

Food

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"We've done pies, one on every table and used it as their centerpiece. We've done create-your-own sundae bars or shortcake bars."

"That's when it gets really fun; everybody gets to participate," she added.

Even when a traditional tiered wedding cake is on tap, there may be chocolate, orange or another flavor cake lurking underneath the frosting, as the white cake dynasty is waning.

To make families happy, wedding caterers usually allow a cake to be brought in, even when they provide all the other food and beverages.

"Many times, aunt whoever has for ten years wanted to make the cake for her niece," said Hoeh of the desire to please family members.

Caterers also know that wedding food is not all about the reception dinner. On the big day, many weddings include drinks and hors d'oeuvres to sooth hungry and thirsty guests waiting for the newlyweds to arrive.

Rehearsal dinners the night before the wedding tend to be less formal affairs with fewer participants. Often these lower-key dinners have a traditional buffet, noted Foltz of Grandview Catering, both save money and not compete with the next day's reception.

Another growing part of her business is providing an *apres-wedding-day* brunch. Usually hosted at one of the parents' homes, the bride and groom join the festivities to share another meal and open gifts.

"Most of the time they want brunch-style food, but I've done a few luncheons," said Foltz.

Carol South is a local freelance writer.

Budget

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As for the music, rather than hire an orchestra or band, she recommends thinking about a harpist or a disc jockey.

The same is true of flowers, she said. "Using flowers that are in season is less expensive than using ones that are not. A simple arrangement isn't as expensive as an intricate cascade of flowers."

The wedding cake may

be the centerpiece of the reception, but the bride is the one who commands attention at a wedding. The cost of a wedding gown can be astronomical, depending on the bride's choice. Resale shop owner Donna Czech has a hint for brides, however.

"We often get \$800 and \$900 bridal gowns we resell for \$100 to \$200," she said. "These are top-line gowns in sizes 0 to 28," Czech said.

Stores like hers also offer shoes, jewelry, veils

and other items for the bride.

The location of the reception is another expense to consider.

"In many cases, hotels, country clubs and halls depend on corporate contracts for their revenue, so if a couple wanted to get married on a Thursday, or some other weekday evening, the vendors will most likely work within their budget," Smith said.

There are also a variety of computer programs available to help individu-

als print their own invitations and matching thank-you notes. Reasonable programs that can get the job done cost from \$20 to \$50.

And having your invitations and thank yous printed at a copy store rather than a print shop can save you as much as 50 percent. Another cost-saving tip: Print the directions to the reception on the back of the invitation rather than a separate card.

RECORD-EAGLE

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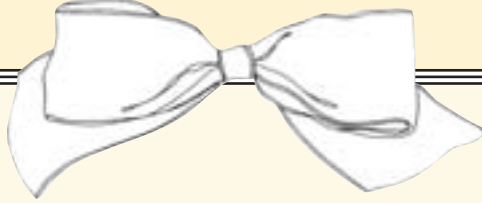
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