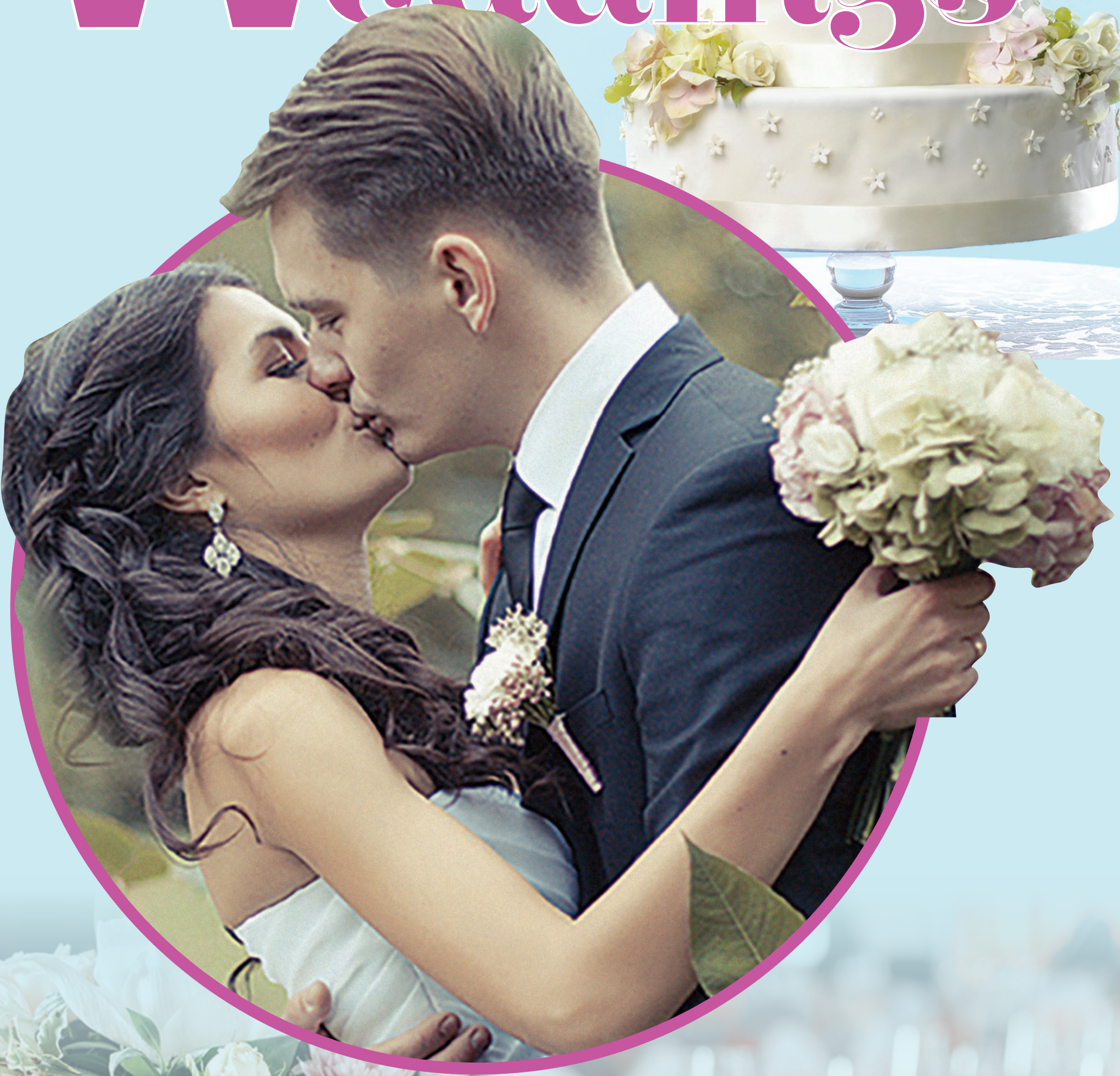


W

Planning your Happily Ever After

Weddings



QUESTIONS

to ask

before booking

a photographer

Various components combine to make weddings beautiful and memorable. Couples rely on photographers to capture the smiles and moments that helped make their events unique and to ensure the big day is remembered for years to come.

The trusted wedding resource The Knot notes that an internal study found that, among 27,000 couples who got married in 2019, an average of \$2,400 was spent on a wedding photographer to document their big day.

Couples who want to find the best photographer for their wedding day can ask several questions before making their final decision.

WHAT STYLE DO YOU SPECIALIZE IN?

Photographers may be able to shoot various styles of photos, but may specialize in a specific type. For example, some photographers specialize in photojournalism, while others may excel at portraiture. Going with a photographer who has the most expertise shooting the style you prefer will help produce the desired results.

WHO WILL BE SHOOTING MY WEDDING?

Certain photography studios have several photographers working under one roof. Just because you meet with one does not necessarily mean that photographer will be on site, unless it is specified in the contract.

HAVE YOU EVER WORKED AT MY VENUE BEFORE?

Photographers may be familiar with several local wedding venues and houses of worship. A photographer who has experience working in the locations where couples will tie the knot and subsequently celebrate might produce the best results, but lack of experience with particular venues need not exclude other professionals.

CAN WE SEE A FULL GALLERY OF A RECENT WEDDING?

According to Brides magazine, unlike an album or a highlight gallery, a full gallery provides a better sense of a photographer's style and attention to detail.

WILL PHOTOS BE COLOR BALANCED AND RETOUCHEDED?

Skilled photographers are capable of capturing winning photos. But photos can be enhanced further in the studio with retouching software to bring out specific effects. Some photographers will polish all proofs, while others only will work on the images ultimately ordered. Confirm retouching details before signing the contract.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE PHOTO PACKAGES?

A detailed price list helps you compare one photographer to another and decide which el-

ements are covered. Additional prints, having a photographer's assistant, ordering albums for the parents, or ordering a large framed print can alter costs significantly. Explore all prices to ensure you're getting the best value. In addition, consider how many hours of event coverage are included in the price.

WHAT IS THE PAYMENT TIMELINE?

Photographers may accept deposits for their services but expect a different time-

line of payment. Some may require payment in full before the wedding, while others may offer a payment plan that includes a final payment when picking up proofs or albums.

Wedding photography is one of the essential elements of a wedding and helps tell the story of couples' special day. Asking key questions can help couples find a photographer who will produce the desired results.



How to BUILD a wedding BUDGET

without breaking the bank

Wedding planning is a unique experience unlike any endeavor most couples will ever encounter. Much effort goes into planning a wedding, and that includes building a budget that ensures the big day will be fun without breaking the bank.

Most couples planning a wedding have never tied the knot before, so it can be difficult to determine a reasonable amount to spend. It's easy to go overboard when planning a wedding, and couples may find their list of wants and, consequently, their expenses, growing as they get into the weeds of wedding planning. Though it might require some difficult decisions, couples can keep these tips in mind so they can build a wedding budget that won't land them in debt after saying, I do.

- Determine funding. The days when a bride's parents would finance the wedding entirely on their own are largely a thing of the past. According to a recent WeddingWire Newlywed

Report, parents now pay for 52 percent of wedding expenses. As couples begin establishing a wedding budget, it's imperative that they first determine who, if anyone, will be helping them finance the big day. Fifty-two percent of wedding expenses is a significant amount of money, but in that scenario, couples will still need to come up with roughly half of the money needed to fund their weddings. Couples without substantial savings may be forced to cut back in order to avoid beginning their life as a married couple in debt.

- Make a list of potential expenses. Location will be a significant factor when determining potential expenses. For example, a 2022 ValuePenguin analysis of data from The Wedding Report found that the average wedding in Massachusetts cost roughly \$30,500 in 2020, while couples tying the knot in Arkansas spent around \$12,500 on their weddings. With such wild fluctuations, it's important that couples get an accurate estimate of how much it may cost them to get married in a given city. Couples who met in a city and still live in a city but grew up in a suburb might save a considerable sum by getting married in their hometowns. Compare and contrast prices in locales you're considering, and then

build your budget accordingly. This can help you avoid sticker shock and going over budget. Notable expenses to budget include the venue, attire (i.e., wedding dress and tuxedo rental), hairstyle and makeup, entertainment, photography, and transportation, among others.

- Make a list of what's most important. Most couples will have to compromise in order to avoid taking on debt to finance their weddings. An earnest discussion about what's most important to each person can ensure you both get what you want. Each person can make a list of their priorities, ranking them from most important to least important. Once lists are shared, couples can see where their priorities converge and where they diverge. Any items that rank low on each person's list of priorities can be afforded less funding, while those that are high on each list can take up more of the budget, if necessary.

- Commit to a limit before spending a dime. Committing to a limit before spending a dime can help couples keep wedding costs more manageable. Once that number is defined, couples can then work within its parameters, which can make potentially difficult decisions a little easier by narrowing options at a time when options can seem endless.

A well-planned budget can be just what couples need to begin married life on strong financial footing.



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What's in at weddings,

and what's being left out



Wedding Trends

THE CELEBRATIONS



By LILY BYRNE
Staff Reporter
lbyrne@cortlandstandard.com

While weddings themselves are a tradition, the traditions and trends within them change each year, industry professionals say. Recently, brides have been wanting sparklers, lavender and baby's breath.

THE FLOWERS

Lavender was the most popular color in wedding floral arrangements, said Julie Lilley, owner of the Cortland Flower Shop on North Main Street in Cortland.

Lavender roses and pink peonies were some of the most requested flowers, Lilley said. Cascading bouquets were requested often, which makes the flowers look like they are trailing from the bride's hands.

Ashley Paul, wedding planner and floral designer for C&A Event Planning in Binghamton, said wedding floral arrangements are more about vases of flowers, rather than traditional greenery, like pampas grass.

"Baby's breath is kind of making a massive comeback," Paul said. "A lot of people want clouds of it, or big puffy arches."

THE RINGS

As far as rings go, women are still vouching for flashy, solitaire rings, with another style gaining popularity recently, said Jerry Robinson, owner of Robinson Jewelers in Cortland.

"Solitaire diamonds are always the most popular, but coming as a close second in the industry has been the halo mountings," Robinson said, where the center diamond is surrounded by smaller diamonds.

"We've seen a lot of people sprinkle in tradition within their ceremony, while still not embracing super formal traditions and ceremonies," Paul said.

THE DECOR

A lot of 2023 brides embraced bold colors, rather than muted shades. Minimalism is also a growing theme, Paul said.

"A lot of people are doing super-heavy candles on tables, because they want that romantic, elegant vibe," Paul said. "I feel like it's almost more of a minimal effect, but making up for it with really pretty flowers in their bud vases, and lots of candles."

THE CELEBRATIONS

Julie and David Bean, owners of Oneida venue Bean Acres in Oneida, say many traditions have been left behind the past few years.

"They're really not doing the garter and the flower-tossing and all that stuff, hardly ever," Julie Bean said.

"The dollar dance has gone away, too," David Bean said. "Most of those things that, years ago, used to help make a honeymoon fun have kind of gone by the wayside."

"They're getting rid of that because they don't want to break up their reception party to do a formality," Paul said.

"We have signs that say 'pick a seat, not a side,'" Julie Bean said. "Years ago, you sat on the bride's side or you sat on the groom's side. Now, you just sit where you want to sit."

A few other new traditions have been popularized the past few years. Many couples have been choosing to do a private cake cutting between the two of them, Paul said.

Sparkler exits are a hugely popular new trend, Julie Bean said.



LILY BYRNE/STAFF REPORTER

A HALO-MOUNTED ENGAGEMENT RING AT ROBINSON FAMILY JEWELERS IN CORTLAND IS AMONG THE LATEST TRENDS IN WEDDINGS. THIS IS THE SECOND MOST-POPULAR RING STYLE FOR RECENT BRIDES AFTER THE TRADITIONAL SOLITAIRE.

"They all line up all their guests at the end of the night, and the bride and groom walk through with sparklers lit," she said.

Guests will be handed 3-foot long sparklers, David Bean said, lined up to form an archway for the bride and groom to exit through.

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DID YOU KNOW?



A number of variables affect how much engaged couples will spend on their weddings. Personal preferences, location and the season in which couples get married are just some of the factors that can affect the final cost of a wedding. However, one aspect couples can count on regarding wedding spending is the reception will likely require the most significant financial investment. The Knot 2022 Real Weddings Study found that the average cost of a wedding in 2022 was

\$30,000. The study also found that the biggest investment couples make is the venue. Couples indicated they spent about 37 percent of their overall budget on a wedding venue. Though some couples may spend more than that and others may spend less, engaged couples currently planning their weddings should know that the cost of the venue where they will tie the knot will likely end up requiring the most significant investment of any component related to their wedding.



A 2015 study from the Pew Research Center found that interfaith marriages are on the rise. Prior to 1960, only 19 percent of individuals married outside of their faiths. By 2010, that number had risen to 39 percent. According to data from the PRC, peo-

ple who are Jewish, mainline Protestant and religiously unaffiliated are somewhat more likely to be in relationships outside of their faiths compared to Hindus, Mormons and Muslims. Also, among unmarried people living together, nearly half were in interfaith relationships.

Jeffrey Foote Photography

the knot
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Tips

WHEN TOASTING THE HAPPY COUPLE



Many special moments unfold during a couple's wedding day. A bride's walk down the aisle, a married couple's first dance together and, of course, the moment couples say "I do" are just a few of the many memorable moments to take place during a wedding.

Another memorable moment, and one that couples have little to no control over, is the wedding toast. Toasting is a tradition that some historians trace to ancient Greece, which should give nervous toasters-to-be a little more confidence as the wedding day approaches. After all, given the lengthy history of toasting, it's likely that millions of people have toasted happy couples over the years. If millions of others can do it, then so can this year's crop of best men, maids of honor and proud parents who will be asked to raise a glass to happy couples. As a couple's big day draws near, those trusted with toasting the newlyweds can consider these tips.

▶ **Introduce yourself.** Unless it's a very intimate affair with only a handful of well-acquainted guests, introduce yourself before beginning your toast. This not only ensures everyone recognizes who you are, but also provides a simple way to begin your comments without feeling a need to impress.

▶ **Keep things lighthearted.** Though it's best to avoid being too informal, a lighthearted toast with a funny anecdote and/or a joke or two can help to maintain the jovial vibe of the reception.

▶ **Explain your relationship.** Maids of honor and best men are often chosen because they have a special relationship with the bride or groom. So it's alright to give a brief expla-

nation of that relationship and explain how much it means to you during the toast.

▶ **Toast the couple.** Even though most people toasting at a wedding have a special connection with just one half of the newly married couple, it's normal to toast the new couple and their happiness before closing your remarks. If you want to toast each person when delivering your remarks, speak to your counterpart (i.e., a maid of honor if you're the best man, or vice versa) for some special insight.

▶ **Keep your toast short.** Toasts need not be lengthy. In fact, toasts should be on the shorter side so everyone tasked with delivering a toast can do so in a reasonable amount of time.

▶ **Avoid winging it.** Plan your remarks ahead of time, even writing down your toast or at least organizing your ideas before you're handed the microphone. Winging it might seem like an option, but if you speak off-the-cuff you'll likely find yourself rambling and going off course. Planning also allows time to practice your remarks before the big day, which also can help to calm your nerves.

▶ **Remember you're among friends.** If need be, remind yourself before your toast that you're among friends. Speaking to a room full of people you know or are at least familiar with should help you avoid the nervousness that can come with speaking to a room filled with strangers.

Toasts are a beloved wedding tradition. People tasked with toasting the happy couple can follow some simple strategies to stay calm and deliver remarks couples will remember forever.

7 ways to incorporate some personality into your wedding

Weddings present an opportunity to embrace time-honored traditions. However, couples can be as tradition-minded or as unique in their wedding details as they desire. There's certainly room to let personalities shine through during both the ceremony and the reception.

Increasingly couples are seeking ways to set their celebrations apart from the scores that came before them. While one may not want to banish all customs, there are several ways for couples to inject their own personalities into the proceedings. Here are seven ways to inject some personality into a wedding.

1 Have custom-designed rings made. Couples can work with jewelers to have rings made to their specifications rather than buying only what is available in the cases. Furthermore, the rings do not have to be matching sets. A couple can select ring styles that complement one another but may be slightly different in design.

2 Cut out the cake. Many couples just aren't fans of traditional sponge cake with buttercream or fondant overlay, so why have that expensive, multi-tiered confectionary creation at the wedding? Instead, serve a more popular dessert. Dessert artists can whip up many impressive options and present them in dramatic (or cake-like) fashion. What about a tower of decadent brownies or a stack of fruit-and-cream-filled cupcakes?

3 Write the vows. Vows present an excellent way for couples to let their personalities shine through. Couples can showcase humor, compassion, quirks, and more with the messages they share with one another.

4 Customize table numbering. Seating cards traditionally guide guests to numbered tables around the reception hall. There is no rule that the tables have to be or-

ganized by numbers, however. Those who like movies can name the tables by movie titles. A couple that loves to travel can make the tables destinations around the world. Keep in mind the catering staff may ask that numbers also accompany the alternative system for ease of serving dinners and keeping orders straight.

5 Make a grand entrance. Couples need not feel beholden to taking a limousine to and from their weddings. Fans of the movie "Batman" can rent a Batmobile replica. Those who couldn't get enough of "Breaking Bad" may want to roll up in an RV. There's also the option of a horse-drawn carriage or a sports car.

6 Serve custom cocktails. Traditional drinks can be given custom names that pertain to details of the couple's lives or how they met. If someone is a microbrewer or makes his or her own wine, these boutique beverages also can be served.



7 Create a monogram. Use the monogram on save-the-dates, invitations, the home page of a wedding website, the ceremony program, and even on cocktail napkins at the reception. The continuity will help set the tone for the wedding.

Couples can allow their creativity and personality to shine through on their wedding day.



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How to curate your reception playlist

PLAYLIST



After a formal wedding ceremony, complete with processions and “I dos,” comes the part of a wedding that enables the happy couple to brush off the last vestiges of jitters and celebrate. A wedding reception marks the culmination of months or even years of planning. Oftentimes a hundred guests or more gather to dine, dance and toast to the prosperity of the newlyweds.

Certain components of a reception will prove more memorable than others. Food is one such element. The other component that tends to make a lasting impression is the music, which means couples curating reception playlists should do so with care and consideration.

Deejays and live bands can help couples choose music that fits the mood. But couples also can consider these tips when curating their reception playlists.

- Calculate your needs. Couples may wonder just how many songs they need for a standard reception. Unless you're working with extra-long songs, like “Paradise by the Dashboard Light” or “Bohemian Rhapsody,” most songs are around three minutes long. That means for a four-hour reception you'll need roughly 80 songs. However, plan for moments such as speeches/toasts and other breaks.

- Pair songs with key elements. Traditional weddings have certain mini-events within the receptions. Music enhances these moments. Jot down ideas for the following components:

- Bridal party entrance
- Couples' entrance
- First dance (wedding song)
- Mother/son, father/daughter dances
- Cake cutting song

- Garter/bouquet toss songs
- Spotlight dance
- Any other special element
- Select calm dinner music. After a day rushing around, most guests are looking forward to sitting down, conversing and, of course, eating. Cocktail hour and dinner music should be at a low volume and not too fast-paced. It certainly shouldn't drown out conversation. Musician Peter Lee Johnson performs violin covers of popular Top 40 songs, and his music may be an option when choosing songs to accompany food service. Postmodern Jukebox is a group of musicians who take modern songs and give them a bygone flair. Their tunes also can be fitting.

- Tie the music to the theme. Weddings that follow a specific theme, such as a beach wedding, can be enhanced by music that coordinates to that theme. Think steel drum bands, Hawaiian stylings or even Beach Boys surfing songs.

- Be mindful of older guests. Some seniors may appreciate modern music, but they also may want to hear songs from the era when they were growing up. Pepper the song list with options across various decades to keep as many people on the dance floor as possible.

- Select a classic first dance song. Some couples opt to go trendy when selecting their wedding songs. However, certain songs have withstood the test of time. Such options include “Have I Told You Lately That I Love You,” “Here and Now,” “Stand by Me,” “Amazed,” or “Just the Way You Are.”

These tips can help any couples put together a wedding reception playlist that will help to create a memorable celebration.

Songs tailor-made for FATHER-DAUGHTER DANCES

Weddings can be as novel or traditional as couples prefer. Couples who go the traditional route will undoubtedly include certain spotlight dances in the reception.

The father-daughter dance is a staple of a wedding reception. According to the experts at Fred Astaire Dance Studios, the history of father-daughter dances can be traced back decades. The dance once was one last nod to Dad before the bride's husband became the most important man in her life. Now it's more symbolic of general love and affection.

Times have certainly changed from the first father-daughter dances and this tradition no longer carries the same meaning. In fact,

retaining showcases of fancy footwork to songs of all types. The song should match the vibe of the wedding. That said, certain songs seem tailor-made for the times during the reception when love and gratitude are expressed during these bittersweet dances.

COUNTRY

- “The Man Who Loves You the Most,” Zac Brown Band
- “My Little Girl,” Tim McGraw
- “Just Fishin’,” Trace Adkins

BIG BAND

- “Unforgettable,” Nat King Cole
- “The Way You Look Tonight,” Frank Sinatra
- “Swinging on a Star,” Bing Crosby



despite what the name may imply, father-daughter dances needn't take place with a father at all, especially if he passed away or is not in the bride's life. She can choose any special person, whether a father figure, uncle, brother, mentor, etc. to honor during the dance.

Traditionally the father-daughter dance (and mother-son dance) takes place immediately following the newlyweds' first dance together. However, some opt to have it after the toasts or before the cake cutting. Couples can make their preferences known prior to the reception and schedule these dances any time they desire, especially since they are frequently preceded by a special announcement.

While many brides prefer to dance to a slow-paced, heartfelt song, this needn't always be the case. In recent years, some daddy-daughter duos have opted to put on shows with humorous dances or even en-

INDIE/SINGER-SONGWRITER

- “You've Got a Friend,” James Taylor
- “Let it Be Me,” Ray LaMontagne
- “Father and Daughter,” Paul Simon
- “Wildflowers,” Tom Petty
- “Constellations,” Jack Johnson

ROCK

- “Sweet Child O' Mine,” Guns N' Roses
- “When You Need Me,” Bruce Springsteen
- “Scarlet Begonias,” Grateful Dead

R&B

- “Ain't that Love,” Ray Charles
- “Daddy,” Beyoncé
- “Dance with My Father,” Luther Vandross
- “Love of My Life,” Brian McKnight

TRIED AND TRUE

- “Butterfly Kisses,” Bob Carlisle
- “Wonderful World,” Louis Armstrong
- “Hero,” Mariah Carey

There is nothing quite like the love a mother has for her children. When it comes time for a son to get married, Mom has already seen him through plenty of milestone moments like birthdays, proms, graduations, and other achievements that showcased his transition from boy to man.

A wedding is a momentous occasion in a family's life. During a wedding, couples opt to show their love and gratitude to their parents or guardians in many ways, including through traditional dances. The mother-son dance gives the groom an opportunity to honor the special woman in his life who saw him through thick and thin. Much like the father-daughter dance, the mother-son dance traditionally takes place during the reception after the newlyweds take their own first turn around the dance floor. However, this spotlight dance also can occur at other times during the festivities.

Typically the groom chooses a song with the right sentiments, but the decision also can be a joint effort. There are no right or wrong answers when it comes to song selection. However, for those who need some inspiration, certain songs are tried-and-true options.

MAKE MEMORIES with mother-son dances



- “How Sweet It Is,” James Taylor
- “You Raise Me Up,” Josh Groban
- “Time After Time,” Cyndi Lauper
- “Letter to My Mother,” Edwin McCain
- “Mother Like Mine,” The Band Perry
- “God Only Knows,” The Beach Boys
- “Beautiful Boy,” John Lennon
- “Wonderful Tonight,” Eric Clapton
- “The First Lady in My Life,” Paul Todd
- “Because You Loved Me,” Celine Dion
- “You're My Best Friend,” Queen
- “Thank You Mom,” Good Charlotte
- “The Wind Beneath My Wings,” Bette Midler
- “Forever Young,” Rod Stewart
- “You'll Be in My Heart,” Phil Collins

With so much on their docket in relation to wedding planning, engaged couples can be forgiven if certain components garner less attention than others. The ceremony and reception are bound to stay on couples' radar, but what about the time in between saying "I do" and cutting a rug on the reception room dance floor?

Cocktail hours are a great way to keep guests entertained between the ceremony and the reception. Many couples use this period to take their bridal party wedding photos, so offering guests a little food and some drinks during a cocktail hour can benefit everyone. Planning a cocktail hour is not a significant undertaking, but couples can keep a few pointers in mind as they plan this interim period between the ceremony and reception.

- Opt for an outdoor cocktail hour when possible. Couples tying the knot in spring, summer or fall at a venue with ample outdoor entertaining space can choose to host the cocktail hour outside. This reduces the likelihood that guests will feel cramped and it also sets a positive tone for the remainder of the evening. A balcony, patio or rooftop entertaining area can be great spaces for guests to mingle prior to the reception.

- Offer seating. Cocktail hours tend to be stand-up affairs where guests mingle with long-lost friends or relatives while enjoying some light hors d'oeuvres. However,



SIMPLE TIPS TO PLAN

a fun and relaxing cocktail hour

older guests or guests with small children will appreciate some seating. Couples need not ensure there's a seat for each guest, but some strategically located high-tops and more traditional tables for guests with mobility issues can ensure anyone who needs to sit down can do so.

- Give guests something to do. If the cocktail hour will be a full hour or more, couples can consider ways to help guests pass the time. Some may be content to relax and chat with friends and family over a drink, but others may grow a little bored as the hour drags on. A photobooth or selfie station so couples can have a ready-made wedding album before the reception begins can be fun for guests. For less formal affairs, consider providing some popular outdoor games, like cornhole and bocce.

- Set a tone with music. Music can help set the tone for a cocktail hour, which is not meant to get the ball rolling on the dancing-heavy revelry to come during the reception. Some simple instrumental music, whether it's provided by a live string quartet or pre-recorded, can establish the cocktail hour as a peaceful period to relax, chat, eat a little, and enjoy a drink before the reception begins. Reserve the dance music for when the reception hits full swing.

It's easy to overlook the cocktail hour when planning a wedding. However, some simple tips can ensure guests enjoy the time between the ceremony and reception.

The benefits to hosting a wedding ceremony and reception at the same venue

Streamlining the wedding planning process can help couples feel relaxed and enable them to more fully enjoy their big day. Hosting a wedding ceremony and reception at the same location is one way to streamline and simplify the planning process.

According to the wedding resource *Here Comes the Guide*, all-in-one venues are preferred by the majority of modern engaged couples. Couples contemplating such an approach can consider the following benefits to tying the knot and hosting the reception at the same venue.

- Streamlined planning: Rather than having to coordinate with two places, all of couples' attention can be directed to one location and working with one party coordinator. This can reduce the propensity for mix-ups.

- Ease of transport: Figuring out how to move between multiple locations and schedule hired vehicles and the like can be a chore. With one venue, guests simply arrive and are done with travel until the festivities end.

- Seamless transition: Sometimes there can be an awkward period between

the ceremony and the reception. In such situations, a ceremony may end but the cocktail hour is still an hour or two away. A ceremony and reception in one locale can eliminate the gap, as such venues typically begin the cocktail hour a short time after the ceremony has ended.

HOSTING A CEREMONY AND RECEPTION AT A SINGLE LOCATION CAN BENEFIT COUPLES WHO WANT TO SIMPLIFY AND STREAMLINE THEIR WEDDING PLANNING.

- Better guest attendance: Guests who may find it challenging to get to two different locations, particularly those who don't drive or must rely on public transportation or a taxi, may find a single-location wedding more convenient.

- Outdoor ceremony: Couples who want to exchange

vows outdoors often can do so when they have one wedding location because the nuptials are taking place outside of a house of worship, which may not allow for an outdoor wedding due to the sanctity of the location.

- Fewer travel worries: With a single location, it makes it much easier if inclement weather dampens the occasion because there is far less traveling involved.

Couples can keep in mind that a single-location wedding may come with some challenges. Unless the location is on the grounds of a house of worship, the wedding may lack the religious or spiritual component that some couples aspire to. Also, weather can cause issues if couples had hoped to have the ceremony outdoors and must move it into the same space as the reception as a plan B, necessitating a turnover of the room. Couples also may be limited in their photo backdrops, as there will not be two separate places where photos are taken, particularly if the wedding space is limited.

Hosting a ceremony and reception at a single location can benefit couples who want to simplify and streamline their wedding planning.

Dig into these WEDDING CAKE options



Something sweet comes near the end of a wedding reception and that is the joy the couple experiences knowing they have their entire lives ahead of them to enjoy together. However, there is another sweet treat that is shared near the conclusion of the wedding and it is typically served with tea and coffee: the wedding cake.

Wedding cake traditions can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Cakes represented good luck and fertility for the couples tying the knot. The first wedding cakes were rather bland and breadlike, representing purity and virginity. Some were quite like the fruitcake now enjoyed during the holiday season. Eventually wedding cakes transformed into the sweet confections that are known today. The modern wedding cake as most know it debuted at the 1882 wedding of Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany. His wedding cake was actually the first to be completely edible. Previously, some cakes featured wooden broomstick pillars covered in icing, but the Duke's cake used a hardened type of icing, according to Edible Art Bakery and Dessert Café.

Couples today have many options when picking their wedding cakes. The following are some wedding cake tidbits to chew on.

- Couples can choose among various cake styles. Many opt for a classic style, which is typically a white or ivory tiered cake with simple, elegant decorations. Rustic cakes may be much less ornate, while modern cakes may be rectangular or square and feature clean lines and minimalist decoration. The cake should fit the overall theme and scope of the wedding as it is another

complementary component of the larger celebration.

- Wedding cakes can be quite costly. *Wedding Wire* estimates the average wedding cake costs around \$500. One way for couples to save on their cake is to have a faux cake on display, with one tier that is made from cake and can be cut. Guests will then be served slices of a sheet cake that is much less expensive.

- Couples have many flavors to choose from. Vanilla is classic and quite popular because it appeals to a vast number of people. Lemon, chocolate, and carrot are some other popular cake flavors.

- When it comes to frosting a cake, there are various outer coatings that will encapsulate the cake to make it both beautiful and durable. Buttercream, Swiss meringue, fondant, cream cheese, and ganache all can be used in various applications. Some bakers attest that Swiss meringue, due to the addition of egg whites, makes it a more stable option over traditional buttercreams, particularly during warm weather. Of course, couples can opt for a "naked cake," which usually has a scant amount of frosting so that the cake underneath peeks through.

- A groom's cake used to be tradition, but largely fell out of favor, although it is still alive and well in the American South. The groom's cake typically is less ornate than the wedding cake, and favors the groom's choices in style, interests and flavors.

Couples and their guests look forward to indulging in wedding cake near the end of the reception. The looks and flavors of a wedding cake can be as unique as the couple saying, "I do."



A guide TO WEDDING DAY FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS



Various elements come together to complete a wedding day visual. Floral arrangements are one such component that can create a special and awe-inspiring ambiance.

Flowers appeal to at least three of the senses. Their delicate aroma can help a venue smell fresh and inviting. And it's hard to deny the visual appeal of a stunning floral arrangement. There are colors, sizes, textures, and much more that can cater to any theme. In addition, flowers can add a tactile element, even if guests do not go around touching the blooms.

Flowers convey so much during weddings that it's important to make finding a florist a priority, according to the wedding resource The Knot. The following is a guide to understanding floral arrangements that may be included in a wedding.

Bouquets, corsages and boutonnieres
The wedding party, bride,

groom, and parents of the couple are set apart from others at the wedding ceremony by the special flowers on their attire and in their hands, among other indicators. Boutonnieres are a single bud pinned to the left side of a gentleman's jacket. Corsages can be attached to a dress, but are now often worn on the wrist. Bouquets are held in hand. They can be a few flowers gathered together, or more extensive displays. Bouquets may feature bare stems, or stems may be bound and hidden beneath ribbon and fabric.

Some couples also have a small tossing bouquet to use later in the day. Flower petals for a flower girl to drop down the aisle also may be part of the floral plan.

CEREMONY FLOWERS

Guests often are first introduced to floral arrangements at the wedding ceremony. Potted or vase-encased flow-

ers may bookend the couple at the altar. Seats or pews may be adorned with flower sprays to draw attention to the aisle, known as aisle markers. These are subtle choices that enhance the ceremony space.

RECEPTION COMPONENTS

Flowers may truly shine during the reception. They're one of the most important components when decorating the space. Flowers serve

as centerpieces, so the guest list and the number of tables will dictate how many centerpieces are required. These centerpieces can be elaborate or simply a few loose flowers in vases. Florists can customize the look depending on couples' budgets. Some additional reception flowers can include installations on arches or on anything hanging like a floral backdrop for photo opportunities.

Tips and tricks

Couples should create a list of everywhere they would like to use flowers and present it, along with magazine clippings or planning boards, to show florists what they have in mind when shopping services, according to Hummingbird Wedding Advice. A 2021 survey from The Knot reported that the average cost for wedding flowers was \$2,300. It's important to set a strict budget so florists can present ideas that are in line with what couples can spend. Many expensive looks can be replicated with in-season flowers or less costly alternatives.

Flowers are an important part of the wedding day and should be incorporated into couples' budgets.

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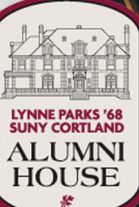
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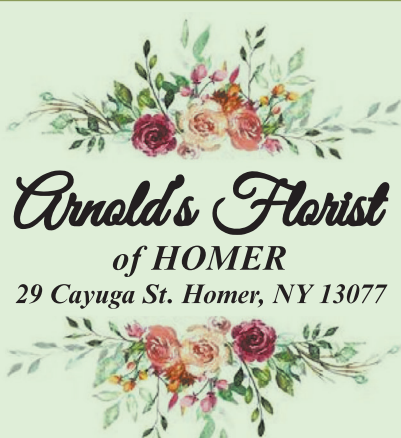
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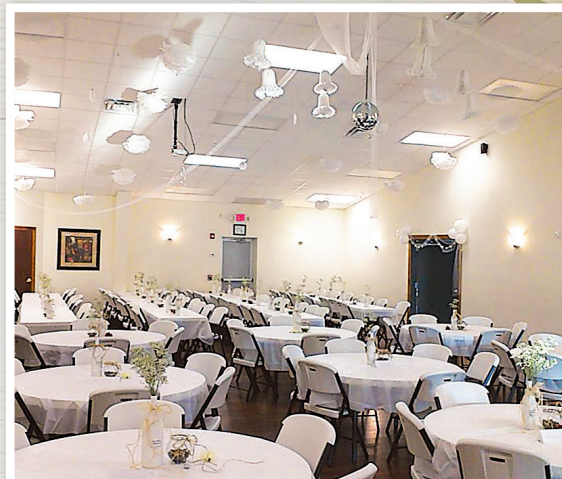
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