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10 Easy Ways to Save on Wedding Catering Costs

Creating a memorable culinary experience for your wedding guests doesn't have to eat away your catering budget (no pun intended). These ideas from Nadia Digilov of Celebrating in Style will show you how.

1) Know Your Guests. The first step to designing a reasonable quality budget is to know your people. What are their priorities? Are they primarily drinkers, eaters, or both? What is more important; a top-shelf bar or Surf and Turf? Your answer to this question will drive the rest of the decisions you make.

2) Make a Great First Impression. We've all heard the saying, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Set the tone with a well-dressed server greeting guests with champagne or signature cocktails. This will set the tone for the rest of the evening, as guests feel welcome and comfortable in their surroundings.



3) Cocktail Hour. If you are having a cocktail hour, consider having the servers hand pass the pricier items, and leave veggie and cheese platters out on tables. This will typically save an average of 30% of your catering budget.

4) Not All Seafood is Priced Equally. Ask your caterer the specifics when making seafood selections. For instance, did you know that calamari are about half the price of shrimp?

5) Know Your Seasonal Foods. Some dining options are perfectly affordable during the summer season and are expensive in the fall and vice versa. Scarcity of a particular food will increase the cost by up to 40%.

6) Discount Options If you will have children at the reception, make sure that your caterer offers a discount for their meals. They eat less, and don't necessarily need "grown-up food." This will save tons of cash, especially if you have a huge family.

7) Mix It Up. Depending on the evaluation of your guests, consider a tasting menu that offers an array of mini courses instead of a hearty entree.

8) Mix Up the Alcohol Brands. Certain brands of vodka for example are pricier than others. If you're having a full bar, mix up expensive brands for guests that will inquire on brand and have your bartender use the less expensive brands for guests that do not have a preference. This little trick will save you about 30% on the cost of alcohol.

9) Close the Open Bar An Hour Earlier. Begin serving coffee and tea approximately one hour before you party will end. This will save you money, give closure to the party and give guests a chance to "sober up."

10) Forego the Over-the-Top Dessert Bar. People are generally happy with a good slice of cake or a cupcake, and maybe one other option.

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Nadia Digilov is the founder and CEO of NY event production firm [Celebrating in Style](#).

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