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SWEET ENDINGS

For the grand finale, exquisite miniature wedding cakes in soft pastel hues, created by Michael Vandergoest of The Rittenhouse Hotel, are as delicious as they are beautiful. **TOP:** This small round cake is accented with a mint-green fondant ribbon, decorative stitching and silver dragées; **ABOVE:** A Wedgwood-style, three-tier cake is decorated with fondant ribbons, Swiss dots and floral scrollwork.

Ice is hot. The vodka luge, an ice sculpture that takes its inspiration from the winding Olympic luge track, can be found at The Rittenhouse Hotel in Philadelphia. When a guest orders a martini, the bartender pours a measure of liquid down the chute. Gravity directs it to the waiting glass, "and by the time it gets to the end, it's chilled," says Keith Wagner, assistant general manager at The Ritten-

house. Only nonflavored vodkas are used because flavored vodkas leave a bit of their essence behind on the ice.

The Rittenhouse also can carve an "ice bar" entirely from ice, adding the family's initials upon request. "It looks like the bartender's working behind a big glacier," says Rema Giordano, director of catering at The Rittenhouse.

The Perfect Plate

All around the Philadelphia region, sophisticated tastes are putting a whole new spin on wedding-day menus

By Maria Gallagher ■ Photographs by Kate Swan

STEP UP TO THE VODKA LUGE, POSITION YOUR GLASS AND catch your cocktail at the finish line after it slides down an icy runway. Graze on surprisingly tiny re-creations of favorite comfort foods—such as spaghetti and meatballs—delightfully recast as elegant hors d'oeuvres. Thrill to the chill of an icy intermezzo before the main course, which might be a game bird, an Asian dish or a vegetarian platter. Marvel at the show-stopping cake with luscious layers that seem to float on air. Then applaud the newlyweds for hiring a nonprofit agency to handle one of their wedding services.

The imaginary wedding reception we've just described incorporates many of the food and beverage trends that

ELEGANCE ON ICE

A refreshing intermezzo of cassis or pink-champagne sorbet is served in individually sculpted ice bowls, created by Michael Vandergeest, pastry chef at Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Hotel, garnished with a napkin and fresh blossoms from Evantine Design, Philadelphia. Turn to page 164 for additional information.

SETTING THE MOOD

A miniature plum calla lily, entwined with a hosta leaf and cinched with silver organza ribbon, tops each silver charger along with a menu card and an ivory napkin. A centerpiece of autumn dapple hydrangea, lavender surprise spray roses, miniature purple calla lilies, candy blanca roses, jade hypericum berries and hosta leaves adds a splash of color to this formal setting at The Mary Cas-satt Tea Room in The Ritten-house Hotel; floral arrangement by Brian Kappra of Evantine Design. Accessories include an embroidered pale-blue table-runner, Evantine Design.



TOAST ANYONE?

Cool cocktails are served on a silver tray with a blanket of fresh blue hydrangea petals at The Rittenhouse Hotel, from left: a flute of sparkling champagne rimmed with ice-blue sugar; a classic Cosmopolitan; and a Melon Ball garnished with an orange twist; all drinks created by Deborah Cullmann, The Rittenhouse Hotel; flowers by Evartine Design.

