

Food & drink

Liquid refreshments can be as unique and exciting as any other part of your day. *Nicola Smith* samples craft beers, cocktails and mocktails – all in the name of research...



[Below] With Bespoke Catering & Events, you can have your own w-day bar (bespoke-catering.com)



[Below] Designated drivers will thank you for Bespoke Catering & Events' homemade punch (bespoke-catering.com)

Drinks WITH A difference

I'm sure many readers will join me in this statement: I like a drink. I don't mean I like to knock it back to excess, of course, but I do enjoy a little alcoholic refreshment when the mood is right. I have particular preferences for different places too. If I'm at the pub with pals I'll likely order a pinot grigio. At a gig you'll find me clutching a pint of cider. And at home I'll slice a lime to go with a gin and tonic. At a wedding, however, I'm still trying to figure out my signature tippie. This is, in part, thanks to the wonderful variety of options on offer nowadays at receptions. Want prosecco on tap? You've got it. Care to lay out an entire table of malts from around the country? No problem. Think the kids deserve more than just

flat cola? But of course. Your mixologists and baristas have it all in hand.

YOUR CHOICE

In days gone by, wedding drinks consisted of a narrow range of favourites and nothing more. Now, though, brides and grooms can specify whatever they fancy, perhaps even tying the drinks list to their theme. Having a summery, nature-filled wedding? Mark Gilligan, owner of Tickled Pink Bartending, is your man: "We have a list of botanical and garden-inspired cocktails," he says. "They're made using local ingredients such as Scottish spirits and seasonal herbs and botanicals, with edible flowers for that extra-special garnish." When you enlist the help

of the experts, it seems, there are no limits to what you can have. You simply have to ask. "We run a fully serviced bar featuring a huge array of spirits, craft ales, wines and soft drinks," recounts Susannah Nixon of Bespoke Catering & Events. "Our standard list includes local suppliers such as Kippen's Fallen Brewery, Stirlingshire's Deanston Distillery, and Edinburgh Gin, but we're happy to put together a totally bespoke drinks list for our couples."

There's even the option of whipping up your own creation. "For bespoke mixes, we ask you to fill out a quick questionnaire before we get to work on creating your

signature cocktail," says Mark.

Susannah's team, needless to say, live up to their Bespoke name, and will happily discuss making something completely unique for your day: "We often devise separate bride and groom cocktails," she says. "One of our memorable creations was a sparkly pink candy floss martini for a girly bride and an espresso martini for a coffee-loving groom." →



[Above] Fizz is on the move with The Prosecco Chaps (theproseccochaps.co.uk)

Photo: danielafloresphotography.com

[Below] Your drinks will be all song and dance with Rusty's Travelling Piano Bar (rustyspiano.com)



Top trend

"Due to the current popularity of gin, we are finding a huge increase in requests for a dedicated wedding gin bar with flavoured tonics and a choice of accompaniments."

Susannah Nixon,
Bespoke Catering & Events

RIGHT ON TIME

The serving of drinks at weddings often follows a set pattern but really there are no hard and fast rules – it's your day so you can set your own timings if you like. "We find more couples want to keep the drinks flowing throughout the day," mentions Susannah, "so we offer an all-day service. Standard licences run until midnight but we can apply for a late licence to keep the party going longer."

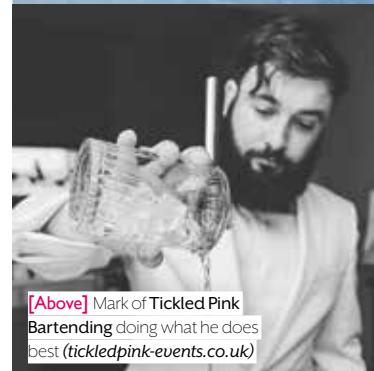
If you'd feel happier sticking to set times, that can be a very good option too. "We are typically hired for around two to three hours to serve during the post-ceremony drinks reception," says Mark. "It's a great way to refresh guests and to give them something more than the traditional glass of bubbly." He is happy to accommodate your specific requests: "We can serve drinks at any point in the day, whether that be during dinner, after the meal or alongside another drink offering in the evening."

BOOZE-FREE

Of course, there's more to life than alcohol, so what are the options to keep non-drinkers smiling? There's coffee for a start – caffeine is no longer reserved for an after-dinner pick-me-up. "People are more into coffee than ever before," comments Craig McIntyre, co-owner and expert barista at Something Brewed. "We can offer the independent café experience at your wedding – no more instant coffee for anyone! We have a full menu covering espressos, lattes,



[Above] Coffee and coolers done right by Something Brewed (somethingbrewed.co.uk)



[Above] Mark of Tickled Pink Bartending doing what he does best (tickledpink-events.co.uk)

"WE HAVE BRILLIANT HOMEMADE SOFT DRINKS – PEOPLE RAVE ABOUT OUR TURKISH DELIGHT LEMONADE AND RED BERRY ICED TEA"

cappuccinos, americanos, flat whites and so on, and we also have a selection of loose teas." It's enough to make you want to be the designated driver!

The baristas don't just dabble in coffee, though. There's a lot more up their sleeves, as Craig explains: "We have some brilliant homemade soft drinks – people rave about our Turkish Delight

lemonade and red berry iced tea." And for the kids, there's something more appealing than sticky orange juice. "They absolutely love our traditional lemonades, and hot chocolate always goes down a treat."

Mark, meanwhile, goes out of his way to ensure those avoiding the booze get a special treat: "The majority of our cocktails can

be made in non-alcoholic versions – it means no one feels left out."

The same goes at Bespoke Catering & Events, as Susannah explains: "We have a huge range of soft drinks. Our non-alcoholic punch works wonderfully in a Kilner jar and can be livened up with fresh fruit and herbs."

WITH A TWIST

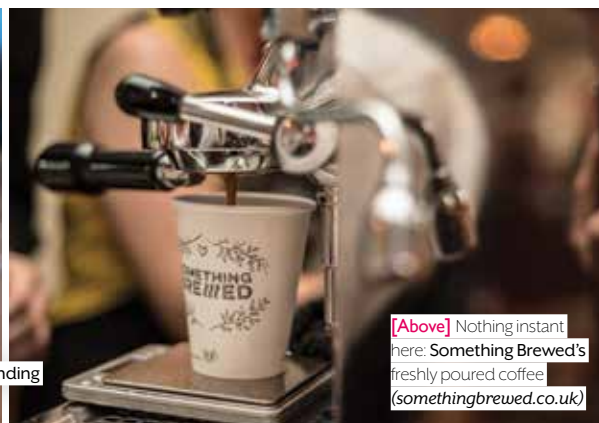
We all like traditional touches, but a wedding is a great excuse to play with the status quo. Want to mix up the prosecco reception? "Homemade elderflower cordial will jazz up a glass of fizz, as will a flavoured liqueur – our favourites are black raspberry and strawberry," says Mark. Is he trying to make us thirsty?

The team at Bespoke Catering & Events will happily whip up something similar. "We can supply a 'pimp your prosecco' station which has ten fruit liqueurs as well as fresh berries, herbs and edible flowers," suggests Susannah. They can even pair the swallie with some scrán. "A recent favourite has been miniature tacos served alongside a pipette of a margarita in honour of the couple's engagement location." Olé!

So, what will your order be? You can have whatever – and we mean whatever – you want. ♥



[Above] Beautiful botanicals created by Tickled Pink Bartending (tickledpink-events.co.uk)



[Above] Nothing instant here: Something Brewed's freshly poured coffee (somethingbrewed.co.uk)