

# Food & drink

[Below] This vanilla panna cotta served with ruby and purple fruits by **Bespoke Catering & Events** looks truly scrumptious ([bespoke-catering.com](http://bespoke-catering.com))



We delve into the delicious world of wedding catering to find out what you can expect to spend, says *Nicola Smith*

[Below] A plate that looks straight out of MasterChef. **Hudsons Catering** towers sea bass on crushed potatoes ([hudsonscatering.co.uk](http://hudsonscatering.co.uk))



**N**ot a day goes by in this office without someone piping up, "If I was going to get married,

I'd have this," pointing to a delicately embroidered gown or a cracking pair of heels. We can't help it - we're constantly surrounded by all the latest and best wedding ideas. My focus is usually on what I'd serve up for the celebration meal should my other half and I ever take the plunge and tie the knot. Right now, I'm dreaming of a big buffet feast piled high with local game, meats and cheeses from all over Scotland, along with more puds than you can shake a stick at. The only pickle is, I have absolutely no idea how much such an extravaganza would set me back.

Discovering the cost of hiring a caterer can be surprisingly difficult. Wouldn't it be helpful to have at least a ballpark figure of what your money could get you? Read on as we do just that with the help of two leading Scottish w-day caterers.

## CASH FOR QUESTIONS

Let's cut to the chase: how much will it cost to feed everyone you've invited along? "We have a baseline price of around £50 per head," states Elaine Mackay, events manager at Hudsons Catering. It's not just the grub that's factored into this quote, she adds. "Our menu prices include staffing costs for the day, and couples can tailor their spread to their theme and guests."

Not every company can give you a definitive answer without discussing the logistics, so when you're in initial talks with a caterer, have these to hand. "As a guide, I would advise couples to think about the kind of meal they'd want for their wedding and imagine what they would expect to pay for it in a restaurant setting," suggests Susannah Nixon of Stirling-based Bespoke Catering & Events. "Factor in that you'll need to cover staffing, travel and crockery hire too."

Once you're in discussions with a caterer, they should go out of their way to be as clear as possible about money matters. "We try to be super-transparent with costs for our couples," reassures Susannah. "We send out an initial guide →

### HUDSONS CATERING

#### TWO COURSES, £50.40pp

**MAIN:** Seared rosemary chicken with Alford oatmeal stuffing and buttery fondant potato

**DESSERT:** Hudsons' sticky toffee pudding with butterscotch sauce and vanilla ice-cream

#### THREE COURSES, £56.40pp

**STARTER:** Hot-smoked salmon, quail's egg and asparagus, with a lemon relish

**MAIN:** Braised shin of Scotch beef in red wine, with glazed carrots and Yorkshire pudding

**DESSERT:** Hudsons' sticky toffee pudding with butterscotch sauce and vanilla ice-cream

#### FOUR COURSES, £70.20pp

**STARTER:** Timbale of award-winning haggis, neeps and tatties, with Lochnagar whisky cream sauce

**INTERMEDIATE:** Butternut squash, chilli and rosemary soup

**MAIN:** Lemon roasted chicken with a black pudding, leek and potato cake and a smoked bacon sauce

**DESSERT:** Salted caramel chocolate tart with malt milk ice-cream

# On the MONEY



[Below] Bespoke Catering & Events serves up blushing, just-cooked salmon. Yum! ([bespoke-catering.com](http://bespoke-catering.com))

that breaks all of these elements down so you can focus on what you have left in your wallet and how you can design your menu around this. “We’ll tailor your day to suit your budget and advise where you could make tweaks so you get the most for your money – such as choosing a grazing table rather than a starter, for example,” she suggests.

## HOW YOU WANT IT

Many venues have an in-house chef and kitchen and are able to produce fabulous food, but there will almost always be compromises around the menu. If you have

You won’t find set menus or packages here. “We have some sample guides that you can look through for inspiration but we are happy to tailor everything around your food loves, your budget and the style of day you want to create.”

This adaptability inevitably costs more than going down the ‘chicken or beef’ hotel route, but it’s not the only reason the price is higher if you’re tying the knot at a barn or in a marquee. “People often forget to consider that we have to include the price of bringing in equipment to spaces that are not purpose-built kitchens,” points out Elaine.

“Your location may be several hours away from our base,” adds Susannah, “so transporting food, plates, glassware, bar equipment and several teams of staff can bump up the price.”

## GET LOW

Your dream dinner is not impossible even if funds are tight, however. “Using seasonal and locally sourced ingredients is a great way to keep costs down,” suggests Susannah.

And consider alternatives that will be just as delicious as prime cuts, she adds: “If you really want beef for your main, say, a cheaper cut such as roast rump or slow-roasted beef cheek is a better option than steak.”

And doing away with meat altogether – would that save money? Not necessarily, warns Elaine: “We’re often asked if a vegan spread would reduce the cost but it can actually prove just as expensive due to the price of alternative ingredients.”

Regardless of what’s in your piggy bank, your caterer should be able to conjure up something seriously tasty – trust us. ♥



[Below] Asparagus and Parma ham canapés à la Hudsons Catering, anyone? ([hudsonscatering.co.uk](http://hudsonscatering.co.uk))

chosen to host your marriage celebrations somewhere else, you could have an advantage, since bringing in your own caterer means complete versatility – you can literally have whatever you want. “The sky is the limit,” promises Elaine. “We can put together an entirely tailor-made menu to suit you, even if that means multiple themes, tastes and dietary requirements, and we can source specially requested ingredients to make the menu unique.”

Bespoke Catering & Events takes a similar approach: “Flexibility is at the very heart of what we do,” declares Susannah.

## BESPOKE CATERING & EVENTS

### A PERSIAN FEAST, £32pp

**STARTER:** Selection of hot flatbreads with Persian dips

**MAIN:** Buffet of turmeric chicken skewers; lamb kebabs; blackened salmon and Ghormeh Sabzi [Persian herb mix]

**DESSERT:** Chocolate and pistachio torte with Persian rose and vanilla ice-cream

### HINT OF SCOTLAND, £45pp

**STARTER:** Foraged wild mushroom on toasted brioche with poached hen’s egg; home-smoked duck salad; butter-poached Islay langoustine

**MAIN:** Herb-crusted fillet of cod; roast fillet of venison; roasted butternut and almond pithivier

**DESSERT:** Trio of desserts

### ROUND THE WORLD, £65pp Europe

Antipasti, olives and focaccia

### Africa

Piri piri tuna slider; fattoush salad with couscous; spiced rump of lamb

### South America

Ceviche of king fish; Gallo salsa; seared steak with chimichurri

### Oceania

Chiko roll; chicken lap lap; mumu-baked kaukau [sweet potato]

### Asia

BBQ char sui pork; Indian dhal; vegetable samosas; caramelised duck *san choy bau*; *nuoc cham* dipping sauce

### North America

Buttermilk fried chicken; classic mac and cheese; three-bean chilli

### Antarctica

Bespoke sledges; gin and tonic sorbet; frozen cheesecake brownies

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