

Eat Green and Celebrate

Local, seasonal, organic and cost-effective? According to these sustainable Northwest caterers: Yes, you can!



Delicious and local: Edamame Timbale by Lisa Dupar Catering

FOR MANY NORTHWEST COUPLES, our verdant and agriculturally abundant region is synonymous with gourmet dining. By planning the wedding menu with a “green” caterer—one who strives to utilize local, organic and sustainable foods—brides and grooms can demonstrate that gourmet can equal delicious *and* good for the environment.

But before you place your order for Willapa Bay oysters, Copper River salmon and organic Braeburn apple pie, what do you need to know about eating green? We asked local caterers to serve up their insights and advice to help couples make informed and cost-effective choices. Because ultimately you’ll want to ensure that your wedding menu is as good for you and your guests as it is for the earth.

’TIS THE SEASON

Caterers agree that couples should express what matters most to them—choosing foods that are local, organic,

seasonal or other specifications—to best realize their vision using the best resources available. To that end, expect the unexpected when dealing with local agricultural products and seasonality. For example, explains Lisa Dupar, owner of Redmond-based **Lisa Dupar Catering**, if there has been a slow season for berries and the wedding is in early spring, “we may have to resort to saying, ‘OK, we’re using [organic] berries but they’re coming from California.’” This, for many, is a preferable option to using overseas products, in terms of fossil fuel emissions and supporting the local economy.

TASTING POINTS

Traditional timelines often schedule menu tastings as early as six months prior to the wedding, an option incompatible with seasonal eating. Instead, couples can choose to taste menu items much closer to their wedding date or have an early tasting but with different foods. This latter

option allows couples to “experience how we cook, prepare and present,” explains Pam Samper, executive chef of Eastlake-based **Ravishing Radish Catering**, a company that recently invested in a new Ecolab green washing machine for all its linens. “As their wedding approaches, they can taste again!” Alternatively, look for caterers who offer scheduled tastings, such as the complimentary open-house tasting events offered by SoDo-based **Herban Feast** about four times a year.

EXPLORE ECO-FRIENDLY MEAT

Vegetarian is traditionally the most environmentally friendly menu option, but many of us can’t forfeit our bacon. Fortunately, there are local, organic and natural meats that are also grass- or grain-fed and/or antibiotic- and hormone-free. “We just began offering our clients 100 percent organic chicken, and it’s beautiful,” says Ravishing Radish owner Lisbet Mielke. “You can actually see the difference when it comes in.” BJ Duft, owner of Herban Feast, supports beef from Vashon Island-based Misty Isle Farms and swears by its spectacular flavor. Painted Hills Natural Beef in Oregon is another great resource, says Lendy Hensley, owner of Capitol Hill-based **The City Catering Company**, but she warns that all-natural beef can be costly. Couples should talk to their caterer about cost and “maybe make a bit of a compromise,” she suggests. “Offer an awesome coriander-encrusted hanger steak as an appetizer and serve a more economical fish as the entrée.”

NOT ALL SALMON ARE CREATED EQUAL Puget Sound is known for its salmon,

and naturally you want to share the bounty with your guests. But because of the huge demand for the fish, serving farm-raised and/or Atlantic salmon has flourished here, even though the consequences of either choice are potentially harmful to the environment, says Dupar. But a growing awareness about the importance of eating wild salmon is afoot, she adds, because “we feel like this is our issue.” Dupar notes that she gets creative when a budget doesn’t allow for wild Northwest salmon, offering just a bite of salmon as part of the meal rather than as the main course. Another option: “Let’s get past salmon,” laughs Hensley. She suggests serving another fish that is more abundant, such as black cod.

RENT OR PURCHASE WISELY

Renting linens, china and flatware is a more earth-friendly decision than using disposable products. However, “some people want a totally compostable option, such as flatware made from cornstarch or bamboo,” explains Melissa Hogenson, catering sales manager of downtown Seattle’s **TASTE Events**, caterer for Seattle Art Museum and other venues. “We all cheered when prices for 100 percent compostable cutlery and flatware became competitive with, if not cheaper than, the prices for plastic disposables,” says Nancy Donier, co-owner of Queen Anne-based **Kaspar’s Special Events**, a company that grows organic herbs on its own farm. Don’t worry that compostable flatware and cutlery will be unsightly; both are available in a variety of styles and shades that range in design from natural to elegant.

COMPOST, COMPOST, COMPOST!

Local caterers agree that composting makes an enormous difference in reducing the amount of waste a wedding produces. Ravishing Radish began composting two years ago and cut their garbage volume in half. Kaspar’s sees composting as an opportunity to educate guests about green options in waste management. “We compost everything, including meat and fish, in special corn-based composting bags,” Donier says. Kaspar’s will outfit events with composting stations and instructional signage to educate guests and can provide a staff member to facilitate the process. For its part, TASTE composts everything they can and then uses the nutrient-rich compost to fertilize and beautify the grounds at their event space at the Olympic Sculpture Park. *

For more caterers, see Resources starting on page 152.

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