



Twenty Years On

This year represents 20 years of catering excellence for Philippa Sayer of Sayer's Catering

Philippa Sayer's passion for cooking emerged at an early age and was quickly recognised by her parents. She was lucky enough to achieve a place at one of Britain's top catering colleges, and from there became familiar with many different culinary situations, even down to cooking in Switzerland as a chalet girl.

Returning in 1984 from her Swiss experience, Philippa fulfilled her ambition to set up a successful freelance catering business, allowing her clients to relax whilst she produced the food for their function to the highest standard.

Sayer's Catering started out in the kitchen of Philippa's first cottage, and has matured to the present industrial unit at South Hams Business Park. To begin with she catered for all functions, but now is involved exclusively in weddings and large events, a challenging but rewarding aspect of catering she thoroughly enjoys.

Many changes have come about in the way people entertain over the past 20 years, Philippa says. The most popular form of wedding reception used to be a buffet, with guests helping themselves to a selection of meat and fish, vegetarian quiches and salads. Returning to the tables to be met with sumptuous sweets, many cries of 'a little of everything, please' would have been the prevailing sound. The finger buffet was also a popular choice, consisting of small, home-made bite-size eats, served over a period of two

or three hours and accompanied by champagne or Pimms.

As travel has become commonplace and exotic parts of the world are no longer out of reach, it is now really easy to obtain ingredients for different and unusual dishes for the more distinctive buffet. On the other hand, Devon has a huge and extensive range of fresh, high-quality local produce that forms the basis of many of Philippa's exquisite dishes. One of these is the ever more popular seafood, typified by platters of local crustaceans served on ice to each table and accompanied by local salad and a mix of local and continental breads – just one of the dishes that could make your day forever memorable.

The increasingly popular choice of the sit-down meal also allows Philippa to show her talent in the kitchen. With choices from local kiln-roasted smoked salmon (accompanied by dill and lemon crème fraiche – yum!), to prime cut of Devonshire beef on spinach and asparagus, an accompaniment of eye-catching salads and potatoes that melt in your mouth, Philippa will certainly spoil her clients.

Philippa is able to cook in all conditions and situations, creating a kitchen wherever needed. She can just as easily produce a hot, sit-down meal in a marquee as in her kitchen. Succulent noisettes of local lamb with leek and garlic mash drizzled in red-currant, port and rosemary sauce provokes no difficulties at all – and is just one example of her creations in a marquee kitchen.

Canapés traditionally play a large part at any wedding reception. As hungry guests return from the church, it's common for them to be met with platters of small but appetising bite-size eats. Tiny Yorkshire puddings filled with beef and horseradish, sweet-chilli scallops in mini filo baskets topped with crème fraiche, and Mediterranean bruschetta served with chilled champagne will set up any guest for the wedding breakfast ahead.

For a wedding with a more relaxed feel, the ram-roast has become an increasingly familiar – and spectacular – sight, bringing the banqueting experience to the reception. Carving the beast in front of the guests will have your onlookers watering at the mouth.

With well over 50 functions per year, Philippa is as busy as ever, yet the perfectionist's touch still influences every dish, every salad and every sweet – a facet of her work which has earned her great credibility and enhanced the reputation she enjoys today. With 20 years of hard work behind her, Philippa is a fine example of the strength of small local businesses in Devon. For her, each wedding represents a different challenge and a different occasion to show off her culinary competence by pleasing each and every guest. □

For any information about wedding receptions or celebratory events, contact Philippa on ☎01548 856714, or visit the website: www.sayers-catering.co.uk