



The Caterers

“We’ve done events in private jets at 36,000 feet and cooked for 300 people from a changing room at Saks. Whatever our client wants, we try to accommodate it.”

DAVID CASTLE AND RUSS SONNIER, OWNERS OF SONNIER-CASTLE

What makes you guys unique as caterers? CASTLE: Our clients wanted the restaurant experience, not their mother’s buffet dinner—so we reached out to that world and hired a series of restaurant chefs: Robb Garceau from Jean Georges, Cornelius Gallagher from Oceana. Cornelius completely revolutionized our menu; he did a stint at El Bulli, and one of the techniques he brought back was sous-vide cooking. Our current chef, Patrick Phelan, continues to grow the vision.

What should couples ask when evaluating potential caterers? SONNIER: They need to know their budget so the caterer can answer specific questions about what sort of event they can have for that price range. CASTLE: Ask for sample menus from recent events, and check to make sure the caterer has worked at the venue where you plan to have your wedding. **How does the venue influence the menu?** CASTLE: We take it into account from the very beginning and try to steer couples toward items that lend themselves to those circumstances. Sometimes



SUGGESTION

SERVE RISKY HORS D'OEUVRE

“This is where you can really push the envelope. If someone doesn’t like one item, there are seven others they can try.”

we have to steer a little more forcefully—you can’t fry French fries in the New York Public Library.

So how do you make reheated food taste good? CASTLE: Our expertise is preparing foods in tough environments. We have a kitchen where we grill and roast and make smelly stuff happen, and then bring it to the site and warm it in a way that makes it taste just-cooked.

Do you ever feel like you’re competing on *Top Chef*, given all the obstacles? CASTLE: Oh my God, yes. It’s like opening a different Broadway show every night.

Some restaurant chefs look down their noses at caterers. What don’t they get about what you guys do? CASTLE: Chefs who cook in these ivory towers are in control in their own world. We try to approximate that world as best we can, but ultimately our goal is to please our clients. If you were to go to a restaurant and disagree with Daniel Boulud, he’d probably throw something at you. Restaurant chefs have a problem with caterers because we accommodate special requests, but great service is about getting exactly what you want.

Any crazes in wedding fare right now? CASTLE: Playfulness. We’ve baked Mallo-mars and Rice Krispies treats, made milkshakes, and even built a macaron cake in the shape of a Christmas tree. These items remind people of their childhood; we just re-create them with adult flavors.

What trends do you wish would go away? CASTLE: Anything on a lollipop, whether it’s cheesecake or apple pie. That’s done. Also sliders.

So if you were getting married in summertime, what would you serve? CASTLE: Sweet corn picked that morning. And lobster rolls. And French fries.

CELIA SHATZMAN

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