





**Right-sizing:** Puff 'n Stuff uses a wide range of vessels to serve hors d'oeuvre, from tiny tins to big hawker trays (left to right).



**Perfect pairings:** 'Eat and sip' stations from Design Cuisine offer not just wines and cheeses but beers and bar snacks.

booze and finger foods adds another level of creativity to the cocktail hour. Arlington, Va.-based Design Cuisine's popular "eat and sip" appetizer stations offer the traditional wines with artisanal cheeses, as well as beers and bar snacks (Pilsner Urquell and soft pretzel bites; Sapporo and wasabi popcorn), and small-batch specialty whiskeys and smoked meats (Angel's Envy Kentucky Straight Bourbon with apple pancakes and smoked duck, Virginia Highland Malt Whiskey with wild mushroom and bacon puffs).

## ECLECTIC ENTREES

"The biggest cuisine change comes from better qualified chefs and culinary staff that are joining catering kitchens," says director of sales Stacy Zeigler, Bold American Events, Atlanta. "We now have the talent to do all kinds of custom menus with cuisines from all over the world." A recent wedding blended West African and Mediterranean entrees

into one menu, while another paired traditional Southern fare with Indian, both reflecting the heritages of the bride and groom.

Cultural sensibilities aside, multi-ethnic cuisine has broad appeal. "Today's couple is more food-savvy. They've traveled and have been introduced to many cuisines," says Jerry Edwards, CPCE, president/chef of Baltimore-based Chef's Expressions, adding that a fusion of Indian, North African and South American is his top trending pick. Case in point: A recent trio of wedding entree offerings featured a filet of turbot on a spinach, roasted shallot and cardamom pillow, a tandoor spice-rubbed hanger steak with chimichurri in a French fry basket, and a garam masala-infused couscous tower topped with spinach, fried catfish, and ginger-black garlic marinated shrimp with mango green chile salsa.

Richard Mooney, owner of Kensington Caterers, Los Angeles, adds Mexican, Korean and Mediterranean into the multiethnic

mix, noting that "a cross-pollination of cuisines allows for fun and innovative wedding menus." A recent wedding featured stations ranging from Spanish to Mediterranean to Moroccan, with entrees ranging from olive oil poached salmon with an orange-fennel infusion to chicken tagine with preserved lemons, cinnamon and ginger.

At Culinary Capers, Lykkemark has seen a steady increase in veggie-centric entree requests, and in many cases, entire vegan and/or gluten- and dairy-free menus. Her kitchen is rising to the occasion, creating house-made dairy-free butters, sauces and cheeses to enhance such menus. "We'll often use nuts such as almonds, cashews and macadamias to make silky, dairy-free and vegan sauces and cheeses," she says, citing a salad of micro greens topped with house-made macadamia nut cheese, oven-dried tomatoes, crisp basil and pickled onions drizzled with basil oil and maple grenache vinegar, paired with an entree of tofu "ricotta" ravioli



at microbreweries,” says general manager Patrick Cuccaro. “And these menus pair well with artisanal beer.”

with grilled artichokes, sauteed kale, pistachio pesto, and pea shoots with cashew cream sauce as an example.

On the meatier side of the menu, the team at Atlanta-based Affairs to Remember serves up food truck fare sans the truck with its popular “un-trucked” street-food stations. The “pig in a blanket” station features Italian sausage and bratwurst baked in savory dough blankets and served with assorted mustards, sauerkraut, beer-cheese fondue and salted pretzel rods. “We cater quite a few weddings

**CAKE TALK** When it comes to the wedding cake, sometimes the icing on the cake is actually *off* the cake. Culinary Capers’ sugar-dusted “naked cakes”—stacked, frosting-free affairs filled with cream, custard or mousse and fresh fruit—echo the ever-popular “rustic chic,” farm-to-table wedding theme. For traditionalists, Lykkemark suggests a “rough buttercream-iced cake” embellished with burlap bows and fresh flowers and foliage. “Nothing too refined or perfect-looking,” she says.



Scaled-down also means smaller, even personal-sized wedding cakes, with beautiful and bountiful dessert bars providing the sweet ending. “Many brides are opting for a petite wedding cake that mimics the lace pattern of their dress, as well as fun yet formal dessert bar,” Cuccaro says. “For example, we’ll do a 6-inch buttercream-iced lemon pound cake



with silky strawberry filling for the bride and groom to ceremoniously cut, and then offer a dessert bar featuring Krispy Kreme bread pudding with house-made butterscotch caramel in champagne flutes, chocolate brownie popsicles dipped in chocolate with espresso sprinkles, and gingerbread and lemon cream 'whoopie pies' with praline crunch."

**MIDNIGHT MUNCHIES** For wedding receptions that run into the wee hours, after-party snacks keep the party going—especially if the booze is still flowing! "We always suggest serving something later on if guests are going to be drinking and dancing hours after



**Taking classics for a spin:** Affairs to Remember offers a dressy presentation for shrimp grits (here) and a chocolate cake that's allergen-free (left).

dinner," Lykkemark says. "After a formal dinner, it's a great way to incorporate casual, comfort food into the menu."

At Affairs to Remember, a combination of sweet and savory appeases both hankerings. Favorites include mini pecan pies on popsicle sticks and tiny glasses of banana pudding topped with toasted meringue, sitting alongside mini breakfast burritos and buttermilk biscuits with fried chicken. ●

## RESOURCES

### AFFAIRS TO REMEMBER

[www.affairs.com](http://www.affairs.com)

### BOLD AMERICAN EVENTS

[www.boldamerican.com](http://www.boldamerican.com)

### CHEF'S EXPRESSIONS

[www.chefsexpressions.com](http://www.chefsexpressions.com)

### CULINARY CAPERS CATERING

[www.culinarycapers.com](http://www.culinarycapers.com)

### DESIGN CUISINE

[www.designcuisine.com](http://www.designcuisine.com)

### KENSINGTON CATERERS

[www.kensingtoncaterers.com](http://www.kensingtoncaterers.com)

### PUFF 'N STUFF EVENTS AND CATERING

[www.puffnstuff.com](http://www.puffnstuff.com)