

Sensationally simple

Lu Thornely, the wonderfully individual and inventive private wedding caterer, has followed her passion for food all over the world. She talks dos, don'ts, inspirations and locations...



Lu at work at LaraLu

PIC: TADGH CONWAY

How did you get into the weddings business? Through private parties and word-of-mouth. From one party you get another – if people enjoy the food, it just goes from there. I am getting a lot of calls, which is great, but there are only so many weekends in the year!

You're incredibly inventive when it comes to planning menus - where do you get your inspiration from for wedding receptions? From experience, and from what you know works. But it's always good to just sit down with the bride and see what her ideas are and what theme she's working with. I love Indian, Mexican, Caribbean and Moroccan food – I like to live on the edge!

Fresh salads for summer weddings



"Really good bread and cheese"
Crostoni with creme fraiche and caviar



Bespoke marquees by LPM Bohemia



In terms of weddings, what dishes do you recommend for different seasons? Once autumn comes, I get really excited about game, I just love it. And as it starts to get colder I do these winter hotpots that are very popular - slow cooked casseroles, using cheaper cuts of organic meat, which is become more and more essential. For a winter wedding, I just love the idea of everybody having a mini dinner party on each table, with a solid slab of wood on



Rosnaree House, Co Meath

which would rest a really good cut, or a luxury stew, or chicken and everybody would

just dig in and share out lots of organic vegetables and mashed potatoes. I think that would really get people talking to each other. Once Summer time hits, I think a barbeque or a big roast spit pig is beautiful with lots and lots of very fresh salads, definitely something rustic and informal.

What locations are 'in' right now? I think Rosnaree House (T: +353 41 982 0975) is a beautiful hidden haven. It's in a fantastic location in Co Meath, with megalithic tombstones as a backdrop and beautifully restored gardens, by the River Boyne. It's an absolutely magical setting; the surroundings really speak for themselves. You can get beautiful coloured marquees set up there by the Boyne – I think people are getting fed up with plain white marquees, especially when bohemian ones can be such a beautiful feature. (LPM Bohemia for bespoke tents. T: 0870 7707185 or see www.lpmbohemia.com).

You catered for Jasmine Guinness' wedding last month. What was on

the menu and how did the day go?

We concentrated on good Irish food, sensationally simple. We had a very nice menu - we started with smoked salmon canapés and honey and thyme baked sausages at the champagne reception outside. Then at the sit-down we had laid out beef carpaccio olives, hummus and ham. The main course was organic Irish salmon with asparagus, new potatoes and salad, and strawberries with chocolate biscuit cake for dessert. The day went great, a bit mad in the kitchen, as always, but with all things, it went fine in the end.

Are there any no-nos when it comes to wedding menus?

I think anything deep fried - even filo-wrapped prawns or something like that is horrible, it's just not a good idea! Especially when simple, good quality food would be cheaper and go down better. I also think ornate, elaborate, overly traditional affairs can be very restrictive.

What do you suggest for a limited budget?

Cold platters and big rustic barbeques are great and really can work out a lot cheaper. If you want a big sit-down meal, full silver service and lots of hot food, it's more work and it will cost a whole lot more.

What adds real wow factor to your food?

I think it has a homely touch. Trying to recreate great home cooking en masse really is the idea. I'm not trying to get tiers and tiers of something that looks fabulous but tastes of nothing. I make it all myself, and they're one-offs, bespoke to whatever the client fancies.

What was the most interesting wedding you have ever done?

I catered a Moroccan themed wedding in the beautiful 17th century Prince of Wales Terrace in Bray. The bride went to London and got loads of exotic lamps, cushions, etc and I did a Moroccan lamb stew, with watercress and orange blossom salad, it really went down well, everybody loved it – and that was for 200 people! It was in a private house, it was beautifully intimate. I thought that was a really nice theme.



Boyne River



A food hamper for Lu's stall would make an innovative wedding gift

Does catering for festivals such as Electric Picnic and The Garden Party help prepare you for the wedding season?

Yes, because its hectic! Last year we had a really good lamb barbeque. It was a total rollercoaster, but an organized conveyor belt one! We had tortillas, chili, Greek yogurt and fajitas. At the Garden Party earlier this summer we had organic beef burgers in a ciabatta with organic rocket salad and horseradish and mustard mayonnaise.

If you were getting married how would you do it?

Well, I think it would be really hard not to do the food! I love being outside, so it would definitely be an outside event. We had my birthday on the banks of the banks of Boyne at Rosnaree - a few good Bloody Marys, champagne, oysters, a barbeque really good bread and cheese, and a nice big salad, so maybe something like that.

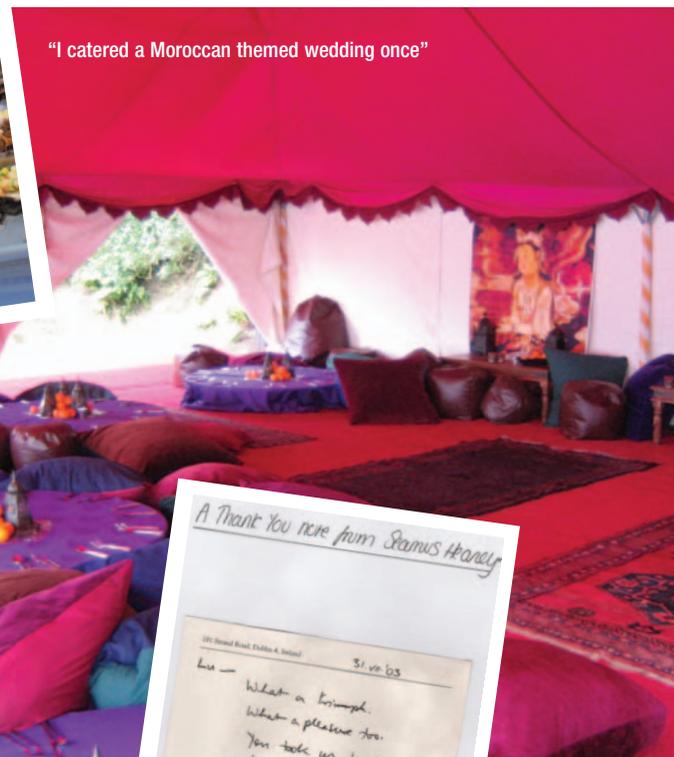
Contact Lu on T: (+353) 087 990 8003 or drop into her stall at LaraLu Foods, Georges's Street

Arcade, Dublin 2.



Oysters and champagne from the book "Barbeque" published by Ryland Peters & Small

"My wedding? I would have Bloody Marys, champagne, oysters, a barbeque and a nice big salad"



"I catered a Moroccan themed wedding once"

