposit-and-booking-checklist).