

A day in the life...

...OF PHILIPPA SAYER OF SAYER'S CATERING, WHO SPECIALISES IN WEDDING RECEPTIONS

The day has finally arrived; all the preparation and organisation will now become reality. The marquee stands proud in the garden, bare tables and chairs in the appropriate position. A trestle table stands covered in floral decorations, name cards and favours waiting to be put into their allotted places. In the catering tent adjoining the marquee, vast quantities of catering equipment, china, cutlery, glasses and linen have been delivered and stacked alongside copious quantities of champagne, red and white wine and bottled water all waiting to be sorted and chilled by the caterers when they arrive. During a last meeting two days previously, when the bridal couple with their parents came to see the setup, the final details were sorted, everything checked carefully and the final

schedule made clear in everyone's mind.

Today the menu is based around a sit-down cold meal. Canapés with champagne are to be followed by the wedding breakfast. There will be asparagus with leeks, ginger and prosciutto drizzled in a sweet balsamic vinaigrette; roasted smoked salmon with a warm chive butter on a puff pastry leaf accompanied by crunchy red cabbage salad; French bean, cherry tomato, red onion and fresh basil salad; mixed lettuces with fresh herbs; and hot new potatoes with spring onions and mint. After this, individual hazelnut meringues filled with mixed berries will be served on a blackcurrant coulis, or chocolate baskets filled with chocolate mousse accompanied by brandy and vanilla sauce. A selection of cheeses will be available later in the evening for anyone feeling peckish after the dancing.

Philippa's Diary

Saturday

6am Back in our kitchens final touches being made to feast that awaits the 150 guests after the ceremony. Colourful salads prepared and placed in bowls ready for each table. Asparagus cooked, puff pastry leaves baked until golden. Leeks, ginger, lemon and prosciutto quickly stir-fried together to accompany asparagus. Cream whipped, scooped along with berries into meringues and dusted with icing sugar. Have prepared rest of meal day before. All waiting ready in refrigerated trailer ready for transportation to site.

10am All necessary catering equipment collected and put in van – and that means everything – nothing in catering tent except water!

11am Time to go

12noon Arrive at site to help waiting staff lay up tables. Outside, trestle table lined with champagne glasses set up ready for guests to be offered glass as they arrive. Champagne and white wine chilled on ice and red wine opened to breathe.

2pm Guests start arriving and are served by wine waiting staff with champagne or fresh elderflower cordial, ice and limes (for those who prefer no alcohol). Waitresses circulate with canapés. Behind scenes, starters are assembled.

5pm Main course plates decorated ready to take salmon; chive butter warming gently on gas burner; potatoes simmering. Out goes asparagus, wines and water onto the tables. Wedding breakfast about to begin. Everyone tense...

5.30pm Guests enter, find places and await entrance of bride and groom.

Backstage, salmon being arranged, potatoes garnished, salads brought in from refrigerated trailer, dressings poured into jugs.

5.45pm Starters served and cleared and salmon – a classic celebratory fish – makes its entrance! Delicious food, excellent wines, a happy occasion... ambience gets better by the minute. Salmon a particular talking point. In catering tent meringues put onto plates and raspberry coulis and summer berries added. Sprig of fresh mint tops the dish. Chocolate baskets set onto brandy and vanilla sauce, decorated with whipped cream and strawberries.

6.45pm "Ladies and gentlemen, the bride and groom will now cut the cake." Loud applause rings through tent, cameras flash. Waitresses clear empty dishes, wine waiters replenish empty bottles. When everyone returns to seats, puddings served. ➤

