

Make life easier by booking bridal shower venue

You want the intimate atmosphere of a family bridal shower, but unfortunately it's a big family. You have to find room for the bride's great aunts, and cousin Sue has just told you she's a vegan.

For some families, the solution is to find a venue that offers an intimate home-like atmosphere, but one with professional kitchens and caterers, not to mention enough tables and chairs.

"We do a great deal of bridal showers, anywhere from intimate showers of 12 to ones of 40 or so," says Adam Harman, sales manager for The Rockfish in the historic neighborhood of Eastport in Annapolis, Md. "With the atmosphere we have, casually elegant, it's almost like someone's house."

The Rockfish offers an events package with a two-course limited menu ranging from \$15 to \$23 per person for lunch and \$26 to \$40 for dinner. An optional dessert course is \$7 per person.

While The Rockfish normally needs about a month's notice, Harman warns that during the peak wedding times, May, June and September, those planning a shower should book as soon as possible.

If you want the spectacular setting of the Cylburn Arboretum or the Howard Peter Rawlings Conservatory, plan on booking a year in advance.

The mansion has four rooms and a wide, covered porch, as well as a full-size commercial kitchen and prep room. The whole mansion can accommodate 120 to 130 people for a formal sit-down dinner, or up to 200 in an informal setting. The porch can handle another 100 people. To rent the entire mansion, which does not have catering on site, is \$1400, but the individual rooms can be rented for \$250 per room per hour.

The prices are the same for the conservatory, which can handle 100 people for a sit-down event and 300 for an informal event. The conservatory has a more modern feel, and the rooms, filled with flowers, have themes, palm, orchid, Mediterranean and tropical.

Another popular spot for wedding showers is the Mt. (cq) Washington Tavern, which offers four spaces. The Chesapeake Room upstairs is the most intimate, with a

fireplace and wood-paneled walls, and can accommodate up to 30 people. Also upstairs is the Pimlico Room, with an equine theme, that can accommodate 30 to 60. The Sky Bar, which can host 50 to 80, is a seasonal rooftop bar, and banquet manager Michael J. Dowgiewicz says it is a popular option for wedding showers, although one of the other rooms can be a backup in case of rain. Finally, if it's a really gigantic shower, with a minimum of 85 guests, the Garden can accommodate up to 150 and even more if the Sky Bar is included.

A popular menu choice for showers is a brunch buffet, available in two versions for \$16.95 and \$18.95 per head.

Dowgiewicz says the advantage to using a commercial venue is that "no matter what, there's always more food down in my kitchen. And when you're done, you just pick up the gifts and leave, leaving me with the wrapping paper and the mess."