

Wedding Planner

A guide to planning
your perfect
wedding in
southeast Iowa



A special supplement to the
OTTUMWA COURIER

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Picking the perfect bridal gown

With countless styles, lengths and colors of dresses, saying “yes” to the dress might seem a bit intimidating. Ease the stress of choosing the perfect wedding attire with these tips from Kristie Durlinger, owner of The Bridal Cottage.

1. Country-themed weddings continue to rise in popularity. Choosing cowgirl boots for you and your bridesmaids has never been more popular. Brides are choosing floor-length dresses for themselves so that the boots peek out when wanted and shorter dresses for their bridesmaids to show off their footwear all night long.

2. Gone is the fear that used to overcome bridesmaids when their friends ask them to be in their wedding. Today brides are selecting a color and company for their friends to order from. This new-found freedom will allow your wedding party to feel happy and beautiful in a dress that flatters their body.

3. Say goodbye to tiaras and hello to flower crowns. The new popular headpiece can be customized to match your floral arrangements and can even be made out of fake flowers to cut down on costs.



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4. The gown is the most important accessory, so be sure to select the best one before purchasing jewelry, head-wear or shoes.

5. Brides searching for a dress this year will notice plenty of lace, gold tones and plunging backs. In addition, sleeves are coming back into style. If you like to be on top of current fashion, these are the trends you should be looking for in 2015.

6. Before you step foot into a dress store, make sure that you have finalized the venue and theme of your wedding. You may look great in dozens of dresses, but the venue could help pick the one that is right for you. For instance, if you are



having an outdoor wedding, you will want a dress made with a lighter material and shorter train.

7. Familiarize yourself with all the different types of white. Today, dresses come in a variety of popular shades including white, diamond white, ivory,

champagne and light gold.

8. When you decide to begin trying dresses on, bring along a strapless bra, a pair of heels and any shape wear you plan on wearing underneath.

9. Experts advise starting to look for the dress eight months before saying "I do" in order to give plenty of time for alterations. Any more time will give the undecided bride time to second guess her decision.

10. Consider the terrain you'll be covering on your wedding day. Avoid the embarrassment of having your heels sink into the ground as you read your vows by keeping the venue in mind through the entire planning process.



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Bridal jewelry: What to keep in mind

When it's time to pop the question, there is little in this world that means more than the ring he'll use to propose. This decision is immensely important as she could be wearing the engagement ring, and later the full bridal set, forever.

Judy Rhynas of Rhynas Jewelers in

Ottumwa emphasizes that there are some very specific questions that need to be answered when choosing bridal jewelry. These are her tips for both the bride- and groom-to-be before purchasing the girl's ring.

Tips for him:

1. Know her taste in metals. Rhynas says the first step is learning if she likes white gold or yellow gold. Dee Duree at Bookin advises to go with either gold because it is more durable. While tungston and titanium are popular with men right now, they are more likely to scratch.

2. Consider the job she has. For example, if she's a nurse and wears gloves all day, she'll probably prefer a ring that sits low on her finger.

3. Does she like wide or narrow? Proportions on a woman are very important, Rhynas says. A petite girl probably wouldn't like a wide band that will overshadow her entire hand. Conversely, a tiny, thin band would get lost on plumper fingers.

4. Take some notes on her taste in style. For starters, does she like traditional, vintage or contemporary?

5. Catch her looking at Pinterest and other social media. See what draws her attention, what she pins or book-marks and ask some well-phrased ques-



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tions to see what her response to different styles are.

Tips for her:

1. Pick three sets and let him choose. Go to the jewelry store ahead of time, Rhynas suggests, and find three rings that you love. Pass the information along; it will still be a surprise and you'll be guaranteed something you like. Duree stresses the importance of not being afraid to let someone know what you want.

2. Be specific when you give ideas of your preferences. Let him know the amount of bling you like, your size and your preferred colors. Why make him guess when you can give a few clues?

3. Do your detective work and see what's out there. Rhynas says many brides-to-be are doing their research well before coming to the store, making their decisions much easier. Duree said having pictures and samples with you will save time and energy in the long run.



4. Do you want color and clarity over size? Rhynas explains that for many ring-buyers to stay within their budget, they may need to choose between a quality stone or a large stone. Learning the difference will direct you to the perfect diamond for you.

5. Try the ring on while you're at the store. Remember that this piece will be on finger forever, and it may be different on you than when you saw it on computer.

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Transforming into a blushing bride

There is nothing quite like a beauty emergency, and on your wedding day it's the last thing you want to tackle.

Follow these tips from local salons to make sure you are perfectly polished before slipping into your wedding gown.

1. Cross a shower off your morning-of checklist. Stylists say skipping the suds on the day of your wedding will give your hairdo more hold.

2. Schedule a practice run with your stylist



a few weeks before the big day. Have her test out your hair style and make sure it's something you

will truly love.

3. Don't wait until the last minute for nails. Beauty experts advise not to wait until the wedding day for your manicure because you don't want the added stress. Schedule a solo trip or grab your bridesmaids for some last-minute bonding before the nuptials.

4. Make sure that the hair style you choose for your bridesmaids will look good on them all.

Instructors at Iowa School of Beauty say that nearly half of the brides that walk

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through the door have bridesmaids choose their own style for the big day.

5. If possible, bring in a picture of the hairstyle you want to show your stylist.

6. The bride isn't the only one that needs to visit a salon before the event. Stylists advise that grooms get a trip about five to seven days beforehand. This allows enough time to get the needed trim, but gives it a few days to grow into a natural look.

7. Want a sun-kissed glow? Pro Tan advises that brides begin a tanning regime 30 days before the wedding to get an all-over perfect tan. If you want that bronzed look without the UV, they have you covered with spray tans. The tanning experts recommend coming in for your spray tan two days before the event.

8. Choose the right makeup. Not only do you want to wear shades that will match your complexion, but you also will want products that will last through all the tears of joy. Pick a water-proof mascara for less stress.

9. If you choose to have a makeup artist work their magic on your wedding day, make sure that they leave with you the right touch-up tools. You'll need the same shade lipstick and eye shadow to ensure your look stays flawless from "I do" to late-night dancing.

10. Being organized will pay off, so budget your time accordingly. Allow for plenty of time to get ready, and maybe even a little extra time to enjoy with your bridesmaids.

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How sweet it is: Creating your dream cake

When you think of wedding cake, you probably think of images of happy couples shoving cake into the face of their new partner.

Two popular local bakeries, Hy-Vee and Dawn's Couture Cakes, offer some professional tips that will ensure you have the perfectly tasting cake to serve after

you've had your fun.

1. Before meeting with your local bakery, know how many servings you will need.

2. Do you want round tiers, square tiers or maybe no tiers at all. Bakers at Hy-Vee say that cupcakes are still a popular alternative to large cakes. Not



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only is the price less intimidating, but it eliminates worrying about having someone cut the cake.

3. Do you love those fancy cakes whipped up on television shows? Chances are they are using fondant to cover the cake for a polished appearance. Fondant is great for ensuring a polished look, but Hy-Vee bakers urge couples to remember that it is an acquired taste that not everyone may enjoy.

4. Local bakers say that chocolate, vanilla and red velvet are the top three cake flavors.

5. If you're thinking about breaking the mold and splurging for an over-the-top flavor, think about if your guests will enjoy it as well. The last thing you want is to take home 100 servings of leftover cake.

6. Dawn Kappelman, owner of Dawn's Couture Cakes, says that when couples are selecting flavors for their cake tiers, she urges them to think about who will be eating the cake. The bride and groom each should pick a flavor they really love and then the rest should be focused on the guests.

7. Bakers say that cake toppers are still popular, but people are leaving the plastic bride and groom behind. Choose a fresh flower bouquet or your new last name's initial to top the cake for a clean and modern look.

8. If you are interested in a cake flavor that you don't see the bakery offer, call them and request it. The Hy-Vee bakery says that if you let them know a few days ahead of time, they will whip up the recipe for you to sample.

9. Discuss your budget with the bakery to make sure that you're on the same page. You may not be able to afford a seven-tier wedding cake covered in fondant and fresh flowers, but bakers can take that vision and create something you can afford to love.

10. Don't forget to pick the perfect icing to pair with your cake flavors.



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Focus on flowers: Come prepared

That Pinterest board you have been working on in your free time for the last few years will pay off when you're picking out the perfect decor.

Being well prepared is the number-one wedding tip there is. Having looked through hundreds of wedding-inspired ideas, you will be able to show the florist all of the aspects you want to incorporate. Local florists give some insight on what you need to consider before choosing the flowers you will carry down the aisle.



Hy-Vee Floral Manager Judy Mathis says that she has brides bring in their smart phones and even laptops to show her all of the ideas they love on Pinterest. Don't be afraid to show the florist everything you love; it will make their job easier.

Tony Yencsick of Tony's Flowers says that before picking out what flowers to use on the big day, think about the venue. If you're having an outdoor wedding, let your florist know; there are some flowers that will hold up better during those hot and humid Iowa summers.

Hans Wilz of Edd the Florist encourages brides come in and tell him all about their dream wedding, even if it's something they cannot afford. Hearing what the



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bride has been dreaming about since childhood will better ensure that Wilz and his team make all those dreams come true without racking up an unaffordable bill.

4. Since flowers can be pricey, you can save some money by having someone in the wedding party pick up the flowers. If you will be picking up the flowers yourself, make it one of the last tasks of the day so that they can stay refrigerated as long as possible.

5. Make sure you have an appropriate place to store that flowers until it's time to put them to use. Don't let your flowers share a refrigerator with food because you don't want your bouquet to smell like your appetizers.

6. If you have a hugging family, you may want to consider an alternative to chest corsages to avoid smashed flowers or find a sturdy flower that will withstand the the action.

7. Provide the florist with a list of the bridal party and their names so that they can label flowers to make sure they arrive in the right hands.

8. Want to save money on centerpieces and still wow guests as they walk into your reception hall? Place eye-catching centerpieces on top of pedestals on one third of the tables to give the room a full look. On the rest of the tables, place smaller bouquets, plants or other decor.

9. If you want your wedding to feel modern, Wilz recommends incorporating glass, stone or polished aluminum in centerpieces.

10. Don't get caught up in doing a lot of small things. Do fewer big arrangements that will draw attention to your theme, not away from it.



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Vetting out the wedding venue

There are countless venues for weddings in southeast Iowa: From churches with beautiful architecture, resorts with a lake view and outdoor recreation areas, there is a spot perfect for every couple.

Pioneer Ridge and Ottumwa Country Club offer some points to consider before you choosing the venue that will hold the celebration of your love.

1. When searching for the perfect spot for an outdoor wedding, make sure

to look for a spot with a covered shelter nearby just in case of an unplanned weather emergency.

2. If you are on a tight budget, an outdoor venue might be the perfect spot for you. Popular wedding spots in the area offer beautiful scenic views, with no long waiting list, for a low cost.

3. Make sure to check with your venue on decoration requirements. Some places prohibit the use of loose glitter because it is tough to thoroughly clean



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up. Some venues, even those outdoors, prohibit the use of tacks and even staples to hold up decorations.

4. If you have your heart set on bringing in your own food, it is important to talk with the venue before booking to see what their policy is on outside food.

5. Consider possible photo opportunities at a location before putting a deposit down.

6. If you must have the venue cater your reception, make sure that they are able to serve the menu you have chosen.

7. Before you create the perfect seating chart, check with the venue to see what the table sizes are and go from there.

8. Give yourself plenty of time to decorate the reception area. Find out what time members of your wedding party can get inside and start transforming the hall.

9. Make sure that you finish all of the handmade pieces of decor the week of the wedding. If you have been working on handmade signs, centerpieces or other decor, make sure they are finished and ready for use before the big day.

10. The whole day is about celebrating the love story of the bride and groom. Make sure the whole story is told. Bring in a projector to show pictures of the couple throughout their relationship.



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Make your memories picture perfect

Your wedding will be one of the most memorable times of your life, and no one can capture it better than a professional photographer. As you begin the interview process, here are 10 questions to help you determine if you've found the best photographer for your wedding.

Does the photographer have a gallery of wedding images you can review? Reviewing sample work allows you to see the photographer's strengths and weaknesses. You'll also be able to get



an idea of their style. Look for images that you can see yourself in. Think of three words that describe you and share those with your photographer.

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2. What is the photographer's working style? Some photographers are orderly and operate like wedding planners. Others prefer to sit back and let the events of the wedding unfold. It's important that you find someone who can understand and meet your expectations.

3. Is the photographer available for an engagement session? An engagement session is your first opportunity to work with your photographer and develop a relationship that will allow you to be completely at ease on your big day.

4. Will the photographer create a detailed shot list? This list will ensure no important photo is missed during the commotion and excitement of the big day. You should be able to create that list together, add to the list leading up to the day and have a copy of that list the day of.



5. What kind of lighting will be used? Whether you have an indoor or outdoor wedding, you'll want to make sure your photographer has professional-grade lighting equipment to deliver the images your wedding deserves.

6. Does the photographer have backup equipment? A true professional photographer will always bring one or two backup cameras, lenses, flashes, additional lighting equipment, extra memory cards and batteries.

7. Does the photographer have liability insurance? Accidents happen at weddings, and if one of your guests trips over your photographer's light stand, it's good to know you both are protected.

8. Will there be one photographer or two? A second shooter increases the probability that no shot will be missed, especially if you are having a large wedding.

9. What will happen to the images after your wedding? Will your images be backed up to a hard drive or the cloud once processed? How long will your photographer keep the images afterward? If you have any concerns about losing your photos, knowing what the photographer plans to do with your images after your wedding is important.

10. When will you get your photos? It's a good idea to get a general idea of the timeline ahead of time. Obtaining your photos will likely take several weeks.

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