

[Below] This twist on cranachan by Bespoke Catering & Events comes with its own whisky atomiser (bespoke-catering.com)



New CLASSICS

[Right] Truffle Events put one couple's savoury dreams on a pork pie pedestal (truffleevents.com)



PLANNING *Food & drink*

Ditch dull dinners and choose something scrumptious. There's a world of flavours out there waiting for you, says *Nicola Smith*

The **gastronomic landscape** of Scotland has come a long way in recent years. At primary school, my diet consisted of jam sandwiches, mince and tatties and jelly and ice-cream. A special treat was spaghetti bolognese with a side of garlic bread - and that was only 20 years ago. These days, we're familiar with cuisine from all over the world and our palate has flourished significantly. Sushi, Pad Thai and kimchi are normal things to eat on a night-out. Yet, we still slip into the dark ages when it comes to the wedding breakfast. I don't blame you if you feel compelled to stick with what you know - but have you considered switching it up a gear? Putting a spin on the dinner options could produce a meal you won't just enjoy but of which you'll be really proud.



[Above] Good presentation makes all the difference, as this salmon dish from Appetite Direct shows (appetitedirect.com)

WE KNOW AND LOVE

"Couples often feel that they have to stick to traditional 'tried and tested' dishes such as lentil soup or Chicken Balmoral for their wedding," says Susannah Nixon of Bespoke Catering & Events. (Hands up if you've come across these as a guest? That'll be all of us, then.) "That's not to say there's anything wrong with them - they are classics for a reason, after all." Perhaps it's because such options have never let us down in the past, it has become almost a given that they're all that's on offer.

"There's no doubt that a beef dish as a main course is very popular too," points out Appetite Direct's Rachel Haenow. "And sticky toffee pudding never fails!"

But have you considered widening your horizons and opening up to the possibility of something a little more modern? "If you have slightly more adventurous tastes, there is absolutely no reason why you can't think outside the box a little when it comes to planning your menu," reckons Susannah. To elevate the standard w-day meal, pick out the main flavours and take it from there, she suggests: "Focus on the key ingredients in the dish and then →



[Above] A rhubarb revolution from Appetite Direct (appetitedirect.com)

“COUPLES OFTEN FEEL THAT THEY HAVE TO STICK TO TRADITIONAL 'TRIED AND TESTED' DISHES SUCH AS CHICKEN BALMORAL”



[Above] Give your drinks the same treatment, and enlist **Shake That Bartending** to light up your bar (shakethatbartending.com)

think about ways to keep these current, but play around with how it looks or add in a complementary component."

A lot can be done with a plain chicken breast, for instance. Instead of serving it with a creamy

YOU DO YOU

When you hire a caterer to take charge of the wedding fare, there are few limits to what you can have. They are there to indulge your epicurean fantasies. "We deliberately shy away from set menus so that our couples have complete freedom over what to choose," explains Susannah. "We start the process by asking about their favourite food, the best meal they've ever eaten, and so on, and then use this to create something delicious that's as unique as they are."

For Rachel, it's a similar process: "It's all about finding out exactly what

fun sharing boards of all their favourite Asian appetisers."

If the family-style dining appeals to you, serving up Sunday lunch could work for your day. It brings a lovely note of nostalgia to proceedings and reminds us of happy afternoons spent around the dining table with loved ones. "To inject a bit of fun to this, we provide chefs' hats for nominated guests and have them collect the beef from the kitchen and carve it for the table," reveals Susannah. Here's hoping they're a dab hand with a

A scrummy plaice (sorry) to start would be fish and chips. "We could make a fish tea much more special by adding garlic and chilli to the beer batter, and our parmesan and truffle chips are always a huge hit," promises Susannah. Bespoke Catering will even serve it up on newspaper featuring photos of you two for that extra personal touch.

And don't you think macaroni cheese would be the perfect evening treat to soak up the day's booze? "We can create a mac and cheese bar with pick-and-mix



[Below] An international note by **Prime Street Food** will go down a storm (primestreetfood.co.uk)

Top tip

"We deliberately shy away from set menus so that our couples have complete freedom over what to choose."
Susannah Nixon,
Bespoke Catering & Events



[Above] Pies for the girls and guys courtesy of **Bespoke Catering & Events** (bespoke-catering.com)

Photo: danielafloresphotography.com

sauce, you could have a ballotine wrapped in crisp Parma ham or even a southern-fried crumb.

And what about our native dish? "We had a couple who loved haggis but didn't want to go with neeps and tatties as an accompaniment, so we created haggis spring rolls with a punchy chilli sauce - it was a huge hit," recalls Susannah.

Of course, it's not just about the actual ingredients; the way the meals are plated up can really make a big difference. "A lot of people find that serving up family-style works - it has a more relaxed feel and is a fun way to change things a bit," says Rachel.

kind of food our couples enjoy and ultimately what they'd like to share with their family and friends," she says. For some divine inspiration, she has a few ideas up her sleeve: "One couple had a mini festival vibe with fun interactive stalls, which was really effective. Another couple approached us after they'd got engaged while travelling in Asia, so the starters ended up being

Photo: danielafloresphotography.com



[Left] Mac and cheese never looked so tempting. Good thinking. **Bespoke Catering & Events** (bespoke-catering.com)



[Below] A vegan corn burger by **Prime Street Food** will keep hunger pangs at bay (primestreetfood.co.uk)

options," Rachel tells us. Now we're talking.

We're certainly not knocking roast beef with mashed potato and spring veg, but there's more to this meat. "Ox cheek is great in canapés - something like a croquette, for example," adds Rachel. Now there's a tasty reinvention.

For puds, one

Scottish fave that's in need of jazzing up is cranachan. Bespoke has this well and truly taken care of. "We recently created a twist on this dessert by adding oat brittle and serving the whisky in a glass atomiser which allowed guests to add just the right spritz of a dram for them," Susannah reveals. "It brought a real sense of fun."

So, what'll it be? A taste of your travels together? Or a twist on an old favourite? Whatever it is, you can make it delicious. ♥

sharp knife!

When it comes to discussing your food options, says Rachel, "Don't be afraid to ask for what you want - wherever we can, we will always provide it and make it happen."

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Let's look at the nation's favourite dishes and how these might be elevated for a bride and groom.