

# Couples have their wedding cake and cookies, too

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As bridal expo season (now) gives way to wedding season (soon), couples fretting about what to feed their guests on their big day should know this:

Local food and booze are hot. The grand cake isn't going anywhere, and if you want to make it gluten-free, go for it. And cookies — particularly when offered from a stand-alone cookie bar — are so casually chic, it hurts.

Like every other detail — the dress, the music, the vows — wedding munchies are highly variable and dependent on the couple. But more than ever, wedding watchers say, couples are relying less on old standbys (protein, veg, carb on a plate) and choosing and serving food in a way that makes a statement about who they are.

“People want their wedding from start to finish to be very customized, very personal,” says Kate Templin Stahl, the Chicago-based co-founder of bride-buzz.com, a bridal resource website.

Chicago wedding planner Charlene Liang of Sweetchic Events recalls one couple — she was Chinese, he was Haitian — whose meal was memorable.

“For one dish, the groom gave a family recipe for Haitian jerk chicken to the caterer. And to bring her Chinese side in, they had salmon with black rice,” Liang says.

The seated dinner still reigns, but couples — who Liang says are starting out with more of a knowledge of food (“They know what an amuse-bouche is,” she says) — are adding more small-bite touches such as raw bars.

The allure of the late-night snack, which adds street cred to otherwise staid affairs, is strong, too.

“In Chicago, that’s going to be a huge trend going forward,” Templin Stahl says. “If you can have Gaztro-Wagon or one of these other trucks come to your wedding at midnight, that would be the coolest thing ever.”

The local, sustainable movement also is working its way into receptions.

Templin Stahl went to a wedding last summer where all the beer was made by the groom and his brother, both budding brewmasters.

“A huge undertaking, but you can’t get more personal than that,” she says.

“Local and sustainable are not just ‘hot,’ they’re smart,” says Bryan Rafanelli, the Boston event planner who handled Chelsea Clinton’s upstate New York nuptials last July, where that now-famous gluten-free cake was cut. “The couples we are helping really care about the world and the communities they live in.”

Though Rafanelli still won’t release the full menu, the former first daughter reportedly sought to have peaches from a local orchard and wine from a local vineyard (Clinton Vineyards, natch) in guests’ gift baskets.

And about that cake: Good news for sweet teeth. In addition to the always important showpiece cake (which, thanks to Clinton, might see a rise in gluten-free orders), dessert stations plying guests with pie and cookies, namely, are gaining ground.

And cupcakes? “Until someone comes up with a better combination of moist cake in a million flavors and the sweet sensation of buttercream frosting — cupcakes are here to stay,” Rafanelli says.

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