



HOSTESS with the
MOSTESS:

Winter WEDDINGS

WRITTEN BY JESSICA COMEGYS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JARRETT WARREN

Cozy fire pits, dining family style, a reason to wear your grandmothers fancy fur stole! Some say winter is the most wonderful time of year, and if you agree, it may be wedding season for you.

An outdoor winter wedding might seem like a challenge, but it actually presents quite a special sweet spot, especially in the south. So many couples are intimidated by the weather factor in the winter that they miss out on a great opportunity. How many times have you enjoyed a perfect patio day in the middle of November? Or had a beautiful sunny day in January that would be perfect for cozying up with warm Irish coffee in that stunning coat you never get to wear?



What are the *Perks* of an outdoor winter wedding?

One of the major benefits of opting for a winter wedding day is that they are more unusual, so you have a more unique aesthetic already built into your wedding ceremony and reception. It also gives couples the opportunity to create a cozy setting for guests which means there's no need to shorten the celebration. In fact, the cooler weather can encourage people to stay on the dance floor and keep your party going strong as they'll be less likely to overheat and need a break from the fun.

➤ **More perks include:** unique flower options, affordability, more available dates, and lower travel cost.

Choosing flowers that are available in seasonal colors (dark pink, burgundy, white, green, red) will add ambience to any winter themed wedding. And although winter isn't known for being a top season for flowers, that's actually not true—there

are several gorgeous options that bloom during this time of year. Berries, pine cones, dusty miller, and eucalyptus are some of the most popular accents for winter wedding bouquets and centerpieces. Be sure to consult with your wedding florist to figure out exactly which flowers are in your budget and available for your date. Some of the most popular winter wedding flowers include:

Anemones, Amaryllis, Roses, Lilies, Ranunculus, Paperwhites and Poinsettias Don't forget about the greenery wedding decor. Fresh evergreens and eucalyptus will bring a cozy (and fragrant) element to your venue and can cost less than many flowers. Maybe even a touch of mistletoe? Place a sprig at your ceremony altar or hang it above your seats at the reception. It will give you and your brand new spouse an extra-sweet reason to share a kiss—as if you really needed one!



Serve dinner
Family style!

Probably the best part about serving a family style wedding dinner is that it makes your guest feeling like, well family! Reception tables can be a little awkward, especially for those guest sitting next to people they've never met. But passing platters and serving seconds across the table with one another is a great way to inspire conversation, warm things up and break the ice. It sounds simple, but it's true — the act of physically sharing a meal with someone makes getting to know them so much easier. Who knows, this may lead to a more populated dance floor!

Family style is also a great value, because you get all the appeal of the food served at the table without having to pay a full service staff to plate each individual course for 100 people. With most couples opting for passed entrees or buffet service, choosing this unconventional option will give your wedding that much more style and uniqueness, and will give the guests that sense that you really thought out the overall experience at your wedding.



WINTER *Holidays*

Winter's got a lot going on! Between Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day, there's a bunch of holidays you'll need to work around. While a New Year's Eve wedding sounds oh-so magical, many of your guests may already have their own plans. And we don't recommend a Christmas wedding for obvious reasons.

Here are a few dates to keep in mind:

- › Hanukkah – December
- › Kwanzaa – December
- › Christmas – December 25
- › New Year's Eve – December 31
- › New Year's Day – January 1
- › Martin Luther King Jr. Day – the third Monday of January
- › Super Bowl Sunday – typically the first weekend in February



Working with What's in *Season*

When you buy what's in season, you get food and flowers at the peak of their supply when costs are normally lower. Plus, when they're locally grown they don't need to be shipped halfway around the globe. So not only do you save money, but you also reduce your carbon footprint. Win-win.

What better way to keep your guests warm and cozy than with good old-fashioned comfort food? Luckily, winter produce is full of starchy goodness: sweet potatoes, parsnips, and all manner of squash. Roasted root vegetables and steaming bowls of spicy gumbo will no doubt make everyone happy.

For dessert, there's no better way to treat your guests than to offer a hot cocoa bar, with a spiked option of course.

Also, consider warm sweet potato pie, pecan pies, and gingerbread as an alternative (or addition to!) your wedding cake.



Outdoor Rentals

With so many beautiful options out there these days, there's no reason not to have an outdoor reception! Our friends at Pelican Tents & Events provided this beautiful clear tent that we were able to see the stars and the moonlight through once the sun went down. Heaters, string lights, chandeliers... everything you need to make a cozy magical evening.



One Skillet Apple Cider Chicken

- 1½ pounds of chicken thighs, about 4 thighs (bone in and skin on)***
 - 1½ tablespoons of olive oil**
 - ¾ cup of apple cider**
 - 2 apples (I used 1 granny smith and 1 gala apple)****
 - 2 teaspoons Fresh thyme or ½ teaspoon of dried (can swap for rosemary if desired)**
 - 1 medium sweet onion, cut into half inch pieces**
 - 1 teaspoon of garlic powder**
 - 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cut into bite sized chunks about ½ inch thick**
 - 1 tablespoon of Dijon mustard (I used whole grain dijon)**
 - 1 teaspoon of cornstarch mixed with 4 tablespoons of water (or more apple cider)**
- Stir in the apples and cook for an additional 3 minutes.
 - Add in onion thyme, and garlic powder. Stir to combine and cook for an additional few minutes.
 - Mix in the apple cider and mustard making sure to mix it well and cover everything in the pan with the cider. Making little wells in the skillet, add the chicken back in, cover, and cook for an additional few minutes.
 - Remove chicken and add in the cornstarch slurry. Mix thoroughly and let sit for a couple minutes to thicken the sauce.
 - Divide into 4 servings, topping the chicken and veggies with the sauce, and ENJOY!!

NOTES

* You can swap this thighs for chicken breasts if you would, but note that it will likely change the cooking time a bit. Make sure to temperature check your chicken to ensure it is cooked through.

** I tried this with and without the skin on the apples and preferred it with the skin OFF. It's just a little prettier with the skin on :)

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Cook Time: 15 minutes

INSTRUCTIONS

- In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium high heat. Add in the chicken thighs and brown for 5-7 minutes per side depending on the size of your chicken. Remove from skillet and place on a plate covered with foil. The chicken will cook a bit more while it rests.
- Turn the heat down to medium and add in the sweet potato chunks. Cook for 3 minutes.

