

2025 Bridal EDITION



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Congratulations from the lifestyles editor!



LISA WARREN
Lifestyles Editor

Welcome to The Greenville Sun's 2025 Bridal Edition!

If you are looking for helpful tips on planning your big day, then I hope this publication provides you with some valuable insight and numerous ideas.

The wedding of Tyler Crisp and Brandon Kinser is being featured this year because it nearly didn't happen at all after Hurricane Helene

rolled in. Despite having nearly half of their vendors cancel on the morning of their Sept. 28, 2024 wedding, the couple persevered and made it happen — thanks to help from their friends, family, the venue owner and a very nervous, but highly competent wedding planner.

In addition to the Kinser's, there are also several photos from the weddings of other local couples who were kind

enough to share glimpses of their Big Day. There are also other articles with helpful hints and tips to help make your own magical wedding happen.

Also included is how you can work with the Lifestyles department of The Greenville Sun to share news and photographs about your own engagement and wedding. These announcements are a free service that the Sun

provides.

As the Lifestyles Editor at The Greenville Sun, I congratulate you and look forward to helping you share the happy news about your engagement and wedding with our readers. If you have any questions, please contact me at lisa.warren@greenvillesun.com or call me at 423-359-3114.

Get Hitched To These Wedding Trends

BY METRO CREATIVE

Modern couples are choosing to start their lives together in style.

The latest trends suggest it's bound to be a fashionable year for those tying the knot in the months to come.

Check out these ideas that are on many a modern couple's wish list.

• Seated down style

The base package likely will include thIt may be the year of the mini in terms of bridal style. From dresses to bouquets to diminutive foods, couples can't get enough of miniature items that, despite their small size, add maximum impact to the big day.

• Celebrant-led ceremonies

For some, there is no more meaningful part of the wedding than the ceremony when two lives are joined together. Although many couples still prefer traditional religious weddings, others are opting for more customizable, celebrant-led events that are personalized and tailored to the couples' unique histories and stories. Flexibility in relation to the ceremony location, and options for inclusivity and cultural diversity, are priorities among many modern couples.

• Experiential extras

Sure couples are still opting for a band or a DJ to provide the bulk of the reception entertainment, but many also are branching out into new arenas. One new trend to emerge offers creative flair. Couples hire an artist to paint or sketch a portion of the ceremony or reception in real time, and guests can enjoy seeing how the scene unfolds. Additional options regarding entertainment include culturally specific performers.

• Creative photography

For years now, couples are increasingly

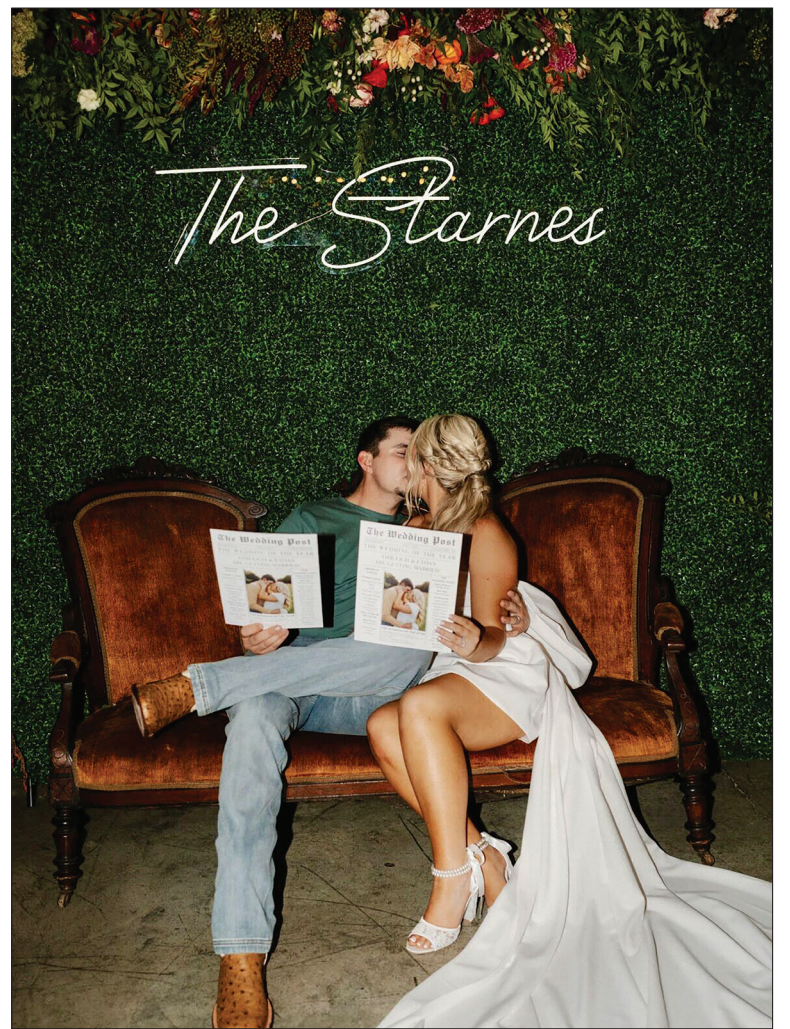
opting for less stilted, posed photos in favor of something a little less rehearsed. Candid photography and a photojournalism approach are popular requests among modern couples, but an even more adventurous photo style also is emerging. As drone photography becomes even more common, aerial photos and video are being used to add an even more unique approach to wedding documentation.

• Colorful fashions

Modern weddings are big on color, from bold and vibrant floral displays to wardrobe choices. Gone are the days when brides must wear white. They're now choosing everything from pastels to silver and even black if the mood hits. Plus, wedding party dresses are equally vibrant, with many brides opting to let their bridesmaids mix and match gowns and colors in a range of hues.

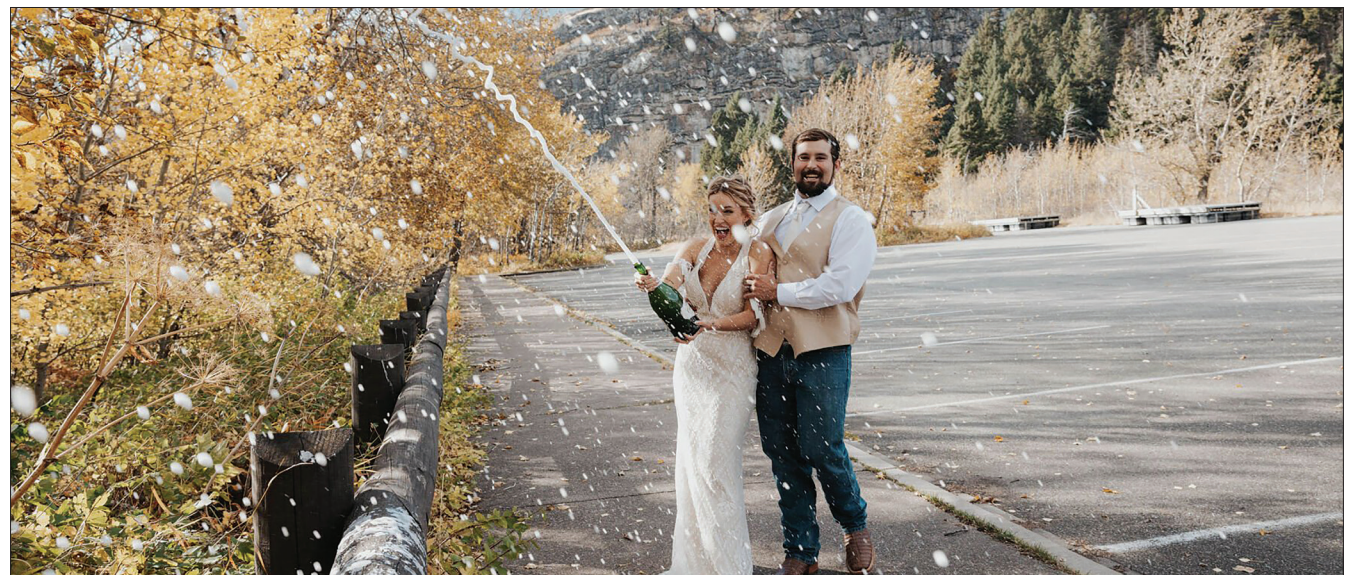
• Weekend-long weddings

Some people don't want the magic of the wedding to end after one day, so they opt for an entire wedding weekend. Hitched says searches for weekend wedding venues have risen by 50 percent in the past year.



SAM BOND PHOTOGRAPHY

Ashleigh and Ethan Starnes, of Greenville, share a kiss as they hold copies of "The Wedding Post" during their Sept. 14, 2024 wedding reception held at Grace Meadows Farm in Jonesborough. Their "newspapers" were made by Ashleigh's friend, Brooke Kilgore, who created them via Etsy.



MEREDITH HUGHES PHOTOGRAPHY

The photographer caught this bubbly spray of champagne as Greenville residents Kenya Frye and Christian Merkel celebrated their Oct. 8, 2024 nuptials in Montana's Glacier National Park.

HOW TO SUBMIT Your Engagement Or Wedding News

Are you newly engaged or married? If so, feel free to share your happy news with Greenville Sun readers.

All engagement and wedding announcements in the Greenville Sun Lifestyles pages are published free of charge both online and in the print edition of the newspaper.

Announcements can be submitted online at greenvillesun.com under the Lifestyles & Accent link.

Submissions can also be emailed to lisa.warren@greenvillesun.com or dropped off at the Greenville Sun office, located at 121 W. Summer Street. A drop-off box is located inside the Sun's Circulation Department.

Color photographs of the couple are welcome with the free announcements.

For more information about submitting announcements, contact Lifestyles Editor Lisa Warren via email at lisa.warren@greenvillesun.com or by phone at 423-359-3114.



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On The Cover



MORGAN LAMB PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC
Tyler Crisp, of Pigeon Forge, and Brandon Kinser, of Greenville, were married Sept. 28, 2024, in a 5 p.m. ceremony held at The Homeplace at Johnston Farms, 240 Joe Johnston Lane, Greenville. The groom is the son of Steve and Tammy Kinser, of Greenville.



MORGAN LAMB PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

Brandon Kinser kisses his bride after they finally say "I do," despite everything that Hurricane Helene threw at them on their big day.

Hurricane Helene Couldn't Wash Away *This Couple's Big Day*

BY LISA WARREN
Lifestyles Editor

As their wedding day approached, Tyler Crisp and Brandon Kinser were fairly certain that every detail had been nailed down and each plan put into place.

The Homeplace at Johnston Farm with its awe-inspiring views of the southern Greene County mountains was booked and ready for their planned outdoor nuptials and indoor reception.

Tyler's elegant, white tulle and lace wedding gown with its spaghetti straps, form-fitted waist and flowing cathedral train had been perfectly tailored for her. Hanging alongside the dress was the delicate Morilee veil that she had found at Southern Belle Bridal, of Greenville.

The minister, hair dresser, caterer, makeup artist, wedding planner and florist had all been checked off the couple's to-do list — along with the countless other details involved with planning and hosting a wedding.

The couple had even found another music DJ — after the one that they had originally had their hearts set on said he was already booked on Sept. 28, 2024, their planned wedding date.

Despite all of their planning and preparation, there was one thing that Tyler and Brandon could have never anticipated. Hurricane Helene.

The young couple grew more and more uneasy as they continued to hear weather forecasters talking about the storm moving inland from Florida and heading north into Western North Carolina and Northeast Tennessee.

Helene brought torrential, record-breaking rainfall and devastating winds to the mountains. The creeks and rivers rose quickly, forcing people from their homes and businesses, trapping some and carrying others away.

On Friday evening, the eve of their wedding, word quickly spread that the Kinser Bridge over the Erwin Highway had washed out and the Nolichucky Dam in the South Greene community could be compromised. The town of Newport, where the hairdresser and makeup artist planned for the wedding lived, had flooded. Reports of power outages, closed bridges and washed out roads also began to hit the news outlets.

"We started to lose hope on making our big day happen," Tyler said matter-of-factly.

Their concern turned to panic when they woke up the next morning and learned that HALF of their wedding vendors had canceled.

"Of course, we understood," Tyler said. "Their safety was of the utmost importance."

Their planned minister, Danny Ricker, also had to cancel because of his work duties as an emergency responder with Greene County 911.

The couple knew if they were going to get married later that day, then they had to put a plan together — and fast!

About the couple

A Sevier County native, Tyler is the daughter of Sarah Crisp, of Gatlinburg, and the late Alvin Crisp, of Robbinsville, North Carolina. She is a 2019 graduate of Gatlinburg-Pittman High School.

Brandon is a Greene County boy, the son of Steve and Tammy Kinser, of Greenville. He is a 2018 graduate of Greenville High School.

The couple both attended Walters State Community College.

Their love story began in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We didn't tell anybody at first, but we first met online," Tyler said with a laugh. "My little sister when she was doing her speech at the wedding reception ... she spilled the beans! So it was just really funny."

Their first date occurred on April 5, 2020, in Pigeon Forge.

"Brandon came to visit me and the streets of Pigeon Forge were empty. It was like zombieland!" she said.

Because not much was happening in the normally bustling tourist town, they ended up going to a Popeye's drive through and eating in the courtyard area of a hotel, where her mother is the manager.

During the early days of their courtship, Tyler said they did "a lot of FaceTime video chats and got to know each other fairly quick."

"On April 25, 2020, he asked me to be his girlfriend ... and he proposed to me on April 25, 2023," she said.

• SEE NEXT PAGE - BIG DAY



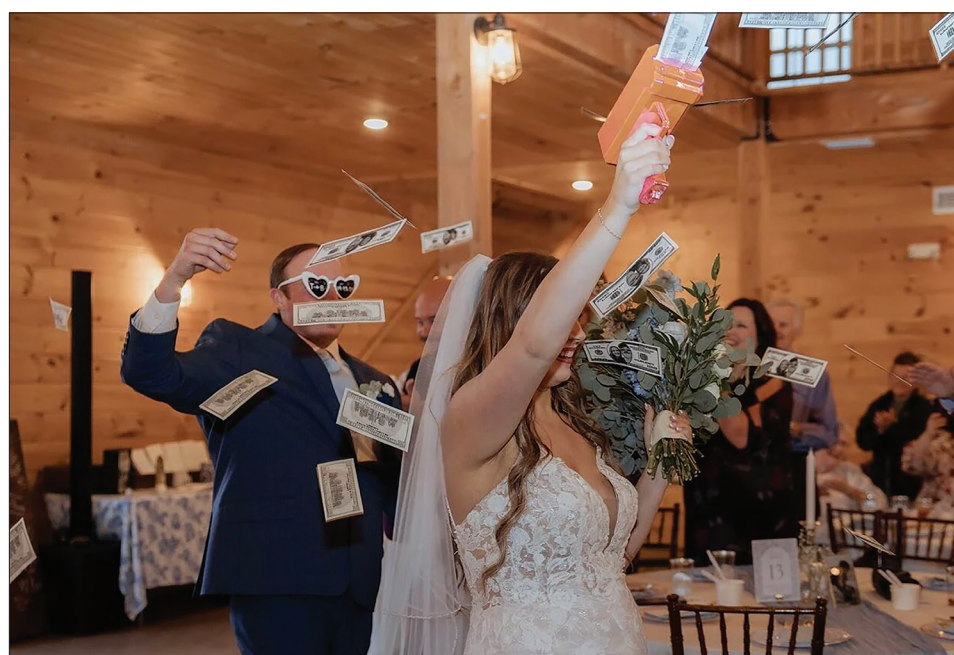
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Brandon and Tyler Kinser celebrate their big day at their wedding reception.



• FROM PAGE 3 - BIG DAY

The vendors begin to cancel

The evening before their wedding at their rehearsal dinner, Tyler got a text from the makeup artist saying she wouldn't be able to make it the next day. She lives in Newport, which suffered devastating flooding in the downtown area and forced the closure of bridges connecting the town with Greenville.

Tyler immediately contacted a friend who agreed to help. So at least the makeup detail was taken care of.

The next day, when more and more vendors began canceling, the panic mode kicked into overdrive.

"Instead of heading up to the venue the morning of the wedding, we sat downstairs and cried for a little bit trying to figure out what to do," Tyler recalled.

As they were pondering their next move, the phone rang. It was Ginia Johnston, owner of The Homeplace, the venue where they planned to wed.

"Ginia said, 'Listen, I know everything seems like it's going downhill right now, but it's going to be fine.'

"She began helping to make calls for us trying to find an available vendors," Tyler said. "She is such an angel! She is so, so sweet! I can't forget how she was so accommodating and for helping me keep my peace of mind."

After talking with Ginia, Tyler said they decided to go on up to the venue to start setting up and finding out what they could do.

She started posting on Facebook and making calls to see who might be available to help.

After hearing that the hairdresser had to cancel, another stylist was found at the last minute with Sculptz Salon, of Greenville.

Tyler's original stylist, however, had the hair extensions she planned use. However, one of the bridesmaids came through.

"She brought her hair extensions and they fit my hair color perfectly! I couldn't believe how well they blended with my hair color," Tyler said.

Another DJ was also found for the wedding. Joe Prokop, the DJ who Tyler and Brandon had originally wanted to book for their wedding, called them and said that the event he had been booked for that day got canceled and he would be able to do their wedding after all.

Now all that was needed was a minister to marry them.

Tyler knew that her uncle, Shane Roughton, who is an ordained Baptist minister, was planning to be at the wedding. As luck would have it (or perhaps it was divine intervention) he decided to leave early from his home in Sylva, North Carolina to make the three hour drive to Greenville. Just 20 minutes AFTER he crossed the Interstate 40 bridge, the bridge collapsed into the flooded river below.

"They had planned to leave later, but they decided to leave earlier because of

the weather," Tyler said about her uncle and aunt.

So, despite all of the worry and the stress — and Hurricane Helene — Tyler and Brandon ended up tying the knot on Sept. 28, 2024.

"It's nuts! I can't believe how that all worked out!" she said looking back at the day.

Amazingly, there were several out-of-town guests who made it to the wedding, including ones from South Carolina, North Carolina, Indiana, Ohio, Florida and Illinois.

"The ceremony was scheduled for 5:30 p.m., but we pushed it up a little bit. So we ended up having the ceremony at 5 p.m. just because of the road conditions and the hazards," Tyler added.

"I thank my sweet Uncle Shane for stepping up and marrying us," Tyler said. "He had just a couple of hours notice to get a message together for our ceremony, but he did it! Without him, obviously we wouldn't have been able to get married."

Tyler also thanked Top Choice BBQ, of Greenville, for the "amazing food" they served. "Rocco and Amanda made sure that they were going to be a part of our day and served the best food."

She also sent a shout out to Lynette and Eric Price of The Creamy Cup. "They are just the sweetest and told us they wouldn't have missed it for the world. We are so thankful for them."

Tyler also thanked her friend, Bailey Akens, who stepped in at the last minute and did a wonderful job on everyone's makeup. She also thanked Georgia Manis Redmond and Amanda from Sculptz Salon for coming and

doing everyone's hair with just a few hours' notice. "Everyone loved their hair and looked incredible!"

For her wedding photos, Tyler said she was grateful to her talented cousin Morgan Lamb for capturing all of the amazing shots in the midst of the chaos.

Her wedding cake was a naked cake styled with light blue details created by Misty Clevenger, of Rogersville.

Lastly, Tyler said she couldn't have made it through the day without her wedding planner, Allison Rossi.

"She dealt with all of the insanity behind the scenes and was keeping any more bad news from getting to me so I could slow down and focus on the day," Tyler said. "We truly could not have done the day without her."

"She's done a lot of weddings, and she said she had never had that many things go wrong in one day," Tyler added.

In a social media post just after Tyler and Brandon's wedding, Rossi wrote about her experience saying, "I found myself in a utility closet breaking down, physically on my hands and knees, but then I pulled it together to continue to manage the chaos. This beautiful couple chose me as their Day of Coordinator eight months ago, and trusted me from start to finish. This was by far one of the most difficult, devastating, yet rewarding experiences of my life."

How to survive your own wedding chaos

So after surviving the mess and stress of such a wedding experience, what advice does Tyler give to other couples who are facing challenges with wedding planning or their own wedding day chaos?

"People were calling and checking on me all day long. One thing that they told me was 'At the end of the day, you are going to be married.' At the time, I thought, if one more person tells me that — I'm going to lose my frickin' mind!" she laughed. "But it's true! It really is true. At the end of the day it's going to happen."

"It doesn't get much worse than what happened to us — and we still got married and we still persevered. It was truly an act of God, there's no other way to explain how it all fell into place."

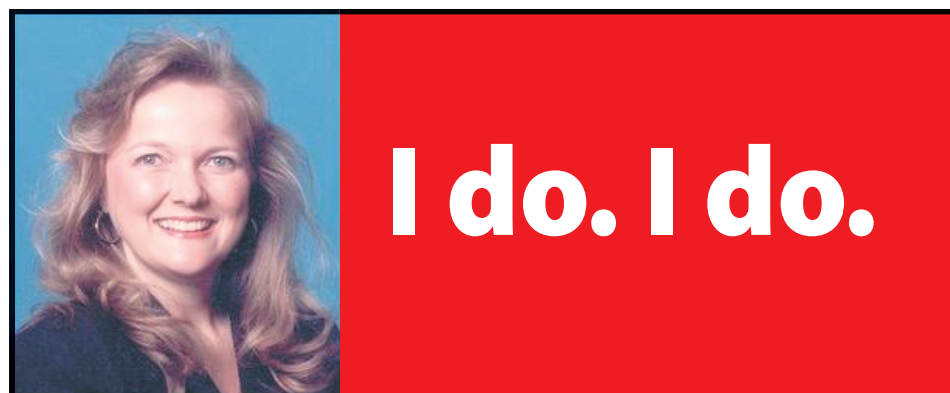
Following the wedding, Tyler and Brandon took a honeymoon trip to Gulf Shores, Alabama.

The couple are living in Greenville, where he is a firefighter with the Greenville Fire Department and she is employed with Greenville Orthodontics.



Tyler Kinser is shown in her beautiful wedding gown.

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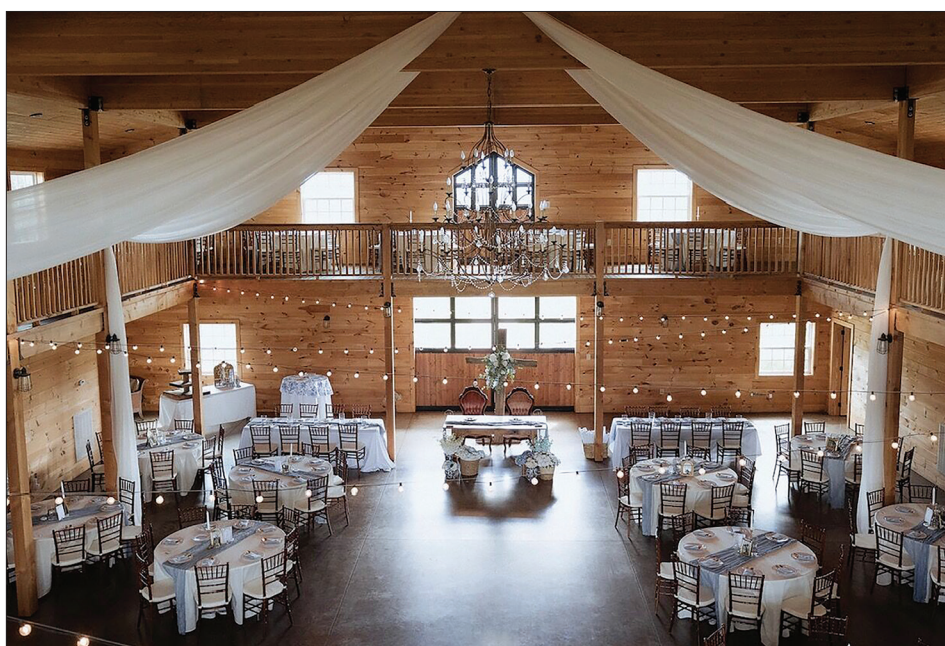
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Flower petals anyone?

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The venue was beautiful set at The Homeplace at Johnston Farm to host the Kinser-Crisp wedding reception.

MORGAN LAMB PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

The Merkels Headed West For A Destination Wedding

BY LISA WARREN
Lifestyles Editor

As a child, Kenya Frye Merkel had always dreamed of having a big wedding. However, her feelings about such a large, involved event changed as she grew into adulthood.

“As I got older it all seemed very overwhelming, and more so, centered around pleasing and entertaining others,” Merkel said.

When it came time to planning her wedding to Christian Merkel, the Greenville girl said her dreams turned westward.

“When my husband and I first got engaged, we both agreed we didn’t really want the whole cookie-cutter wedding,” she said. “We had both been wanting to go out west to Montana.”

At first, the couple thought about a wedding at home here in Greenville with possibly a honeymoon to Montana.

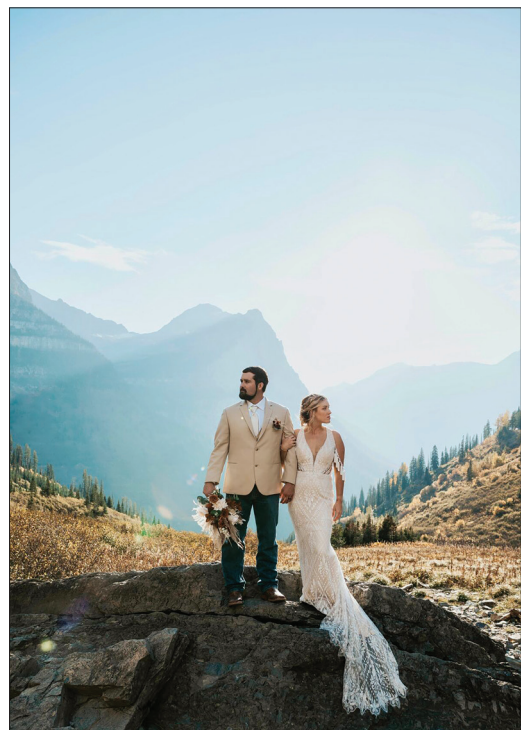
However, as she began doing research on a micro wedding, the more she learned, the more it still seemed like it was going to be more than they were envisioning for their big day.

“I started looking into elopements to Montana,” Merkel



MEREDITH HUGHES PHOTOGRAPHY

This photo of Kenya Frye and Christian Merkel was taken at Big Bend within Montana’s Glacier National Park. The Greenville couple wed Oct. 8, 2024 on the Rising Sun shoreline within the park.



MEREDITH HUGHES PHOTOGRAPHY

For their Oct. 8, 2024 wedding, Christian and Kenya Merkel, of Greenville, decided to head west to the state of Montana. They wed in a small ceremony along the Rising Sun shoreline in Glacier National Park.

said.

The more she looked, the more she fell in love with what what she saw there.

“It was GORGEOUS! We both fell in love with the scenery and how intimate it would be to have it just be us,” she said. “in the end, marriage is about the two of you — and the love you have for each other.”

Their close family members, though, wanted to be there to witness the nuptials.

“So we had immediate family there ... his parents, siblings, and my mom,” Merkel said.

“We got to enjoy two full weeks of being out west,” she continued. “Starting in Wyoming in Grand Teton National Park, we worked our way up and went to Yellowstone, then up to Glacier. It was absolutely perfect, and I don’t regret it one bit!”

For her wedding gown, Merkel chose a lace fit-to-flare gown with an elegant train. She purchased it from Sparrow Bridal, an online bridal boutique based in Texas.

“It was delivered within two months and didn’t even need alterations,” she noted.

Her bridal bouquet was done by Greenville’s Flowers By Tammy, thus giving her a chance to bring little piece of home with her to her wedding under the Big Montana Sky.

It’s All About *The Dress* Today’s Hottest Wedding Dress Trends

BY METRO CREATIVE

Among the items on a wedding planning checklist, choosing a wedding gown often is a top priority.

While certain wedding dress trends withstand the test of time, others have shorter shelf lives. Though no one knows what the future holds for wedding gown trends, these are some that may be notable as brides walk down the aisle in the months ahead.

Floral appliqués and 3D accents

Florals are nothing new on wedding dresses, but they’re being elevated this year with new interpretations. Floral embellishments give texture and help brides make a statement. Appliqués may be on sheer panels that serve as a top layer of the dress, or grouped together to form rosettes or additional three-dimensional floral details. Florals were on display at the Fall 2024 New York Bridal Fashion Week.

Coquette is everywhere

Flirty and feminine is the name of the wedding dress game, as many gowns showcase feminine details like corseted tops, bows and soft colors, say the experts with Martha Stewart. Hyper-feminine looks may not be for everyone, but this style merits consideration for the bride who wants to appear romantic and approachable.

Mini dress

Although one of the first pictures to come to mind

when one envisions a wedding dress may be a floor-length gown, mini dresses continue to make bold statements on bridal runways and in magazines.

The abbreviated hemlines can be flirty and fun, and are featured on various types of dresses, including fitted, strapless, flowing, and even puffed styles.

Jacquard and other opulent materials

Lace long has been a bridal dress staple, but designers are branching out into other fabrics that lend luxury and opulence to dresses. Texture can make a wedding dress a unique visual during ceremonies and the after-party, and may help a bride feel like royalty.

Pearls and more pearls

Pearl necklaces and other jewelry has long gone hand-in-hand with weddings, but brides-to-be can now find pearls turning up just about anywhere. Pearls are embroidered onto dresses, veils, sleeves, and headpieces, and even can be used on wedding cakes to mirror a pearl aesthetic used elsewhere.

Bows

Along with pearls, a growing number of designers are opting for bows in their wedding dress designs. They may be subtle, such as stitched onto the bodice of the dress, or more over-the-top, like a huge bow at the waist or near the train bustle, according to One Fab Day.



MEREDITH HUGHES PHOTOGRAPHY

Kenya Frye, of Greenville, is shown in the stunning gown she chose for her Oct. 8, 2024 wedding to Christian Merkel. The couple wed at Glacier National Park in Montana. She purchased her gorgeous lace fit-to-flare gown, which also featured a beautiful train, from the online bridal boutique Sparrow Bridal, of Texas. Her bridal bouquet was created by Flowers by Tammy, of Greenville.

Shimmer and sparkle

A little bling (or a lot) never goes out of style. For 2024, many brides plan to embrace even more shimmer and sparkle as silver takes center stage in dress designs. Silver thread embroidery or even mirror-type embellishments will ensure all eyes are on the bride when she makes her entrance.

Overskirts

Many brides want a dramatically shaped dress for the ceremony, only to pare down a bit for the reception. The style experts at Vogue note an overskirt provides the flexibility to easily remove layers of fabric to unveil a more fitted silhouette.

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Wedding vows should be honest and simple and express the sentiments that mean the most to them as they embark on this new journey.

Write Wedding Vows With Relative Ease

BY METRO CREATIVE

The exchange of vows is an integral part of many wedding ceremonies. Vows are promises made to one another that serve as the basis of the marriage commitment.

Historians say some of the oldest traditional wedding vows can be traced back to manuals of the medieval church in England.

There are no formal wedding vows in the Christian Bible, but those who profess this faith typically incorporate the teachings of Jesus Christ into their vows.

Many modern couples prefer to exchange their own vows rather than share standard verses. This is particularly true for couples who will be having ceremonies customized to their own beliefs and relationship histories.

Writing vows enables the soon-to-be betrothed to be creative, personal and speak from the heart. However, when faced with writing sentiments that will be expressed in front of others, nerves can set in.

These tips can help couples draft vows more easily.

- Identify who this person is to you; put a label on your relationship. Is he or she a friend, partner in crime, confidante, or all of the above?

- Be sure to say, "I love you" in the vows. Many couples get so hung up on language that they may forget these most

basic words at the heart of the wedding.

- Gush about all of the reasons for that love. Offer personal stories, anecdotes or something that will illustrate to the crowd why you want to spend your life with this person.

- Look to the future. Think about how you want to spend the years ahead. Paint a picture of what you envision your lives will look like, whether that includes children, traveling the globe, or other ideas.

- Make promises to one another. Vows are essentially promises, so come up with some you agree to abide by. These can include similar sentiments to ones that are shared in traditional weddings, or clever and humorous promises, such as to always do the dishes, or pick up clothes from the bedroom floor.

- Include stories that point out your collective strengths and weaknesses. Don't forget to mention instances when things were tough and how you overcame them, and how you can use these lessons in your future as a married couple.

Couples who are writing their own vows should realize they do not have to rival the words of the most profound authors or learned scholars. They should be honest and simple and express the sentiments that mean the most to them as they embark on this new journey.



Greenville native Leigh Ann Blalock and her husband, Justin Nguyen, included their dog, Finn, in this wedding photo. The couple wed Jan. 14, 2024, at Grace City Church, in Jackson, Mississippi, where they now reside. Their reception was held at the Mississippi Museum of Art.

Breathtaking Spots' Make For Beautiful Pictures'

BY LISA WARREN
Lifestyles Editor

Ashleigh Brown and Ethan Starnes, of Greenville, made their magical wedding day happen on Sept. 14, 2024, at Grace Meadows Farm in Jonesborough.

"This venue allowed me to still have my wedding party outside by the pond, and my guests comfortably inside with easy access to the joining room, where the rehearsal dinner was held," Ashleigh said.

"Their breathtaking spots made the way for so many beautiful pictures with my photographer, Sam Bond" she added. "And a little touch of the wind included up making some of the best pictures!"

The food for her wedding was provided by The Kitchen at Grace Meadows.

Iva Starnes, of the Green House, grew all of the flowers and did the arbor.

Her bouquets were provided by Flowers by Tammy, of Greenville.

Her beautiful gown was designed by Sure Bride, in Newnan, Georgia, and the groom's tuxedo was provided by Southern Belle Bridal, of Greenville.



SAM BOND PHOTOGRAPHY

For her wedding, Ashleigh Starnes sought the services of Iva Starnes of the Green House for her arbor and Flowers By Tammy for her bridal bouquet.



SAM BOND PHOTOGRAPHY

Mr. and Mrs. Ethan Starnes share a kiss under their wedding arbor.

The Greenville Sun
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What Are The Roles Of The Wedding Party Members?

BY METRO CREATIVE

During a wedding, the couple tying the knot certainly gets to shine, but so, too, do other ceremony participants. From the parents of the bride or groom to the officiant to the ring bearer, there are many roles beyond bride and groom.

A bridal party typically includes a soon-to-be-bride's close friends and family. The bridesmaid tradition may trace its origins to ancient times, when bridesmaids would be selected to dress like the bride and confuse vengeful spirits or warring rival clans who might want to harm the bride. A special individual gets to enjoy a higher-level job within the bridal party, serving as maid of honor, if she is unmarried, or matron of honor if she has already walked down the aisle.

Bridesmaids lend support and provide help as needed, but it is the maid of honor who will serve as the right-hand woman to the bride. Here is a deep look at the unique rolls these women play both before and during a wedding.

Bridesmaids

A significant amount of planning goes into a wedding and bridesmaids may be called upon to help brides make various decisions. Bridesmaids also offer support to the bride, who may be feeling a tad overwhelmed. It is important for bridesmaids to calm the bride and care for her while she tackles the tasks necessary to host such a momentous occasion.

Bridesmaids can lend support and opinions when visiting with vendors like florists or musicians. A bride-to-be also may ask certain bridesmaids to come to dress appointments.

Collectively, bridesmaids will plan and help pay for the bridal shower and bachelorette party. They also can assist the mother-of-the-bride with whatever extra help she may need.

Maid of honor

The maid of honor (MOH) does all of the above and more. She will attend wedding dress shopping appointments and serve as a trusted source of honest feedback. The MOH also may be called in to mediate any conflicts within the bridal party, as these ladies may not all know each other prior to the nuptials. She will check in with the bridesmaids

to be sure they are on task and fulfilling any responsibilities in a timely manner.

The MOH will be the main point of contact for the bridal shower and bachelorette party. She will keep track of gifts so that the couple can follow up with thank you notes. She also may help assemble and mail out wedding invitations. The MOH will help the bride get dressed on the wedding day and attend to any needs she may have, including providing snacks and water. In the event the bride's gown is cumbersome, the MOH may need to assist the bride by adjusting the dress while seated or when visiting the restroom.

During the ceremony, the MOH will hold the bride's bouquet and she will give a toast at the reception. She also may make music requests to keep the party upbeat and fun.

There is no minimum or maximum number of people who can be part of a bridal party, but it is important to choose people who can be relied upon and who will enhance the experience. The bride-to-be can discuss her expectations from bridesmaids and the maid of honor at the start of the wedding adventure to ensure that everyone can help ensure the day is a momentous occasion.

Best Man

Like the maid of honor, the best man has some extra responsibilities before the wedding and during the festivities. A best man may organize tux fittings, plan the bachelor party, help make arrangements if the groom requests help, and be asked to hold the rings on the day of the ceremony. A best man toast



Ashleigh Brown and Ethan Starnes are shown with their wedding party members. The couple wed Sept. 14, 2024 at Grace Meadows Farm in Jonesborough.



MORGAN LAMB PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

Tyler Crisp, center, is shown with her bridesmaids at her Sept. 28, 2024, wedding to Brandon Kinser at The Homeplace.

is common during the reception, and some grooms ask their best men to distribute tips to vendors at the end of the night.

Groomsmen

Groomsmen help to plan the bachelor party and may be asked to provide some support prior to the ceremony. For example, on the day of the wedding, groomsmen may be asked to show guests, particularly elderly friends and family of the couple, to their seats. Like their bridesmaid counterparts, groomsmen can be especially helpful by doing what's asked of them without resistance. Arriving on time to tuxedo fittings and offering insight when they think it might help are some simple ways groomsmen can pitch in.

Flower Girl/Ring Bearer

Often reserved for children, the roles of flower girls and ring bearers only require some simple participation during the ceremony. Flower girls drop petals as they precede down the aisle ahead of the wedding party, while the ring bearer carries the ring down the aisle. If these roles will be filled by especially young children, couples may choose to have them walk down the aisle together.

Parents of the couple

Parents of the bride and groom typically play supportive roles but may be asked to give speeches during the rehearsal dinner or the reception. The father of the bride typically walks her down the aisle, while the mother will likely spend the day of the ceremony at the bride's side as they get ready. Parents of the groom do not have any traditional responsibilities, though the groom and his mother customarily share a mother/son dance during the reception.

Couples need not feel compelled to assign bridal party members these duties if they don't feel comfortable doing so. However, sharing some of the responsibilities of wedding planning can help couples enjoy the process more and keep party members engaged.

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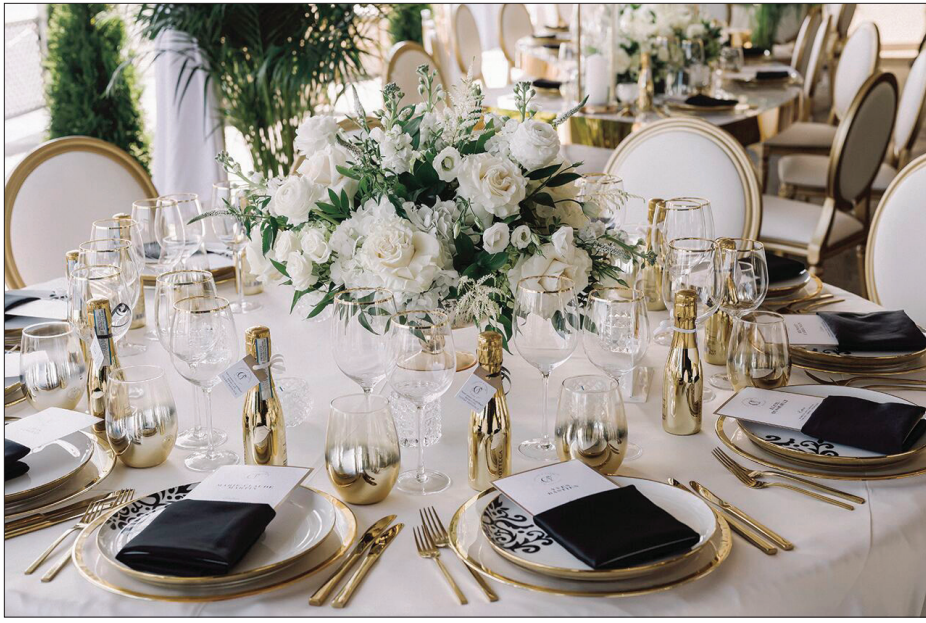
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Couples should take an active role in deciding what to include in floral pieces for their weddings. METRO

Consider Wedding Flowers Carefully

BY METRO CREATIVE

Although many decorative elements help to create ambiance for a wedding celebration, perhaps none is more awe-inspiring than beautiful floral arrangements. Flowers offer visual appeal, captivating aromas and texture that can make a space more welcoming.

Engaged couples typically go to great lengths when planning their weddings, but flowers may not be as micromanaged as other elements. Some are content to let florists design their arrangements, but the average cost of wedding flowers in 2023 was \$2,800, according to The Knot Real Weddings Study. That price tag merits some input on the part of couples.

Floral experts say couples should budget for floral arrangements coming in at 10 percent of the overall wedding budget, which is the industry standard. Therefore, for a \$60,000 wedding a couple should assume their florals will cost \$6,000. It's important to note that the cost of wedding flowers has been steadily increasing over the last few years due to inflation and climate change, says The Knot. So couples may need to be even more involved in floral decisions to maximize their dollars spent.

Here are some variables to consider when selecting wedding flowers.

• *Greenery:*

Adding greenery to fill in spaces in floral arrangements can save some money. Centerpieces and bouquets that are floral-heavy will certainly cost more.

• *Symbolism:*

Consider the meaning behind flowers to make choices even more personal. You also may want to select flowers that will complement the

theme of the wedding. For example, traditional spring blooms like tulips and daffodils will coordinate with spring weddings.

• *Flower varieties:*

Hardier varieties of flowers, such as daisies, mums, carnations, and protea, are less likely to wilt quickly in bouquets or centerpieces than some other blooms, even when they are cut. Such blooms can hold up in any weather and last the entire day so that arrangements will be picture-perfect no matter the hour.

• *Venue:*

Couples may find that some venues already have faux flowers or other decor. That may mean couples do not need to have as many flowers or any elaborate arrangements.

• *Size:*

A particularly large floral centerpiece can overwhelm a table, and a bouquet that is overly cumbersome may detract from the bride or her bridesmaids. Choose the correct scale for comfort in bouquets. For table arrangements, select a size that will not discourage conversation or block guests' view, nor take up too much real estate on the table.

• *Allergies:*

Although they are cut, flowers in arrangements can trigger allergic responses in some people. Others may be bothered by overly aromatic flowers. Work with the florist to find blooms that will be best.

• *Color scheme:*

Although white flowers always coordinate, many couples like some color in their arrangements. Be sure the flowers pick up the hues used in bridesmaid dresses or even the season of the year.

A Rundown On Sustainable Weddings

BY METRO CREATIVE

Wedding trends come and go, but an emphasis on sustainability is one practice that could exhibit some staying power in the years to come.

As the world confronts climate change, sustainability is gaining steam as a sound and vital practice.

Modern couples recognize the significance of sustainability. In fact, a 2022 Sustainable Wedding Alliance poll of couples planning their wedding found that 78 percent of respondents identified sustainability as important to them.

As couples plan their big day, they can keep these sustainability practices in mind to ensure their wedding reflects their desire to protect the planet.

• *Repurpose for the big day*

Repurposing is a tenet of sustainability, and that pillar is easily applied to weddings. Brides can repurpose wedding gowns used by family members, which can add a touch of sentimentality to a sustainable wedding, particularly if the dress is being handed down from a previous generation, such as a parent or grandparent. Furnishings and decor also can be repurposed after the wedding. For example, couples can encourage guests to take centerpieces home after the reception so they get a second life and are not simply discarded after a single use.

• *Focus on reducing waste*

Weddings are not the first event to come to mind when pondering eco-friendly affairs, and waste contributes

to that less than environmentally-conscious reputation. But there are plenty of ways to cut back on wedding waste. When shopping around for a reception venue, prioritize those that do not use single-use plastics. Cocktail hour plastic utensils might be convenient for venues, but they contribute to a substantial amount of ocean pollution. For instance, the Ocean Conservancy notes that volunteers removed nearly two million plastic knives, forks and spoons from the world's waterways in a single day.

• *Arrange for leftover food to be donated*

Food waste is another notable area where weddings tend to be less eco-friendly. When discussing reception plans with their wedding venue representative, couples can express their desire that any leftover food be donated to a local organization catering to those in need. This is an especially effective strategy, as the organization Feeding America notes 92 billion pounds of food are wasted annually in the United States. Donating leftovers ensures that all the energy that goes into planting, harvesting, transporting, preparing, and serving food is not for naught.

• *Host a local wedding*

Destination weddings appeal to many couples, but those focused on sustainability may want to stay closer to home. Doing so decreases the likelihood that most guests will have to travel great distances to attend the wedding. That can help lower the carbon footprint of a couple's big day by lowering guests' overall fuel consumption in relation to the wedding.



SUN FILE PHOTO

The flowers from your wedding can be reused to bring new joy to more people. The Greene County-based Healing With Flowers organization has volunteers who recycle donated floral arrangements and create new bouquets, such as this one shown in the photo. The flowers are then presented to hospitalized individuals and residents of area nursing homes. For more information or to donate to Healing With Flowers, call 423-708-4325 or email HWFlowersinfo@gmail.com.

How To Manage The Menu At Your Wedding Reception

BY METRO CREATIVE

Wedding receptions are the culmination of a lot of planning. Though there may not be any insignificant decisions when planning the post-ceremony party, some choices will loom larger than others, including which foods will be served.

When planning a wedding reception, couples can choose a venue that provides the food, such as a traditional reception center; otherwise, the reception may take place at an outdoor location or a venue that is not equipped to prepare and serve food. In the latter instances, couples will contract with an outside caterer. In both situations certain factors can help determine who to use for reception food services.

• *Planning*

A traditional reception center/catering hall is likely a wise choice for couples who prefer simplicity in wedding day meal planning. These facilities are experts at addressing all of the components that go into a reception. Such venues offer access to a cocktail area and banquet room, and the facility likely has a staff of chefs at the ready to dish up meals. While many reception centers offer restaurant-quality offerings, scouting venues and sampling dishes will provide an idea of how foods taste and help couples narrow down their choices.

• *Preferences*

Some receptions are multi-course events starting from the moment guests arrive and snack on hors d'oeuvres to the dessert display served as a final course. Others are low-key and may not have full sit-down service. If you prefer a cocktail atmosphere only, certain venues may make more sense than



METRO

A host of factors may come into consideration as couples try to determine how to feed their guests come their wedding day. Identifying how much food to have and the type of service desired can help pinpoint caterers to interview.

• *Chef access*

Having a specific chef or cuisine in mind may require separating the food from a venue. Reception centers likely will not allow couples to bring in their own food. Therefore, you will have to find a venue where outside food is possible. Then you can work with a favorite chef for catering services.

• *Location*

Some couples prefer to combine their ceremony

and reception at one spot. This may be at a beachside location or in a converted country barn. If this seems like a scenario you are considering, then the venue will take priority and you'll have to find an outside caterer to service the wedding.

• *Allergies*

Food allergies and intolerances are on the minds of many nowadays. It is important to be mindful of food restrictions when speaking with caterers. Take careful inventory of work-arounds so that every guest at the wedding can enjoy a safe, delicious meal.

Questions To Ask When Vetting Wedding Vendors

BY METRO CREATIVE

The process of planning a wedding involves the coordination of many different components, including people.

It can be stressful and it can be exciting. Chances are the couple-to-be will be handling conversations with vendors they may have never worked with before.

It may be tempting to simply sign on the dotted line when hiring wedding vendors and hope for the best. But the process can prove more fruitful when couples prepare for it by compiling a list of questions designed to ensure they know what they're getting before they enter into a contract.

Is the date available?

The most important question to ask is whether the vendor is available on the day you have chosen to get married. The house of worship or place where you will be exchanging vows should be set first, and then additional vendors can be interviewed to confirm their availability and the scope of their services.

How long have you been in business?

How long a company has been in business, and more importantly how much experience they have with weddings, can be a telling detail. Experience is not always indicative of ability, but vendors with long track records of success may prove easy to work with.

Are you insured?

Check if the vendor is insured. It can be a risky proposition to work with vendors who are not insured.



SUN PHOTO BY KEN LITTLE

Amanda Love Kenney, of Southern Belle Bridal & Tuxedo in Greenville, is shown during the 2025 Something Blue Bridal Fair held Jan. 4 at the General Morgan Inn.



SUN PHOTO BY KEN LITTLE

Jeri Donahue, left, owner of Artistic Printers in Greenville, is joined by associate Karissa Lehman at a vendor booth Jan. 4, 2025, during the Something Blue Bridal Fair held at the General Morgan Inn.

Will you be on site to oversee things?

From florists to private caterers to specialty performers, it is acceptable to ask vendors if they will be there the day of the wedding to manage things or if it will be a third party or another representative. Confirm all pertinent details, including who will be there on the day of the wedding, in advance.

What is your payment schedule and cancellation policy?

Understand how the vendor expects to be paid. Many businesses require a deposit up front to book the date. Some may want payment in full a week or so before the wedding day. Others may enable you to make monthly payments for a set period of time. Ask how the vendor handles cancellations, and whether any deposit or portion of the money already paid will be refunded.

When is the last possible date for making changes?

Know how long you have to make any changes to your plans, colors, music choices, or other details.

Are there any additional fees?

It's important to determine if gratuity, travel, overtime charges, cleaning fees, or any other charges are included in the contract or if it leaves room for additional expenses.

Is mine your only wedding that day? How do you handle conflicts?

Figure out if the vendor handles just one wedding per day or if they have staff to cover multiple weddings on a given date.

Do prices differ depending on time of day, month or year?

Certain dates are busier than others. Find out if the vendor charges a premium for holidays or particular times of the year.

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Unique favors will help wedding guests feel even more special at the end of the celebration.

METRO

Unique *Wedding Favor Ideas*

BY METRO CREATIVE

Guests bring gifts to weddings to express their love for couples. Gift-giving also tends to be reciprocal, with couples making sure that guests leave the celebration with their own tokens of affection and mementos of the special occasion.

Although favors are not mandatory, they often are included in wedding planning to make the celebration that much more special.

Favors run the gamut from simple, such as tulle-wrapped Jordan almonds, to elaborate, like crystal vases. While there are no rules regarding the type of favors couples can offer, most soon-to-be newlyweds prefer something that is not only unique, but will have utility as well. The following are some favors to consider.

• *Food-based favors:*

Guests who already have a drawer full of personalized shot glasses, pens and drink stirrers with couple's names and wedding dates may appreciate the simplicity of a favor they can enjoy without having to store. A gourmet cookie, special jerky, small bottle of olive oil or maple syrup, or another food item that is widely enjoyed can be practical and affordable.

• *Thank-you cards:*

Offer each guest in attendance a heartfelt thank-

you for attending the wedding. Personalize the sentiments to each guest. If you have a photo of yourself with that guest, include it in the card.

• *Candy or snack bar:*

A wedding takeaway can be as simple as letting guests fill up decorative containers with various candies and other treats displayed on a special table at the reception. For a fun twist, try to find old-fashioned candy or items you remember eating as a child to stir up nostalgia.

• *Flower seeds or seedlings:*

Sustainable gifts such as flower seeds or small seedling plants can let guests plant something as a remembrance of the day.

• *Scratch-off lottery tickets:*

The opportunity to return home from a wedding with a winning ticket and a few extra dollars in their pockets can appeal to guests.

• *Charitable donation:*

Rather than giving guests favors, you may want to offer donations to a charity instead. This is a popular gesture among modern couples.

• *Temporary tattoos:*

As a funny gag gift and segue to entertaining photo opportunities, give guests temporary tattoos that have your photo on them. They're clever and will not go to waste.

• *Luggage tags:*

Guests will always think of you when they travel far and wide thanks to luggage tags printed with sweet sentiments.

• *Wine stoppers:*

Customized wine stoppers will keep guests' bottles of wine fresh without taking up much space in a home bar.



MORGAN LAMB PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

Guest at the Kinser-Crisp wedding were treated to these favors.

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Here's A Mock *Wedding Day* *Timeline* To Use As A Guide

BY METRO CREATIVE

Married couples often advise loved ones who are engaged that they should make time to enjoy their wedding days in the moment, noting that the day has a tendency to fly by.

The pace of a couple's wedding day can seem so fast because the hours leading up to the ceremony and reception are typically filled with activities to ensure couples and bridal parties look their best.

Wedding ceremonies begin at different times depending on variables such as couples' preference, ceremony site and even the time of year the wedding is taking place.

The following timeline, which is based on a summer wedding with a 5 p.m. ceremony, can serve as a guideline for couples as they map out their own big day.

• 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Begin getting ready. Grooms and groomsmen typically do not require the same level of attention and amount of prep time as brides and their bridesmaids, so they likely won't need to start at 10 in the morning. But brides and their bridesmaids will need ample time to do their hair and makeup, and it may be necessary to begin by 10 a.m. Depending on the size of the bridal party, the hair and makeup session may last to 2 p.m. Grooms and groomsmen can decide when to start getting ready within this four-hour window. If a groom and his groomsmen will get a hot shave at a local barbershop or hairstylist, schedule the shave so there's enough time to return to the hotel to get dressed, as it's not advisable to get a shave when already dressed in a tuxedo.

• 2 p.m.

Once everyone's hair and makeup is done, a bride can begin to get in her dress. Be sure the photographer is aware of this timeline, as many prefer to document the bride revealing how she looks in her dress.

• 3 p.m.

Couples who want to do what's called a "First Look" can do so at 3 p.m. for a 5 p.m. Couples choose to do a first look for a number of reasons, but it involves the happy couple seeing each other in their tuxedo and gown prior to the ceremony. One reason to do a first look is to take photographs with bridal party members prior to the start of the wedding. Doing so ensures the newlyweds will get to spend more time with their guests, particularly during cocktail hour. A pre-wedding photoshoot also can ensure couples have ample natural lighting for their photos should they choose to take some outdoors.

• 3:15 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

A first look won't take very long, which leaves ample time for photos of the happy couple and their bridal party. Sixty to 75 minutes should be plenty of time for a photographer to get all the shots couples requested. It helps to submit a list of desired photos (i.e., couple with full bridal party, couple with all four parents, etc.) prior to the wedding day, and some photographers even insist on doing so



MICHAELA COX PHOTOGRAPHY

Leigh Ann Blalock, formerly of Greenville, and Justin Nguyen receive a celebratory send off following their wedding held Jan. 14, 2024, in Jackson, Mississippi. Their photographer, Michaela Cox, captured the joyful moment perfectly.

to ensure they don't miss anything.

• 4:30 p.m.

Rest and some last-minute preparation and sprucing up can take up the final 30 minutes before the ceremony begins.

• 5 p.m.

Ceremony begins.

• 5:30-6:30 p.m.

The hour right after the ceremony can be designated as cocktail hour. Couples also can use this time to take additional photos with family and others that might not have been taken during the initial photoshoot. This window also serves as a good time to sign the official documents confirming the couple's nuptials, particularly if a hired officiant will be taking that paperwork and filing it with the appropriate government office.

• 6:30-10 p.m.

The reception, featuring bridal party member and couple introductions, can commence at 6:30. The choice of when to perform father-daughter and mother-son dances is up to the couple and their parents, but such traditions are generally reserved for early in the reception so every guest is still around to witness these special moments.

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