



Susan Gage is a talented chef who gives small parties a homey feel.

CATERERS TO CALL

TH E S E caterers do parties of all cuisines and sizes, from intimate dinners to big blowouts. Prices listed include the cost of waiters and bartenders, though many caterers will do food drop-offs for less.

While most of these caterers are large with a battery of employees, there are plenty of one-person operations that do a good job at small parties. It would be impossible to unearth them all, but here's one we can vouch for: **Bridge Taylor Catering** (202-333-9673). Clients say Jayne Taylor, who works out of her home, makes delicious food.

Another option: ask the chef at a favorite restaurant to come to your house on a night she's not busy. The idea is to be creative; you don't have to limit yourself to caterers.

B&B Washington's Caterer, DC; 202-829-8640. A local institution. Lately, B&B

HERE ARE CATERERS FOR PARTIES BIG OR SMALL— PLUS, HOW TO FIND A BARTENDER OR WAITER AND WHERE TO RENT CHINA, CHAIRS, AND MORE

BY ALICIA ABELL

A small operation known for its delicious desserts. It can also do theme menus, like Caribbean and Southwestern. Minimum price for full service: \$500. No minimum for drop-off.

Capitol Catering, Alexandria; 703-739-1030. Very attentive to clients. Popular hors d'oeuvres include miniature beef Wellingtons and salmon skewers; a signature entrée is veal chops with chanterelle mushroom sauce. Minimum for a drop-off: \$500.

Catering by Mancini's, Alexandria; 703-838-3660. Mancini's is also a wholesale baker—it provides baked goods for

has done lots of Thai-inspired dishes, like grilled chicken with ginger, cilantro, and mint. \$40 minimum per person for a cocktail party, \$50 for dinner. Minimum of ten people.

Bittersweet Catering, Alexandria; 703-549-2708.

XandO and Barnes & Noble—so its breads and desserts are good. Starting cost: \$16 to \$18 a person. Minimum of ten people.

Catering by Windows, Alexandria; 703-519-3500. Sue Fischer is known for her personalized service and is particularly recommended for kosher menus.

Catering Co. of Washington, Northwest DC; 202-364-8883. Owner Elizabeth Petty specializes in homey foods made with flair. Minimum of ten people; no minimum cost.

Charles Levine Caterers, Owings Mills; 301-913-0444. An experienced, skilled caterer who makes a mean macadamia torte and good breads. Minimum price: \$600.

Design Cuisine, Arlington; 703-979-9400. One of the area's best. Stilton-and-quince puff pastries are a popular appetizer, as is seared tuna; roast Angus beef with onion-chanterelle compote is a favored entrée.

Federal City Caterers, Northwest DC; 202-408-9700. Known for excellent service. Baby lamb chops and crabcakes are recommended hors d'oeuvres; try the sea bass for a main dish. Minimum price per person: \$40 for cocktail party, \$80 to \$100 for dinner.

Festive Foods Catering, North Bethesda; 301-230-2700. Good for small events. Theme menus—like Asian noodles or Spanish tapas—are popular.

Occasions Caterers, Capitol Hill; 202-546-7400. One of the area's top caterers. Clients like the polenta baskets with chicken and the Moroccan lamb chops with apple-mint couscous. Minimum cost: \$25 for cocktail party, \$45 for dinner.

Ridgewells Caterer, Bethesda; 301-652-1515. Good for big events. Popular hors d'oeuvres are smoked duck on pecan crackers and cucumber cups with corn relish.

Ritz-Carlton at Pentagon City, Arlington; 703-415-5000 (ask for Alicia Geerlings). The Ritz, which also caters outside the hotel, has been doing lots of French-Asian and other fusion cuisines. Minimum price per person: \$55 for cocktail party, \$100 for full dinner.

Rock Creek Catering Co., Silver Spring; 301-933-7747. Clients love chef Laura Schwartz's jasmine rice cakes with smoked salmon and her plum-glazed lamb chops. Prices from \$28 to \$150 a person.

RSVP Catering, Fairfax; 703-573-8700. This newcomer is earning lots of praise. Client favorites include blackened tuna on Oriental crisps and a praline twill basket with sorbet and berries. Minimum order: \$100.

Susan Gage Caterers, Oxon Hill; 301-839-6900. Gage is a terrific chef who's easy to work with. She's recommended for small parties and making food with homey touches, like buttermilk chocolate-fudge cake. No set minimums.

Vailstar, Georgetown; 202-518-1295. Vailstar specializes in hors d'oeuvres and