FALL 2016

A Publication of THE CURRENT & GAZETTE Newspapers

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Deciding who sits where at the reception requires thoughtful planning

After the bride and groom have exchanged vows closer to the buffet table. and kissed to seal their future together, they and their guests are ready to enjoy some well-deserved fun at the wedding reception.

While receptions are all about fun, sometimes deciding on the seating arrangements can be a hurdle. Such a task requires a good deal of time, sorting through guest responses and an intimate knowledge of which personalities will mesh and which may not. But patience, diplomacy and a little help can make the process much easier.

Group related people together. The relation does not have to be familial. For example, seat work friends together rather than scattering them at various tables. It's easier for wedding guests to mingle when they have some common connection.

Younger guests are more flexible. Younger guests are less likely to complain about where they are seated than older guests, so you have more wiggle room when arranging their tables. They can be placed at tables closer to the dance floor or near the kitchen door, while older guests might want to be seated near the bride and groom, far away from loud music, or

Seat immediate family members nearby. Seat immediate family members closest to the bride and groom. Guests who fall under the acquaintance category can be seated farther away.

Place friends or party animals near the entertainment. Guests who are up for a good party may appreciate being seated close to the dance floor or within arm's length of the bar.

Address mobility concerns. If a guest is elderly or needs to be close to exits or the restroom, make those accommodations.

Embrace the kids' table. Seat young guests together if there are a number of them. Kids will have more fun sitting with one another than with adults or their parents. And seating kids together makes it easier for servers if children will be ordering from a special menu.

Expect the unexpected. Some seating arrangements may not work out. Be sure the reception site is flexible and can easily put another place setting together if an unexpected guest arrives or if someone needs to be moved to another table.



Consider the age and needs of guests when planning seating arrangements.





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Consider guest comfort when making wedding plans

in the life of a couple, no wedding would be complete without the witnesses, including the friends and family members who have been invited to celebrate the special day.

While weddings are largely about the couple tying the knot, it's important that they not overlook the happiness of all of the well-wishers at the ceremony and reception. Every effort should be made to ensure guests are comfortable and feel welcomed.

Plan for inclement weather. The weather is unpredictable, so establish a backup plan should the weather not cooperate on your big day. For outdoor weddings in warm, sunny locations, make sure there is shade available. Ask ushers to hand out sunscreen so guests don't burn in the sun. If there's a chance for rain, have umbrellas or a tent available to keep guests dry.

Choose a venue that can support vour guest list. Guest comfort can be compromised if everyone is packed into a reception room that is too small.

While the wedding is a huge event move around freely. This notion also applies to the dance floor. Be certain guests can dance comfortably and have a good time.

> Verify that basic needs can be met. When selecting venues or ceremony sites, investigate whether guests will have an easy time getting to and from the room. Are paths easily accessible for those with mobility issues? Are restrooms close enough to seating areas so elderly guests won't have to walk far to use the bathroom? Put yourself in your guests' shoes and try to anticipate any potential obstacles and figure out solutions in advance.

Offer welcome drinks and snacks. A cocktail hour might be on the horizon, but guests may arrive with an appetite. Make a few light refreshments available, such as crackers, chips, pretzels and soft drinks. Ice-cold water or lemonade can make an outdoor ceremony more comfortable in the heat. Conversely, hot chocolate or coffee warms up a body in chilly weather.

Consider ice-breaker games. Little Everyone should be able to sit and games can help guests who have never



Something as simple as providing a light welcome snack can go a long way toward making guests feel more comfortable.

also help pass the time until the reception begins.

Provide a program of events. Clue guests in to what will happen and when so they can adjust their schedule around the wedding. If photos of the bridal party will take place immedi-

met get to know one another. Games ately after the ceremony, mention it on the program. Guests will appreciate knowing what to expect.

> Provide creature comforts. Stock extra toiletries in the restrooms, and consider making inexpensive sandals available for guests whose feet might get sore from dancing.

Get the most out of your wedding registry

not unlike a couple's first dance or the practical as wedding registries are,

I Do Bridal

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with a degree of hesitation, fearful that they might appear presumptuous or simply uncertain about what to include on their lists. The following tips can help engaged couples build a registry to relish and utilize for years to come.

Establish an online registry. Whereas guests once had to visit a couple's favorite retailer(s) and ask what remained on their registry, online registries now allow well-meaning family members and friends to peruse potential gifts from the comforts of home and ship gifts directly to the couple. Online registries even indicate which items have already been purchased, saving couples the trouble of returning duplicates while reassuring buyers that their gifts are fulfilling a need or want.

Share your registry information on your wedding website and stationery. Guests need to know where you are registered, so share that information on your wedding website and include it on your save-the-date cards and invitations.

Register with multiple retailers. By registering with more than one retailer, couples can give their guests more options to choose from. Try to include one brick-

Registries are a wedding tradition, best man/maid of honor toast. But as many couples approach their registries and-mortarstore, ideally one with a national presence, so guests who prefer to shop in-person won't be forced to buy online.

Don't be afraid to list expensive items. While few guests will break the bank to buy wedding gifts, that does not mean couples should avoid including expensive items on their registries. Some couples might feel it's inappropriate, but it can actually prove practical. Many stores offer couples steep discounts on items they listed on their registries that ultimately were not purchased. If you have your eye on an especially expensive item, include it on your list without worrying about how it may look to your guests, as they will understand when you explain the postwedding discount you're eligible for.

Don't limit your registry to expensive items. While it's perfectly acceptable to include expensive items on your registry, remember that variety is the spice of life when adding items to your registry. Include items at a range of price points for guests working with various budgets. Don't hesitate to include low-cost items, as some guests may enjoy building a wedding gift basket with various affordable items from your registry.

Make the first dance even more special

about making the most of life with her song "Last Dance" in the 1970s, but during a wedding reception most of the focus is on the first dance of the evening when the newlyweds take to the dance floor for the first time after tying the knot. Not only does the first dance give the couple an opportunity to shine on the dance floor, but it also can help set the tone for the reception to follow.

A couple's first dance is significant. Traditionally, the first dance was performed to a slow waltz, but now the first dance is not governed by any rules.

Many couples like to push boundaries or get creative with their first dances, and this can make the a way to feel more confident in your wedding even more memorable. In fact, some couples enroll in dance classes or enlist the help of choreographers to ensure an epic opening dance number. Social media is full of videos of innovative couples performing spot-on dance routines from classic dance movies like If dancing is not your strong suit,

Donna Summer may have sung "Dirty Dancing" or beautifully choreographed dances to popular first dance songs such as "At Last" or "Can't Help Falling in Love."

> Whether a couple wants to perform an intricate tango or simply wants to sway to the music on the first dance, here are some pointers to keep in mind.

Choose a wedding song that has meaning. It may be fun to do a dance routine to DNCE's "Cake by the Ocean," but remember your first dance song will forever be linked to your life as a couple. Select a song that has deep meaning to you. Read over the lyrics to make sure it's an appropriate wedding song.

Tame those nerves. Practicing is steps, and that will help keep nerves at bay. Many couples experience a bit of stage fright. Just keep in mind that these friends and family are at the wedding to support you and not judge your dance moves.

Choose an uncomplicated routine.



ome couples enroll in dance classes or enlist the help of choreographers to ensure an epic opening dance number.

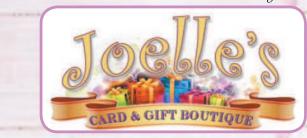
to simply sway back and forth and move around minimally. Dancing takes practice, but with that practice even the self-professed "worst dancer" can cut an impressive rug.

Work with a professional. If you desire something more intricate for budget to pay for some dance their impressive moves.

select an easy song that allows you lessons, go for it. An instructor can take you through dance basics or help you choreograph a more polished piece.

First dances are memorable moments at wedding receptions. Guests can't wait to hear the song couples choose, and some couples the first dance and you have the exceed guests' expectations with

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Ideas for couples who like the do-it-yourself approach

As the cost of the average wedding continues to rise, it's understandable that some couples ready to tie the knot may be seeking any and all ways to save money.

While some aspects of a wedding are better left to the professionals, others are prime for a little do-ityourself cost cutting. By handling some of the work themselves, couples can save a considerable amount of money.

Here are some areas that may be a good fit for couples looking to try some DIY techniques.

Floral centerpieces: While floral bouquets and boutonnieres might be



Making reception table centerpieces can be a fun and creative way for couples to save money

some couples may want to try making their own reception table centerpieces, from simple displays

Jersev S

best left to professional florists, of fresh flowers in vases or more intricate designs. Remember to keep arrangement height in mind to avoid obscuring the view of seated guests.

DIAMOND



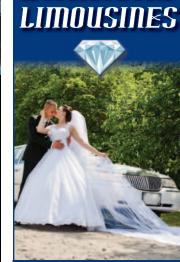
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Cake: Ask a pastry chef or bakery to make a small cake that can be used for cake-cutting traditions and photo opportunities, but have a sheet cake available to serve. Sheet cakes are much less expensive than intricate tiered cakes and can be just as delicious. Guests may not even know the difference if the cake is sliced in the reception site's kitchen. You can purchase the cake or make it on your own.

Invitations: Not everyone has the budget for embossing or engraving expensive paper stock. Thanks to graphic design and page layout software, computer-savvy couples can design and print their own invitations. Besides saving money, it makes it easier to print a new invitation if you miscounted or have a last-minute addition to the guest list.

Favors: Create favors that work with the theme of the wedding and make them yourself. These can be candles, fruit preserves, soap, baked goods, or anything else that appeals to you. The cost of making favors in bulk can be less than purchasing manufactured items; plus, it makes a unique and personal gift.

Video: Enlist a friend or family member to capture the wedding and after-party on video. You can use video-editing software available through popular apps to piece together your own wedding memento.

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Popularity of September and October reflects changing wedding trends

of their own money on their wedding, and their level of financial and personal involvement means they are seeking ideas and inspiration at a greater scale than ever before, according to a new industry survey.

Brides, published by Condé Nast, released a wedding study in August.

Millennial brides are focused on making both the wedding and the planning process more meaningful and enjoyable for all involved, according to Keija Minor, editor in chief of Brides, which released its 2016 American Wedding Study in August.

"Brides are moving away from requiring their bridesmaids to wear the exact same dress, with 66 percent asking them to wear only the same color instead," said Minor. "Grooms are weighing in on more of the details

Today's couples are spending more than ever before, making the big day and events surrounding it more personal and reflective of their style as a couple."

A personalized wedding is a priority, with couples choosing to spend more on details that demonstrate their style, such as the dress, and scaling back in areas that don't, such as the number of guests (down to 135 from 142 in 2014).

This is largely attributed to couples' increased investment in their wedding, which has reached a new high, with 73 percent paying for or contributing to the cost.

Since couples are investing their own money, they have the freedom to spend it how they want with less pressure from parents and traditions, the study found. Social media sites such as Pinterest and Instagram are fueling the trend.

Couples are also more willing to break tradition by writing wedding vows (up to 42 percent from 37 percent in 2014) or having a friend or family member officiate (up to 28 percent from 20 percent in 2014).

They are also taking a honeymoon or minimoon (85 percent of couples take some sort of honeymoon) and putting their own twist on it by inviting family and friends for a "buddymoon" (3 percent). The practice of including a "man of honor" in the ceremony is also on the rise, with 14 percent of brides opting to have a male friend stand by their side.

And contrary to the traditional "marriage first, children second" timeline, 33 percent of couples already have children by the time they marry. Some are from previous relationships. while 9 percent have them together.

Another break in tradition is that September and October have replaced May and June as the most popular months to get married, at 16, 16, 12 and 13 percent, respectively.

Key costs

· The average wedding cost is \$26,522.

· The average reception has a price tag of \$11,380.

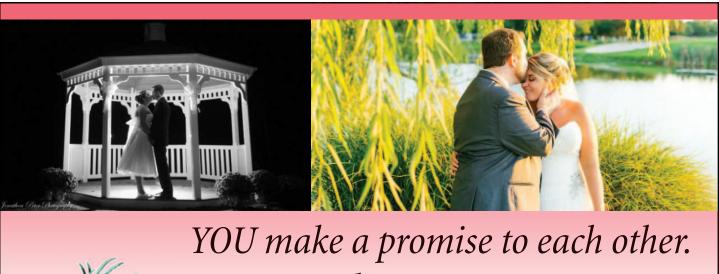
· The next highest-cost items are the engagement ring (\$5,135), photography (\$2,099) and video (\$1,533), reception music (\$1,508), and wedding bands (\$1,725).

· The average wedding cake costs \$417.

· The average wedding dress costs \$1,517, up \$137 from \$1,380 in 2014.

• The average bridesmaid's dress costs \$133.

See TRENDS on Page 9



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Trends

continued from Page 8

• The majority of couples set a wedding budget (89 percent), and one third (35 percent) spend more than intended (up from 30 percent in 2014).

• 58 percent are willing to increase their wedding budget to get the wedding they want.

• To save for their dream wedding, more couples are beginning to consider Friday and Sunday dates (15 percent and 13 percent, respectively), although Saturday remains the most popular day (65 percent).

Engagement

• Prior to getting married, 82 percent live together, and 67 percent do prior to the engagement.

• The average length of engagement is 14.4 months.

• December is still the most popular month of the year to get engaged (21 percent).

• Only 60 percent of couples are having engagement photos taken, down from 64 percent in 2014.

Wedding details

• 29 percent have an engagement party.

• 18 percent host wedding weekends

(multiple days, multiple events).

Bridal showers remain popular, with 63 percent of brides having one.
The after-party remains a trend, with 19 percent of brides opting to continue the party after the reception.

• 10 percent of couples are choosing to combine their bachelorette/bachelor parties.

• 44 percent are having their bachelorette/bachelor parties out of town, while 42 percent are having them locally.

• 85 percent take a honeymoon.

• 17 percent opt for a destination wedding, and 38 percent of them provide hotel accommodations for guests (up from 30 percent in 2014).

• Of those having a destination wedding, couples are inviting fewer guests (91 versus the 145 for nondestination weddings) but are paying for "extras" such as gift bags at check-in (53 percent), shuttle buses to the ceremony and reception (32 percent), and events beyond the wedding, such as planned activities (30 percent) and the rehearsal dinner (46 percent).

Wedding dresses

• Traditional white and off-white gowns are still the most popular, with 93 percent of brides selecting one or the other.

• 11 percent choose something nontraditional, i.e., cocktail length, separates, jumpsuit, nonwhite.

• 54 percent of all brides wear a veil.

• 10 percent of brides purchase a second dress for the reception and another 7 percent for the after-party. Groom's attire

• 54 percent of men wear a tuxedo, and 36 percent opt for a suit.

• 51 percent rent their formal wear, while 41 percent purchase it.

Wedding party

• 88 percent of weddings have a maid or matron of honor, and 14 percent include a man of honor (up from 10 percent in 2014).

• 82 percent of grooms have a best man, and 7 percent have a best woman.

• 99 percent of couples have bridal attendants and 98 percent have groomsmen or ushers.

• The average bridesmaid's dress costs \$133.

•The average number of bridal attendants is 5.3.

• The average number of groomsmen/ushers is 5.1.

• 63 percent of weddings have a flower girl and 57 percent have a ring bearer.

• 66 percent of brides choose a color their fiancé's name.

and let their bridesmaids choose the dress style, and 33 percent match in both color and style (down from 38 percent in 2014).

Wedding and reception

• September and October account for 32 percent of all weddings.

• 63 percent of couples have the ceremony and reception at the same place and same time, up from 56 percent in 2014.

• One in four couples choose to marry in a house of worship (down from 35 percent in 2014).

• 28 percent of couples ask a friend or family member to get ordained to marry them (up from 20 percent in 2014).

• Almost all couples incorporate wedding traditions including cake cutting (90 percent), the first dance (89 percent), toasts (83 percent), and "something old, new, borrowed, and blue" accessories (81 percent).

• 62 percent of brides choose not to see their groom before the wedding (down from 67 percent in 2006).

• 48 percent of couples opt for traditional wedding vows (down from 53 percent in 2014).

• 85 percent of brides plan to take heir fiancé's name.



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How to handle a wedding around a holiday

While summer and fall are the most popular times of the year to get married, some couples choose to wed on a holiday.

Holiday weddings tend to stray from the norm, and that can make for a memorable night for couples and their guests. For example, couples who choose to get married on Halloween may encourage guests to arrive and celebrate in costume, making it a unique experience for all. But planning weddings that take place on a holiday or holiday weekend can require a little extra effort.

Research venues before finalizing the date. Couples who have their eyes set on certain venues for the ceremony and reception should research the availability of those venues on holidays or holiday weekends before finalizing the wedding date.

Some venues may have pre-existing agreements with community organizations that may prohibit them from hosting weddings or limit the available time slots. Confirm the availability of your chosen venues before making the date official.

Allow for a longer engagement. Regardless of which holiday you choose,

keep in mind that many people make plans well in advance of a holiday. Holidays tend to be accompanied by long weekends, and your guests may already have plans for time off from work.

In addition, families often travel to visit relatives during the holiday season. If you plan to wed on a holiday or holiday weekend, allow for a longer engagement so guests won't have to cancel existing plans or miss the wedding because they already have travel plans. Let guests know your holiday-wedding intentions as soon as you finalize the date.

Start looking for vendors as soon as possible. Vendors, including caterers and photographers, tend to be busy on holiday weekends, so start looking as early as possible. It's important to comparison shop, but couples who wait too long to sign contracts with vendors may find themselves paying more or settling for whoever is available rather than getting one of their top choices.

Plan to pay a little more. Prices may reflect the high demand for services on holidays. Budget-conscious couples would be smart to anticipate paying



Wedding and reception venues can be particularly busy on holidays and holiday weekends, so check availability before finalizing the wedding date.

more on holidays than they might pay at other times.

Expect some declined invitations. While an extended holiday weekend may seem like the perfect time to tie the knot, guests may not share that perspective. Some people may be unwilling to abandon their holiday traditions to attend a wedding. Every couple has at least a few friends or family members decline their wedding invitations, but those numbers may be more substantial for couples who choose a holiday wedding.

Holiday weddings can make for some great memories, but couples must be especially diligent when planning weddings on holidays or holiday weekends.



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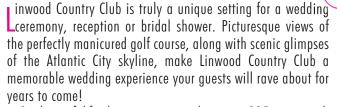
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