

## Ask Us Anything

by Karen Vitt



Q. I have a food allergy. What are my options for a vegan or dairy-free or wheat-free, yet still attractive, cake?

A. The last thing you need on your wedding day is an allergic reaction to the cake — breaking out in hives or doubling over in pain is no honeymoon. But dietary restrictions need not lessen the sweetness of the occasion.

While many large bakeries are not able to accommodate dietary restrictions, due to pre-maid mixes and strict staff training, if you ask around it's easy to find a boutique bakery that will adjust recipes to fit your need. Also, some local bakeries specialize in allergy-friendly wedding cakes for dietary concerns — such as Piece of Cake in Portland, which offers an entire menu of wheat-free, dairy-free, gluten-free or sugar-free works of art.

Common allergens include wheat, dairy, nuts, raisins and coconut, so it really depends on your allergy to determine how difficult it will be to remove these items from the cake. Some ingredients — like nuts and raisins — can simply be left out, which is easy for almost any bakery to accommodate. But wheat-free, dairy-free or vegan cakes can be a little more complicated. However, that's not to say these cakes can't still be delicious and beautiful.

"Wheat-free is easier than dairy-free, and milk-free is easier than egg-free. Vegan cakes are the most complicated," says Debra Watkins of White Rose Bakery in Canby. For wheat allergies, one of Watkins' recommendations is a flourless chocolate cake, which has a rich brownie taste. "Wheat free cakes are a little bit more dry and dense, but still taste good. If you put enough cocoa in, anything tastes good!" As for vegans, Watkins says they can find good cakes, too, though the frosting may not be as gourmet or silky as buttercream. But with the right substitutes and decorated with fresh fruit, vegan cakes can still be beautiful and delicious.

More good news? It won't necessarily cost more to have a special cake made, either. As Watkins points out, you're removing the most expensive ingredients — butter, eggs, milk — and replacing them with fruit juice and oils. And if it costs less to make the cake, it shouldn't be more expensive to buy it.

"There may be more limitations in making the cake, but it's possible to make an allergen-free wedding cake so good and attractive your guests won't know the difference," says Watkins.

For more advice from our "wediquette" expert Karen Vitt, pick up a copy of the Fall/Winter 2008 issue of *Oregon Bride*, on newsstands now!