

Wedding costs: *What to expect when planning*

Newly engaged couples may experience an array of emotions when they sit down to plan their weddings. Some couples cannot wait to jump into planning and want to catalog every aspect of the process, while others may proceed with caution because they don't know what to expect — particularly in regard to cost.

Many couples find it difficult to create their wedding budgets because they have no previous experience to draw on. The wedding planning advisor CostofWedding.com indicates the average wedding cost in the United States is \$26,720, with most people spending between \$20,000 and \$34,000. Seventh Heaven Event Catering states that, in Canada, the average wedding costs around \$30,000. Such costs can vary greatly depending on couples' preferences, including where they hope to tie the knot.

By breaking down wedding expenses, couples can get a clearer picture of how much they may need to pay for their weddings and where they may need to cut costs.

- **Reception site:** According to The Knot, a premiere wedding planning resource, couples can expect their receptions to eat up the largest chunk of their wedding budgets. Wedding reception venues may cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000. The average price for catering per person is roughly \$70. Bar service may be around \$2,000 for a three- to four-

hour party. Some reception sites combine the room cost with the food and beverage costs, while others have à la carte fees.

- **Cake:** Wedding cakes tend to be multitiered intricate designs, so they will cost more than birthday cakes. According to Statistics Brain, wedding dessert will come in around \$390.

- **Music:** The Knot says wedding bands cost around \$3,500, which is more than twice as much as hiring a deejay (\$1,200). Soloists or ceremony musicians may cost around \$650.

- **Wedding planner:** Many couples employ wedding planners to make planning their weddings easier. Wedding planners cost an average of \$1,300, says Thumbtack, a company that matches professionals with people who require their services.

- **Transportation:** Limousines and other transportation prices vary depending on the vehicle(s) couples choose. The Knot notes that budgeting between \$400 and \$500 for transportation might be wise.

- **Wedding gown:** Brides-to-be should expect their gowns to cost around \$1,100 and the veil or headpiece to be roughly



\$120, according to the Association of Bridal Consultants.

- **Photography and Video:** Preserving wedding day memories costs around \$2,800 for video and photography services, based on data from Statistics Brain.

The smaller details, such as accessories, gifts, officiant fees, stationery, spa services, and favors can quickly add up as well. Couples should be sure to leave some wiggle room in their budgets for incidental expenses that may pop up.

Unconventional wedding menu ideas

Traditionally, one of the more memorable aspects of wedding receptions is the food. Whether it was fun, tasty or something entirely new for guests, food tends to leave a lasting impression.

The experts at Boho Weddings say that, more than ever before, couples are seeking menu ideas that reflect their personalities as a couple as they seek to make a statement at their events. Celebrating with delicious, unique foods can make receptions that much more amazing.

Bite-sized bursts

Tapas and a movement toward small bites has started to take hold at wedding receptions. Such a choice allows guests to try many different flavors without filling up too quickly.

From sliders to mini grilled cheese to soup shots to bite-sized pizzas, many of these small bites feature flavors borrowed from familiar comfort foods — just presented on a miniature scale.

Comfort stations and bars

Couples who love comfort food can put it on display with a crostini station, a mashed potato bar, a chicken and waffles station, a gourmet popcorn snack station, or a ramen noodle bar.

Food trucks/carts

Outdoor weddings can be enhanced with the addition of trendy food trucks. These restaurants on wheels can inject burgers, sandwiches, international delights, crêpes, noodles, and so many more flavors into a

wedding.

High-end options

Couples may want to give guests a taste of the lavish with olive oil and vinegar tasting stations, whiskey bars, French hors d'oeuvres, Kobe beef sliders, lobster tails, risotto stations, and more.

Childhood favorites

When it comes time for dessert, some couples opt to avoid or downplay wedding cakes in favor of something simpler. A cookie-and-milk bar, doughnut holes, soft pretzel stations, pie pops, or dessert shot jars push creativity and sweetness to new levels. Do-it-yourself dessert stations, such as s'more-making and ice cream sundae stations, also can be big hits.

