FOOD STYLING

MARRYING FOOD WITH THE DECOR IS KEY TO MAKING BEAUTIFUL MEMORIES



The buffet set-up at the wedding of Yashovardhan Lohia of the Indorama group with Saanjali Kotahwala and the serving platter for the canapes (inset), created to weave the food decor into the "ice palace" theme of the wedding in 2017 in Udaipur

Food is no longer a standalone entity at weddings, especially at theme shaadis. It has to be seamlessly woven into the theme, combining functionality and food safety. Food stylist RAKHEE JAIN *(inset)* tells you how to do so:



What are the food styling trends dominating weddings now?
The ever-growing wedding industry has evolved in leaps and bounds over the last two decades. Moving away from tentwallahs and halwais, the influx of wedding consultants and planners has taken thematic decor, floral installations, lighting design, entertainment and food menus to a magical new level.

Hosts take great pains to curate a diverse menu to charm their guests. They pay detailed attention to the quality and variety of the cuisines that are to be served. But the presentation of the food can be under-whelming due to lack of attention to detail, especially when it is a multiple-caterer event. Even if the presentation is looked into, it may not necessarily go with the rest of the theme of the wedding. So the current trend is to blend the food with the decor.

What are some of the things that you as a food stylist and the client must keep in mind while serving food at a wedding?
The idea is to create an element of "wow" around the food and make it experiential rather than just treating it like something placed alongside the perimeter of the banquets. The idea is to amalgamate the look of the food with that of the decor for a perfect fit and relevance.
Working in tandem with chefs, caterers and event designers to ensure that the food being served is woven in beautifully with the rest of the event. The focus is not just on the visual styling of each dish; functionality, food safety and serving conditions are given due importance.

Enhancing food with relevance and matching it to the theme makes a wedding interactive and gives people a topic for conversation. It also creates an opportunity for caterers and event managers to win appreciation and recognition for their work through an unconventional and unique value-added service, apart from their own. Now people don't just buy products and services, they buy value which enhances their status.



Recreating and serving the bride and the groom's favourite food (top) or weaving a story around the food — like that of their proposal (above) — are good ideas for personalising the food served at weddings or engagement parties

What's the most interesting food presentation you have done for a wedding?
The most exciting wedding that I have styled food for was in Udaipur for the Thailand-based Lohias of the Indorama group. The production was designed by an Israeli company and and I was working with the theme of ice palace, which is not something very common in India.

Is it possible to personalise food styling at a wedding to celebrate the bride and groom?
If the gathering is intimate, it's a great idea to tell the story of the bride and groom through the presentation of the food, as most of the people attending would be able to relate to it.

I recently styled an engagement party for a bride in London. The groom proposed to her in a boxing ring and then took her for a meal to Nando's. As a little surprise for the bride and groom, we replicated this story on the food tray and circulated it during the speech when the story was being told by the sister to the rest of the guests. The family was overwhelmed by the concept and the couple loved it as they relived that wonderful moment all over again.

Anannya Sarkar

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