



[Above] Scrumptious venison is on the menu at Ness Walk



[Above] Enjoy a heavenly plateful at Blairquhan Castle

[Above] Blairquhan Castle's impressive exteriors are photo-opp gold

[Above] "Blairquhan Castle has been a proud winner of VisitScotland's 'Taste Our Best' award for five years running. All in all, eating here is a truly unforgettable experience!"  
Nan Li,  
Blairquhan Castle



[Above] Euan and David hard at work at Achnagairn Castle



[Below] Wood slices add a rustic touch at Achnagairn Castle

Got eyes bigger than your belly? You're not alone. A very hungry Zoë Boothby searches out Scotland's best foodie venues, all guaranteed to dish up a meal to remember

# FOOD *of Love*

Like a lot of people, if I'm eating at a place I've never been to before, I'll spend a while online poring over the menu, whittling down the options so I know exactly what I'll be ordering when I get there. If that wasn't enough, though, I'll also check out the geotag on Instagram to see if I can spot my chosen dish on the feed - and if it doesn't live up to expectations, it's back to the drawing board. It is, I admit, quite obsessive.

The thing is, food is important. That's why, as much as weddings are about love and commitment and that, we've lost count of the number of couples who've told us they put good grub at the top of their priority list - after all, the way to everyone's heart is through their stomach. So we decided it was high time we learnt more about the fare on offer at Scotland's venues. First, a word of warning: this is going to make you very hungry...

## NESS WALK

Ness Walk may be the new kid on the block, but it has had no problem making waves in the industry. The luxury hotel opened in Inverness in July, and its entry into the wedding market has thrilled epicures everywhere. Take a peek at the menu: roast fillet of beef with red wine jus and foie gras truffle croquette; courgette roulade with curried chickpea mousse; blueberry soufflé with pistachio ice-cream... "Dishes change regularly to reflect the flavours and tastes of the season, with flair and exemplary presentation providing an aesthetic and delicious banquet to delight," says marketing executive Arran McAleer. "With delicate canapés, evening buffets and five-star service, a wedding at Ness Walk is a foodie's paradise and the perfect start to this new chapter in your life."

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

## BLAIRQUHAN CASTLE

We're big fans of unapologetic luxury, and it doesn't get much grander than Blairquhan Castle's wedding menus. Impressive, sure, but what we really rate is the Ayrshire venue's commitment to sustainability. "Here at Blairquhan, we believe that local food is always the best," offers general manager Nan Li. "Wherever possible, we source all our food and beverage in Scotland so that our dishes always taste fresh and delicious - plus, this approach helps reduce our carbon footprint, so it's environmentally friendly too. Having your big day at the castle means that not only will you have a fairytale setting for your ceremony and reception, but you'll also enjoy a gastronomic experience for the wedding meal." We'll happily tuck into guilt-free sea bass with braised fennel, wild mushrooms and lemon-and-dill potatoes, or chicken with black pudding potato cake and charred shallot. Yum.

[www.blairquhan.co.uk](http://www.blairquhan.co.uk)

## ACHNAGAIRN CASTLE

Awards are always a solid indication of a venue's strengths, and in the case of Achnagairn Castle, this couldn't be any clearer: food, food, food. Euan and David, who run the kitchen at Table Manors, the in-house restaurant, have both won the Young Highland Chef of the Year award, while the Inverness-shire establishment itself has received two AA Rosettes for culinary excellence and took the Restaurant of the Year trophy at the 2018 Highland and Islands Food & Drink Awards. "The

restaurant offers delicious and adventurous tasting menus - including some suitable for vegetarians - and Sunday lunch options which can be enjoyed by our guests, locals and visitors to the estate," says owner Gillian Lacey-Solymar. "We look forward to welcoming lots of new faces over the autumn and winter, and can't wait to show off our incredible food." There might not be any room in the trophy cabinet, but we've definitely got space in our belly for lamb, halibut and sea trout.

[www.perfect-manors.com](http://www.perfect-manors.com)

## LODGE ON LOCH LOMOND

Lots of couples fall for this charmer because it's a spectacular spot for an outdoor ceremony thanks to its unparalleled position on the banks of the loch. What you might not realise, however, is that the day is only set to get sweeter from there, thanks to the award-winning fare. "Our menus at the Lodge are inspired by the fantastic local produce of Scotland's larder," enthuses the venue's Sandra Cunningham. "Our wedding banqueting selector provides a wide variety of dishes that we hope will appeal to the different tastes of all our couples, but we are also happy to produce something bespoke should that be required." To be honest, when you've got the choice of Ayrshire pork belly with a wholegrain mustard and cider jus, or seared duck breast with roasted sweet potatoes, cauliflower puree and maple raisins, we're not sure why you'd want to stray from the menu.

[www.loch-lomond.co.uk](http://www.loch-lomond.co.uk)





[Above] Lodge on Loch Lomond offers up meat and two veg, but not as you know it



[Above] Loch Ness Country House Hotel's dishes include herb-crusted cod, langoustines and surf clams



[Above] Watch dusk fall from the cosy comfort of Loch Ness Country House Hotel

“WE HAVE PUT GREAT CARE AND THOUGHT INTO CREATING A SET OF MENUS THAT USE SOME OF THE BEST LOCAL PRODUCE”



[Below] Any chef worth their salt should be able to serve up a cracking chocolate fondant à la Grand Central Hotel



[Above] Many a famous face has stayed at Glasgow's Grand Central Hotel

## LOCH NESS COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL

Fish fans, listen up. If you're keen to serve up a spectacular array of seafood, you've come to the right place. Loch Ness Country House Hotel's 'fruits de mer' centrepiece is laden with lobster, langoustines, mussels, crab, scallops, clams, cockles, prawns and oysters. Having said that, if shellfish is not your bag, you'll still have a whopping 80 dishes to choose from for the meal. Result. "We understand that catering for someone's special day is an opportunity for us to provide an experience that will live long in

the memories of our brides, grooms and their guests for many years to come," says head chef Adam Dwyer. "That's why we put as much passion and attention to detail into our wedding dining experiences as we do for our award-winning restaurant."

[www.lochnesscountryhousehotel.co.uk](http://www.lochnesscountryhousehotel.co.uk)

## GRAND CENTRAL HOTEL

We're of the opinion that, just because you're catering for a large contingent, it shouldn't mean you have to compromise on quality. Glasgow's Grand Central Hotel is in agreement. "Traditionally, high-volume banqueting menus have lacked quality and aesthetics," nods

head chef Zoltan Szabo. His new 'Gatherings' menu was designed to put a stop to this problem. "We've put great care and thought into creating a set of menus that use some of the best local produce, presenting the food in a way that exceeds the expectations of those attending high-volume events." Think dishes like whipped goat's cheese mousse with macerated heirloom tomatoes, avocado and olive with a ciabatta wafer; kedgeree-inspired tart with poached egg and wild rice; and Zoltan's signature Orkney scallops baked in the shell. We'll take ten, please.

[grandcentralhotel.co.uk](http://grandcentralhotel.co.uk)

## CAMBO GARDENS

We're long-time fans of Cambo Estate, which is why we were delighted to discover that its sister venue, Cambo Gardens, is equally agreeable - its historic stables and courtyard being a favourite for a pre-wedding dinner or post-event Sunday brunch. "The ethos at Cambo and my personal style of catering is super-relaxed, but with the highest standards of quality and presentation," says new head chef Gillian Veal. Kick off celebrations with a buffet, bursting with homemade breads, tagines (meat or veggie), tarts and tortillas, salad bowls and delectable cakes. Second and third helpings are advised.

[www.cambogardens.org.uk](http://www.cambogardens.org.uk)

## BARNBOUGLE CASTLE

Events at the breathtaking Barnbougle Castle (check out our shoot on page 30 if you don't believe us) are exclusively catered by Honeycomb & Co, a partnership that both parties are raving about. "One of the attractions of Barnbougle is the opportunity to use incredible produce from Rosebery Estates," explains Ian D'Annunzio-Green at Honeycomb. "Whether it's herbs foraged from the surroundings, Great British vermouth produced in the grounds, or stunning estate-reared pork and beef, our food really celebrates these ingredients, drawing inspiration from the land and sea." The canapés sound especially delish: Scotch beef fillet carpaccio and creamed artichoke with a tapenade tuile. Save one for me, please.

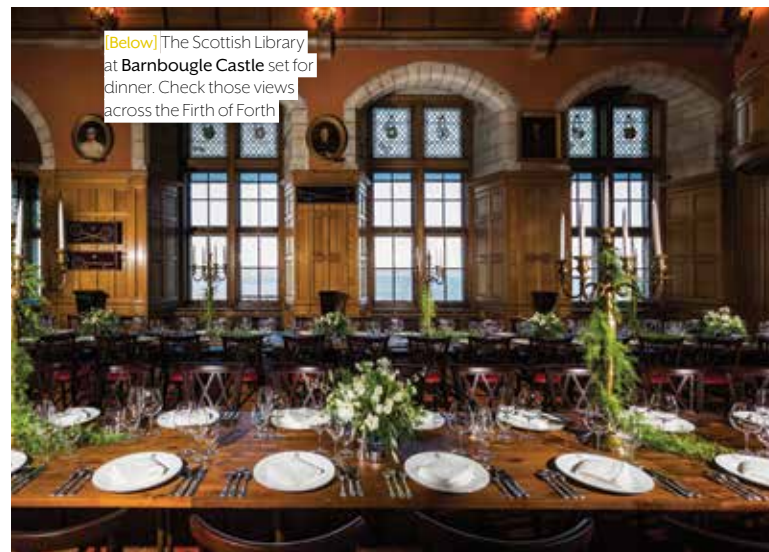
[roseberyvenues.co.uk](http://roseberyvenues.co.uk)

## THE BALMORAL

How does hot-smoked salmon cannelloni with Sound of Sleet langoustine, Mara seaweed cracker, cauliflower, lime and capers sound? Pretty good, right? And that's just the starter. Welcome to the Balmoral's Michelin-starred restaurant, Number One. "Dining here will be memorable on any occasion, but when it comes to weddings, we really have some fun," promises the venue's Gary Robinson.



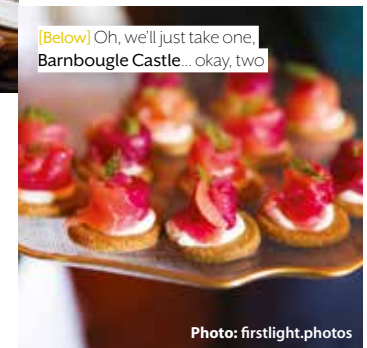
[Below] Fresh, seasonal produce is the name of the game at Cambo Gardens



[Below] The Scottish Library at Barnbougle Castle set for dinner. Check those views across the Firth of Forth



[Below] The Sir Walter Scott Suite at The Balmoral is certainly worthy of its famous namesake



[Below] Oh, we'll just take one... Barnbougle Castle... okay, two



[Above] Food almost too beautiful to eat at The Balmoral

"Our team in the kitchen love a challenge, so pulling together the dream menu to complement the perfect day is where we all get the chance to be creative." Count us in.

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

## DALSWINTON ESTATE

It isn't just grub that you've got to think about - there's the all-important drinks list to consider, too. Luckily, Dalswinton Estate in Dumfries has you covered. "We believe that a well-chosen drinks menu can make any wedding an event to remember, which is why we include our very own Berry & Co prosecco van as standard with our fully customisable drinks packages," reveals event co-ordinator Sophie Duncan. "Every aspect of your day is tailored to you, so if the groom wants a cocktail or the bride is a whisky drinker, we can customise your selection accordingly. All you have to do is pick your tipples and we'll be there to serve them." As well as prosecco, you can add on Pimm's, gin, beer or a choice of non-alcoholic drinks. Chin chin.

[www.dalswintonestateweddings.co.uk](http://www.dalswintonestateweddings.co.uk)

## FAIRMONT ST ANDREWS

By the time the plates are cleared, you might hear the odd grumble from people complaining they've no room left for wedding cake; tie the knot at Fairmont St Andrews, though, and no one will be refusing a slice no matter how much they've eaten. Couples have the opportunity to invest in a cake created by executive pastry chef Alexander Haebe, who is a master of flavours such as Sicilian pistachio, traditional Dundee fruit and double chocolate fudge. A top-notch way to follow up smoked salmon, daube of beef and chocolate hazelnut soufflé, we'd say.

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

## RUFFLETS

Head chef David Kinnes oversees catering and the in-house Seasons restaurant at Rufflets in St Andrews, and does so with an acute focus on sustainability. The venue's kitchen garden provides fresh vegetables, herbs and fruit, ideal when whipping up dishes like roast rump of Perthshire lamb, wild mushroom and pancetta fricassée with herb potatoes, greens and roasted garlic and rosemary sauce, or stovies, handmade burgers and pizzas for your buffet. That ought to hit the spot. "Rufflets has always been renowned for the quality of its wedding catering, which is such an important part of a couple's big day," says conference and events manager Louise Turner. "Our commitment to sourcing locally and seasonally, along with the team's passion for creating a memorable culinary experience, is what sets us apart."

[www.rufflets.co.uk](http://www.rufflets.co.uk) ♥



[Below] Keep your guests refreshed with the prosecco van at Dalswinton Estate



[Below] Luxuriate in the dining spaces at Fairmont St Andrews



[Below] Taste the delights of Rufflets' kitchen garden