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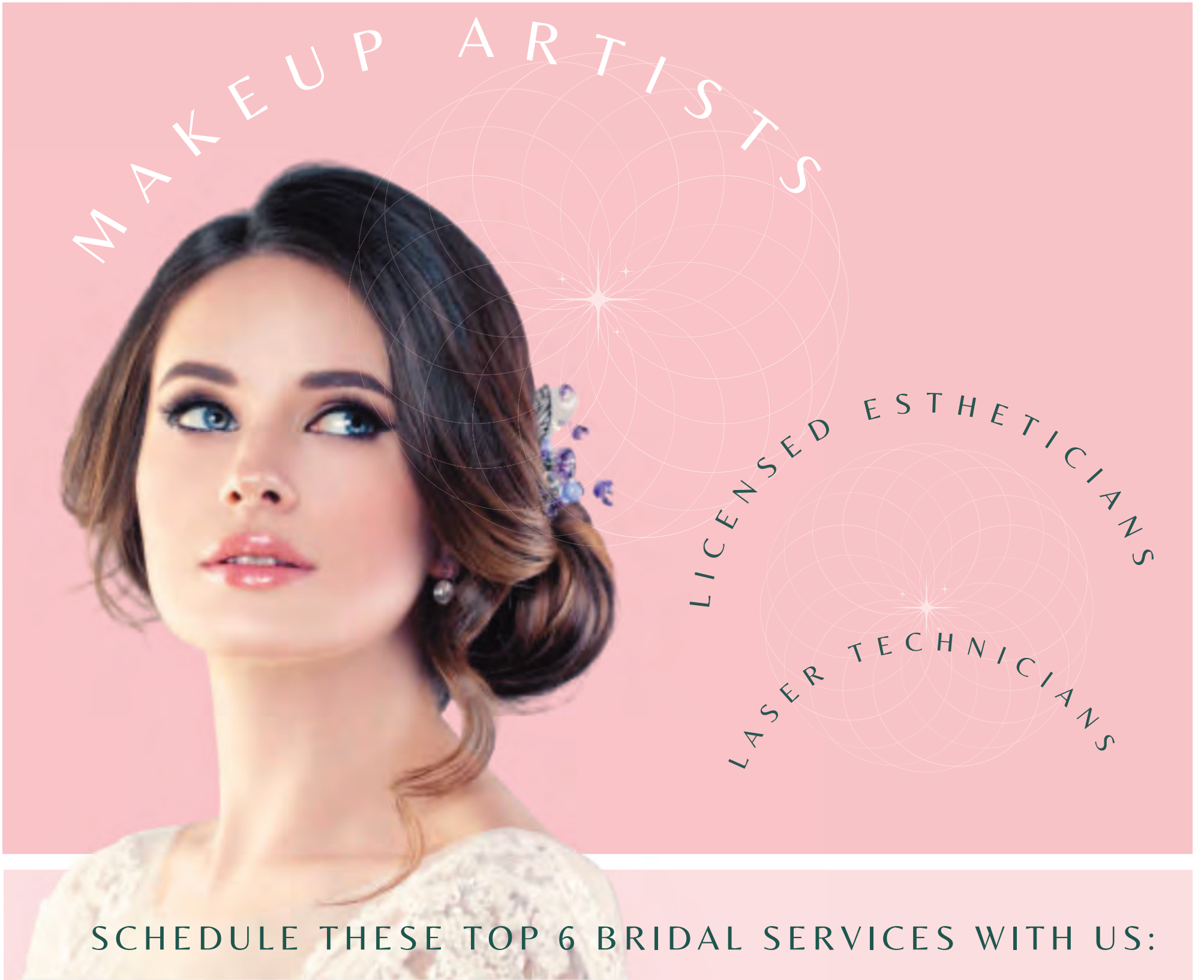
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Popular and Lasting Wedding Traditions



Weddings are steeped in tradition. Some of those traditions may be exclusive to particular families, but many others are embraced by families of various backgrounds.

Couples needn't feel beholden to popular wedding traditions, but some may feel that these customs make their weddings more fun and serve as a great way to connect their ceremonies with those of their parents, grandparents and possibly even their ancestors.

Old, new, borrowed, blue

The rhyme "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue" is likely familiar to people about to get married. This traditional rhyme has existed for centuries and refers to items a bride should wear and keep with her on her wedding day. The old alludes to a bride's past, the new refers to her future, the borrowed is intended to be something borrowed from a married couple or bride, and the blue is a symbol of purity, love and fidelity. These items are traditionally given to the bride-to-be by family members or female friends who are already married.

Bridal veil

It's now up to brides if they want to wear a veil on their wedding day, but it was once a tradition all brides adhered to. Some trace the tradition back to ancient Greece, while others suggest the tradition began in the days of the Roman Empire. Veils were believed to shield brides from evil spirits on her wedding day, thus paving the way for a healthy and happy future. Many brides still wear veils today, though likely due more to their aesthetic appeal than out of a belief that the veil will ward off evil spirits. Some brides still use veils to cover their face as they walk up the aisle, while others flip the veil over their heads.

Gifting knives

Perhaps one of the lesser known superstitions surrounding weddings, giving knives as a wedding gift is a no-no for some people. The origins of this superstition are uncertain, but people who abide by this tradition feel that knives are symbolic of a broken relationship. That would likely come as a surprise to the many engaged couples who have a set of knives on their wedding registries.

Carrying the bride over the threshold

Historians trace this tradition, which Hollywood has undoubtedly helped to keep alive, all the way back to medieval Europe. Also inspired by a bride's perceived vulnerability to evil spirits, the tradition of a groom carrying his bride over the threshold into their new home was believed to keep the spirits from entering the home through the soles of the bride's feet.

Breaking glass

Couples break glass for different reasons on their wedding days. Within the Jewish faith, one member of the couple will stomp on a carefully wrapped glass to serve as a reminder of the destruction of the Jewish temples and to inspire reflection among those in attendance. Italian newlyweds also may smash glass, but they'll do it with a little more gusto. Local tradition in Italy dictated that, at the end of the wedding, the newly married couple would smash a wine glass. Folklore suggests that the number of pieces the glass breaks into indicates how many years the couple will stay together.

Tradition is part and parcel of many weddings. Some traditions are more solemn than others, but all can add something meaningful, dramatic and even a little fun to the ceremony. *metrocreativeconnection*

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by Jenna Snyder

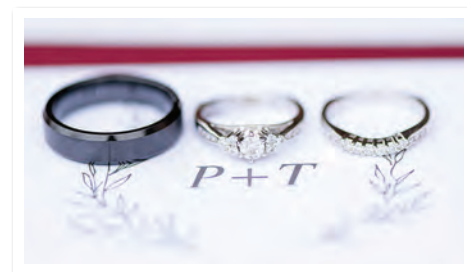
August 13, 2022, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Spencer, Iowa, Paige Hoffman and Tyler Schiernbeck said their "IDos" in the presence of all their family and closest friends. It was a beautiful summer day filled with so much love.

The story of Paige and Tyler began just a few short years ago. Paige was a cashier at Bomgaars and Tyler was a frequent customer. It took Tyler quite a few times going through her line before

he had the courage to finally talk to her. Well, add her on snapchat. A few hours of snapping go by and Tyler decided to ask Paige what she was doing the next night. Paige replied with "working the closing shift at Bomgaars". In true gentleman fashion, Tyler politely asked if she would want to go out for dinner after her shift. Paige agreed, and the first date went really well. After a few days of "talking", Tyler's buddies began to describe Paige as "the four day snap streak girl" Their average dates consisted of going out to eat, attending concerts, and adventuring in the side by side.

Fast forward a couple years to June, 29, 2021. Paige and Tyler were on a side by side trip with some of their closest friends heading to Nemo, South Dakota, to the American Flag Lookout. This is Paige's favorite spot to visit while in the Black Hills. Tyler and Paige were taking a picture together when he started to pull away from her. Paige turned around to see her best friend, down on one knee, asking her to spend the rest of her life with him! Paige stated that it was the easiest "yes" ever!

Not long after the proposal, they started planning for their wedding. Paige wasn't pressed on time as the wedding date they set was about a year and a half away. The first item on her to-do list



burgundy and sage eucalyptus, mixed in with red berries, bright green sword fern and lily grass. The bridesmaids' bouquets were very similar but they featured mini red and white roses to compliment the bride's dress. "The flowers Julie created were absolutely perfect for our special day", Paige said. All the bridesmaids had their hair done by a friend and neighbor of Paige's, Mary Smith, from Webb, Iowa, and the girls made a special trip to Top Nails in Okoboji the week of the wedding to get their nails done together.

was to find her dress. She only went to one store to find her wedding dress, A Heavenly Celebration, in Emmetsburg, Iowa. When she walked in she noticed a dress on the mannequin but she kept walking. She tried on over 25 dresses but not a single one of them was what she was looking for. Paige decided to try the dress on the mannequin and she was instantly in love! Her beautiful wedding gown, designed by Mori Lee, featured allover floral embroidery over chantilly lace, a slim gown with crystal and bugle beaded straps, and a back neckline with a sheer petal train.

Euvonne Hickey Photography in Spencer, Iowa, captured the day in pictures for Paige and Tyler. She offered them a package deal with engagement and wedding sessions together. Paige said that Euvonne listened to the certain poses that she wanted and was by her side through the whole wedding planning process, always willing to help in any way possible. "She captured our day and us so perfectly."

The colors of bordeaux, grey, white and black set the tone for the wedding party. The bridesmaid dresses were purchased online, from a place called The Bridal Shoppe, in the color bordeaux. Paige let them choose their own style of dress but asked that they picked one without lace. All the girls were very pleased with how their dresses fit them. They purchased the mother of the groom and the flower girls dresses there as well. Paige's mom's mother of the bride dress was purchased at a Grand Bridal in Spencer, Iowa, a new bridal boutique downtown. All of the dresses arrived on time and had minimal alterations that needed to be done.

The brides wedding party included her sister, Carrie; sister-in-law, Nicole; cousin, Amy; her two best friends, Grace and Brooke; and Tyler's niece, Summer. The groom's wedding party included Tyler's best friend, Garret, and other friends he's had forever, Jeffy, John, Lee, Tanner and Ben. They had two flower girls, Jaqueline and Makayla, Tyler's nieces, and the two ushers were mutual friends of

Tyler, the groomsmen, and the dads all ordered ivory shirts with grey vests through The Squire Shoppe in downtown Spencer. Tyler wore a burgundy color tie and the groomsmen wore grey to match the vests. They guys also all wore jeans and grey Twisted X's to complete the look. Paige mentioned that it didn't take them long to figure out what Tyler and the guys were going to wear. Maybe 30 minutes max!

Next on the to-do list was picking out the flowers. Paige stated that she's not a big flower person so she didn't really know what she was looking for. She met with Julie at Heart n' Home in Laurens, Iowa, and showed her their colors. Julie is so creative, that Paige was willing to let her come up with something for her big day. Paige's bouquet had a large red roses, ursula purple thistle,





the couple, Andrew and Clarke.

The reception was held at the Tower Gate Pavilion building on the Clay County Fairgrounds. A mix of rustic wooden slabs cut from their acreage, bordeaux table runners, eucalyptus garland and fresh flowers set the mood for the reception. CinTa Party Rentals based out of Spencer, Iowa, helped with all the decorations. "Cindy and Tara were the best to work with! They really went above and beyond to make sure they had everything to make our day perfect and just how we envisioned it", Paige said.

The meal for the evening was a ribeye sandwich, grilled by the Clay County Cattlemen, and cheesy potatoes, baked beans along with some cold salads made by Jacksons out of Webb, Iowa. The two tiered vanilla cake and mini cupcakes in chocolate, vanilla, and red velvet with a cream cheese frosting were a hit and made by The Bend out of Milford, Iowa. "They were so easy to work with and I would 100% recommend them to anyone that is in need of food or cake/cupcakes, Paige mentioned."

After dinner, Paige and Tyler thanked everyone for coming to celebrate their special day and members of the wedding party had the opportunity to speak about the wonderful couple and share the memories they have of the two of them. Tyler's mother and son dance was to "My Wish" by Rascal Flats and Paige and her dad danced to "God Bless the Boy" by Cody Johnson. They also chose to do a grandparents/parents dance, so that Tyler could dance with his Grandma Goettl who is widowed. "It was a very special time for the parents and grandparents who worked so hard for their future generations to have what we do have currently." We thank them from the bottom of our hearts for all that they have done for us," said Paige and Tyler. The bride and grooms first dance song was "You Save Me" by Kenny Chesney. Tyler was determined to pick out their first dance song and Paige was not allowed to know what it was until that time came and the song came on.

There was also some family fun to be had during the reception. The bridal party played a scavenger hunt game with the crowd, it got everyone involved and having fun. Both Tyler and Paige have large families and almost everyone was there to join them in such a big milestone in their lives. "It was truly amazing!" Paige recalls. Paige and Tyler chose DJ Chris out of Spencer to keep the party going. "Chris did a fabulous job getting everyone out on the dance floor." Two weeks before the wedding Chris sent them a questionnaire about what types of music they wanted to play for certain parts of the evening and was open to requests the night of the reception. Tyler and Chris also worked together to surprise Paige with their first dance song. Paige had many memories of their special day, "it's hard to choose just one." Tyler said his best memory of their wedding was finally being announced as "Mr. and Mrs. Tyler Schiernbeck" both in the church and at the reception. "There's just something about the hard parts, getting through the ceremony and onto the reception, that gives you a sigh of relief. You're more relaxed and having a good time," Tyler said. Paige mentions her favorite memory of the day would have to be getting ready with some of the most important people, walking down the aisle to the love of my life, and finally being called Mrs. Schiernbeck. "There's relief knowing that all your hard work to plan the biggest day of your life is here and you can enjoy everything you did to make it perfect," said Paige.

The Schiernbeck couple received many lovely gifts from their bridal registry at Target and Ama-

zon. The Monday following their wedding they headed off to Nashville for their honeymoon. Paige and Tyler stayed right off Broadway for four nights, enjoyed the special time with one another, and will cherish the memories forever.

Paige works in Spencer at Animal Medical Centers, as a vet technician, and Tyler drives his own truck for StaMel Enterprises. They live on an acreage near Webb, Iowa, enjoy the peace and quiet, and love having a place for their three dogs (Whiskey, Driver, and Liebe) to run. The Schiernbecks received wedding advice from their guests in their RSVP list through TheKnot. They were told to never go to bed mad at each other, always say I love you, and to remember a happy wife is a happy life! Who knew that "the four day snap streak girl" was going to end up marrying Tyler all because of Bomgaars. Congratulations Paige and Tyler! May your life together be filled with love, laughter, happiness and adventure!



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A Guide to Wedding Day

Floral Arrangements



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

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

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

Bouquets, corsages and boutonnieres

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

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

Ceremony flowers

Guests often are first introduced to floral arrangements at the wedding ceremony. Potted or vase-encased flowers may bookend the couple at the altar. Seats or pews may be adorned with flower sprays to draw attention to the aisle, known as aisle markers. These are subtle choices that enhance the ceremony space.

Reception components

Flowers may truly shine during the reception. They're one of the most important components when decorating the space. Flowers serve as centerpieces, so the guest list and the number of tables will dictate how many centerpieces are required. These centerpieces can be elaborate or simply a few loose flowers in vases. Florists can customize the look depending on couples' budgets. Some additional reception flowers can include installations on arches or on anything hanging like a floral backdrop for photo opportunities.

Tips and tricks

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

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Tips to help master your wedding guest list

Weddings are such momentous occasions that it's no wonder couples want to share their big days with as many people as possible. Though a wedding where all friends, family members and acquaintances are in attendance may be a dream scenario, reality often calls for a more carefully curated guest list. Data from The Wedding Report indicates that the average cost of a wedding is slightly more than \$20,000, though that figure could be substantially higher, or even lower, depending on where couples tie the knot. Both The Wedding Report and The Knot report that a wedding venue and catering make up a significant percentage of the overall cost of a wedding, with some figures indicating that these expenses account for around 65 percent of the final price tag. The number of guests couples will host on their wedding day will affect which venue

they book and how much food and beverages they'll need to satisfy guests. Couples who hope to stay within budget can consider these tips as they try to build a guest list that won't break the bank.

- **Accept input.** Parents may no longer foot the entire bill for their children's weddings, but couples who are accepting some financial help from parents must also accept Mom's and Dad's input regarding the guest list. Even if parents' desired guests do not ultimately make the cut, it's best to respect their wishes and consider who they want to invite. Couples who are financing their own weddings without outside help need not feel beholden to invite anyone who does not meet their invitation criteria.

- **Make a preliminary list without regard to budget.** Couples can have fun making preliminary guest lists without considering their budgets. A preliminary list can serve as a solid starting point, and couples may even realize that their list is within budget. Once the preliminary lists have been created, couples can categorize guests (i.e., distant cousins, coworkers, etc.) and then work together to determine if any categories can be eliminated from the invitation list. For example, couples who may be going over budget with their guest lists can each agree to remove distant cousins from their prospective invitees.

- **Seek advice.** Many couples face difficult decisions regarding their wedding day guest lists, so it can be helpful to speak to a recently married friend or relative to see how they handled paring down their guest lists. Some might have done it by category, while others might have limited guest lists to local friends and family. When taking this approach, couples can speak to friends about how they approached handling people who were surprised that they were not on the final list of invitees.

- **Throw a less formal party down the road.** A less expensive backyard barbecue within weeks of tying the knot can serve as a less costly alternative to a large wedding reception. Couples who take this approach can keep their wedding day guest lists to a minimum, but invite everyone they hope to see to a post-wedding day backyard barbecue or pot luck picnic so they can celebrate with everyone they love. Curating a wedding day guest list is no small task. However, couples can try various approaches to keep a guest list more manageable and less expensive. @metrocreativeconnection



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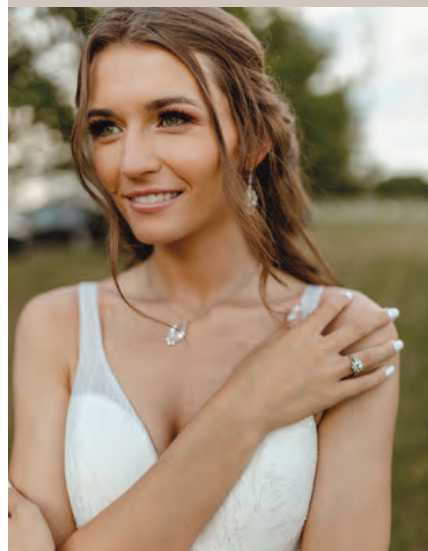
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THE GREATEST *Love Story*



— by Jantina Carney

June 24, 2022, the next chapter of The Greatest Love Story began as Carter Hassel and Cole Nicol became husband and wife! It was a hot summer day, in the back yard of Carter's parents' home, Steve and Brenda Hassel, where they said their vows to each other amongst family and friends. More on this special day to follow!

Carter and Cole's story began in the summer of 2018!. Carter, who was born and raised in Spirit Lake, and Cole from Austin, MN, just happened to meet at one of the craziest places in the summer, Millers Bay! For those of you who aren't familiar with Millers Bay, it's a popular boaters hangout, where on weekends you'll see well over 100 boats anchored! It was an instant attraction, but who would think two people who just graduated college, ready to start their young adult lives would last? That summer connection came to a halt when Carter moved across the country to Arizona. They never stopped talking, though, and decided it was worth it to do long distance. After her year in the desert, Carter decided to move back to the midwest to be closer to family, but mostly to be closer to Cole.

They spent the next 2 years dating and moved up to Minneapolis, but soon bought a house in Okoboji. They knew they had to end back up in the special spot where they met! After both getting jobs, they relocated to the Lakes Area and spent every moment they could on the lake, whether it was boating or snowmobiling.

August 19, 2021, after 3 years of dating, Cole decided it was time to propose! It was the perfect "set-up" as Cole's sister Krissy was doing a photo-shoot to practice her photography skills of Carter and Cole at Pikes Point. Carter was skeptical, but Cole convinced her it would not happen. In fact, he told her that day, "Maybe we should stay home and not take pictures tonight," just to throw her off! Once they started taking pictures, the song "Greatest Love Story" by LANCO played. Cole got down on one knee and told Carter that he knew this was meant to be forever. Cole had it all arranged for both sets of parents and families and their closest friends to show up by boat to witness the beautiful proposal, with West Lake Okoboji and the sunset in the background! It truly was amazing.

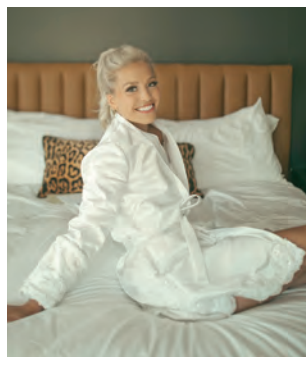
The planning for the June wedding started im-

mediately after the proposal! Carter, a teacher at Spirit Lake, is a planning fanatic! Although their engagement was only nine months long, 2022 was a lucky year as 22 is their favorite number. Cole and Carter met in June, started dating in June, and moved back to Okoboji in June. It just felt right to get married in June, too! They also thought a Friday wedding would be best so their guests could enjoy Lake Okoboji the entire weekend.

Carter always knew since she was a young girl that she always wanted her wedding to be hosted by her parents in their back yard! For those of you who know Steve Hassel, he is quite fond of his landscaping and yardscapes! With his help, her vision came to life with beautiful flowers, lights, and their home's outdoor layout. So with the location being a given, the first item on the list to cross off was the dress!

Carter had a specific style in mind - she wanted a boho styled dress that was fitted with an open back.

It had to match the backyard vibe. She attended a trunk show at Grand Bridal in Spencer and fell in love with the Aryn gown from Madi Lane. The gown offered a sleek and slender style with a plunging neckline and an open back - allowing Carter to show off her summer tan! Thin straps deepen into a soft V-back and the train carelessly follows, creating a magnificent and lasting impression. This dress was the first one she tried on at Grand Bridal, and it was THE one! Next up was choosing wedding colors.



Carter's specific boho-style wedding included hints of sunset colors, pinks, oranges, yellows, and purples. Finding the bridesmaids dresses was not easy, but she found the perfect silk mauve gowns from Baltic Borne. The bridesmaids were ready, now for the guys!

Cole chose a light beige tuxedo for himself and his groomsmen, which, with the help of the gals at Elegance Boutique in Okoboji, it was the perfect look to coordinate with the bridesmaids' dresses. With the fun, colorful, flowered ties - the look was perfect. To go along with the casual summer wedding vibes, the groomsmen and both dads wore white vans. It pulled it all together to create the vision they wanted!

Carter and Cole have a large close-knit group of friends, so choosing who was to be in the bridal party



was a bit of a task, so instead of having to make that difficult decision they just made their bridal party larger! Cole and Carter had 12 bridesmaids and groomsmen. Many of the bridal party were close friends and family, which made the day even more special for the bride and groom!

While Carter and Cole were making their wedding plans - little did Carter know that Brenda, her mother, was also planning on something very special for Carter on her wedding day. Brenda decided to take her wedding dress and make it into a robe for Carter to use as her getting ready robe for her special day!

After months of planning - finally the wedding weekend had arrived. For the rehearsal dinner the groom chose Snappers Turtle Bay Cafe at Parks Marina. The group shared speeches at dinner and invited all family and friends to join.

And now the wedding day was here! The bridal party prepared for the day ahead at The Inn in Okoboji! Lakeside Charcuterie catered to the girls while getting ready. Their hair was done by Posh Salon and their makeup was done by Okoboji Skin Care. The groomsmen spent their morning golfing at Brooks Golf Course.

A variety of flowers and colors, including pampas grasses, made for beautiful floral bouquets. Carter said working with Broadway Market Place in Paulina was a lot of fun and she made the process of choosing the florals super fun and easy! Carter was able to DIY a lot of her decor, as well. Brenda and

Carter spent a lot of time finding the perfect vases, candles, candle sticks and florals to add to tables.

As for the wedding day itself, it was perfect, other than the weather was a bit warm! After the ceremony where the couple exchanged their very personal and emotional vows, they said "I do" and celebrated with a boat cruise at Okoboji Boat Works! This allowed guests at the wedding to mingle and find their seats.

Hy-Vee in Spirit Lake catered the dinner which included the brides favorite pasta, salads and cookies! Fun toasts and words were shared while the guests ate - and then it was time for the reception! The reception was also held in the back yard of Carter's parents' home!

"The Greatest Love Story" by LANCO was their first dance song for the bride and groom, followed by Cole and his mother dancing to "Like Jesus Does" by Eric Church and Carter and her father dancing to "Never Let You Go" by Steelheart, which was Steve and Brenda's wedding song. It was a special evening.

The DJ, Nate T, started the dance tunes and the wedding party and guests danced all night long! This very special day was captured by a close friend of Carters, Emma Dau Visuals.

Carter and Cole settled in Spirit Lake along with their three labs, after a week long honeymoon in Cabo, Mexico, in February; this lovely couple is excited to continue to watch the Greatest Love Story unfold!





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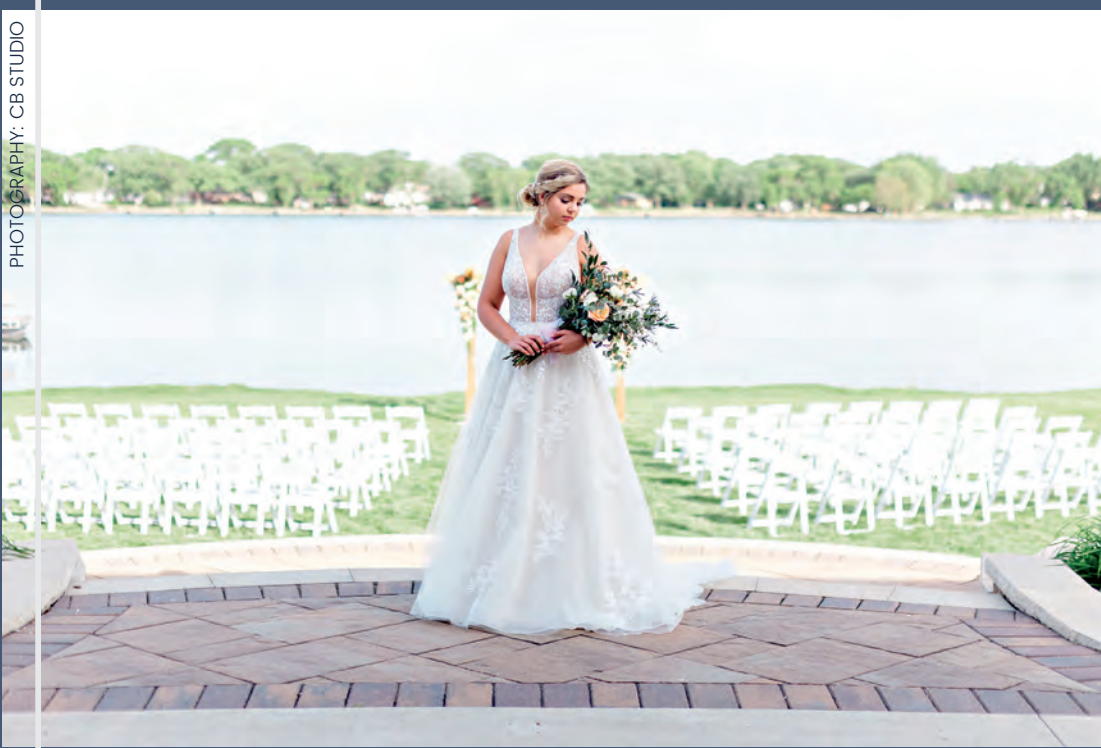
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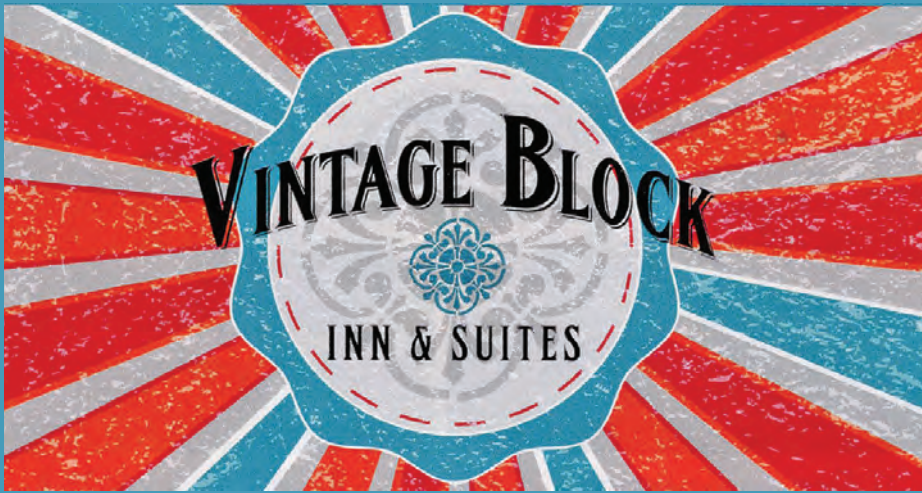



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How To Find the Right Wedding Reception Venue



Every decision engaged couples make in regard to their weddings is significant, but some may affect the day more than others. Perhaps no decision will help couples set the tone they hope to establish more than their choice of reception venue.

Reception venues are where couples and their guests will spend the vast majority of their time on the wedding day, which is why choice of venue bears such significance. With that in mind, couples can consider these tips as they look for the perfect place to host their receptions.

- **Decide what you want out of a venue.** Prospective brides and grooms may have vastly different ideas regarding how they want their weddings to go, and it's imperative that couples discuss their ideal weddings prior to looking for a venue. Do you want to get married in a place of worship? Or do you prefer a venue that can host both the ceremony and reception? Do you want an indoor, outdoor or hybrid ceremony and reception? Define what you both want before looking for a venue and make the necessary concessions if you have different ideas in mind.

- **Consider picking a venue before setting a date.** It can be wise to pick a reception venue first and then choose your wedding date based on the availability of the venue. This is especially important for couples who already have an ideal venue in mind, and it also provides some flexibility as couples search for the venue. For example, couples working within a strict budget may not be able to afford a preferred venue during the height of wedding season, but that venue could be less costly during slower times of year. By waiting to pick a date until you've chosen a venue, you're increasing your options.

- **Consider your guests.** Though couples, particularly those footing the bill on their own, should prioritize their

desires when choosing a reception, it's important they also consider their guests before making a final decision. A venue that's accessible and located near transit hubs like airports and train stations will increase the likelihood that more people can attend. In addition, if children will be invited, a venue that includes family restrooms, including at least one with a changing table, can make parents' nights much easier.

- **Consider your budget.** The Knot 2021 Real Weddings Study found that couples typically spend around 30 percent of their overall budget on the venue, which makes this decision the biggest one in terms of the financial commitments a couple will have to make. Couples may be tempted to choose an awe-inspiring, costly venue for their reception, but they should consider how devoting so much of their budget to the venue will affect the rest of their big day. The best reception venue might be one that won't eat up too much of your budget.

- **Consider the package.** Venues vary in terms of their reception packages. Some may offer catering, including beverages, while food and beverage might not be part of other venues' offerings. If you find a venue you love but it doesn't offer catering services, seek estimates from area caterers to determine how much it will cost to feed and serve your guests. Many couples find it more convenient and less stressful to pick a venue that offers on-site catering, though plenty of others have had no trouble after choosing a venue and separate caterer. The bulk of a couple's wedding day and night will be spent at the reception, making choice of venue one of the more fun and important decisions they'll have to make.

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Tips When Toasting the Happy Couple

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

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

As a couple's big day draws near, those trusted with toasting the newlyweds can consider these tips.

- **Introduce yourself.** Unless it's a very intimate affair with only a handful of well-acquainted guests, introduce yourself before beginning your toast. This not only ensures everyone recognizes who you are, but also provides a simple way to begin your comments without feeling a need to impress.
- **Keep things lighthearted.** Though it's best to avoid being too informal, a lighthearted toast with a funny anecdote and/or a joke or two can help to maintain the jovial vibe of the reception.
- **Explain your relationship.** Maids of honor and best men are often chosen because they have a special relationship with the bride or groom. So it's alright to give a brief explanation of that relationship and explain how much it means to you during the toast.
- **Toast the couple.** Even though most people toasting at a wedding have a special connection with just one half of the newly married couple, it's normal to toast the new couple and their happiness before closing your remarks. If you want to toast each person when delivering your remarks, speak to your counterpart (i.e., a maid of honor if you're the best man, or vice versa) for some special insight.
- **Keep your toast short.** Toasts need not be lengthy. In fact, toasts should be on the shorter side so everyone tasked with delivering a toast can do so in a reasonable amount of time.
- **Avoid winging it.** Plan your remarks ahead of time, even writing down your toast or at least organizing your ideas before you're handed the microphone. Winging it might seem like an option, but if you speak off-the-cuff you'll likely find yourself rambling and going off course. Planning also allows time to practice your remarks before the big day, which also can help to calm your nerves.
- **Remember you're among friends.** If need be, remind yourself before your toast that you're among friends. Speaking to a room full of people you know or are at least familiar with should help you avoid the nervousness that can come with speaking to a room filled with strangers. Toasts are a beloved wedding tradition. People tasked with toasting the happy couple can follow some simple strategies to stay calm and deliver remarks couples will remember forever. *©metrocreativeconnection*

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Responsibilities of Various Members of A Wedding Party

Participating in a wedding party is an honor. Couples invite many people to their weddings, and the select few asked to be in the party are typically those individuals with whom the couples share a strong and special bond.

The role of the wedding party is not merely symbolic. Though it's up to the happy couple to determine how involved they want their wedding party to be, individuals asked to be in the party should know that their acceptance of these roles carries with it a certain level of responsibility.

Maid of Honor

The maid of honor may bear the most responsibility of any wedding party member. Maids of honor typically help with the planning of the wedding, offering advice and opinions on everything from the bride's gown to the bridesmaid dresses and anything else a couple might need help with. If the bride asks, the maid of honor may be asked to organize dress fittings and attend them as well. A maid of honor typically plays an active, and often the lead, role in planning the bachelorette party. Come the day of the wedding, the maid of honor helps the bride prepare and may organize the bridesmaids to ensure everyone stays on schedule. A maid of honor typically toasts the happy couple during the reception as well.

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

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

Bridesmaids

Bridesmaids often help the maid of honor plan the bachelorette party, and they also help to organize the bridal shower if the bride chooses to have one. Bridesmaids can offer input on wedding planning, particularly if they're already married, though that is not necessarily required. Bridesmaids also can help relieve stress on the bride by being as agreeable as possible when scheduling dress fittings.

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. *@metrocreativeconnection*

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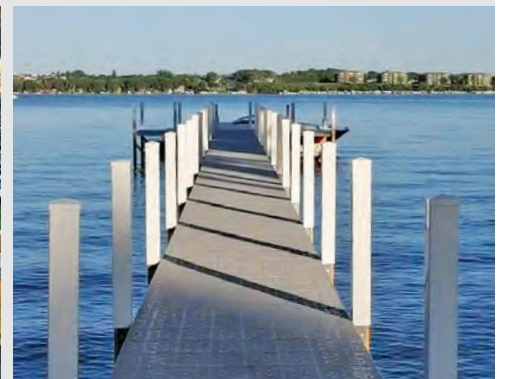
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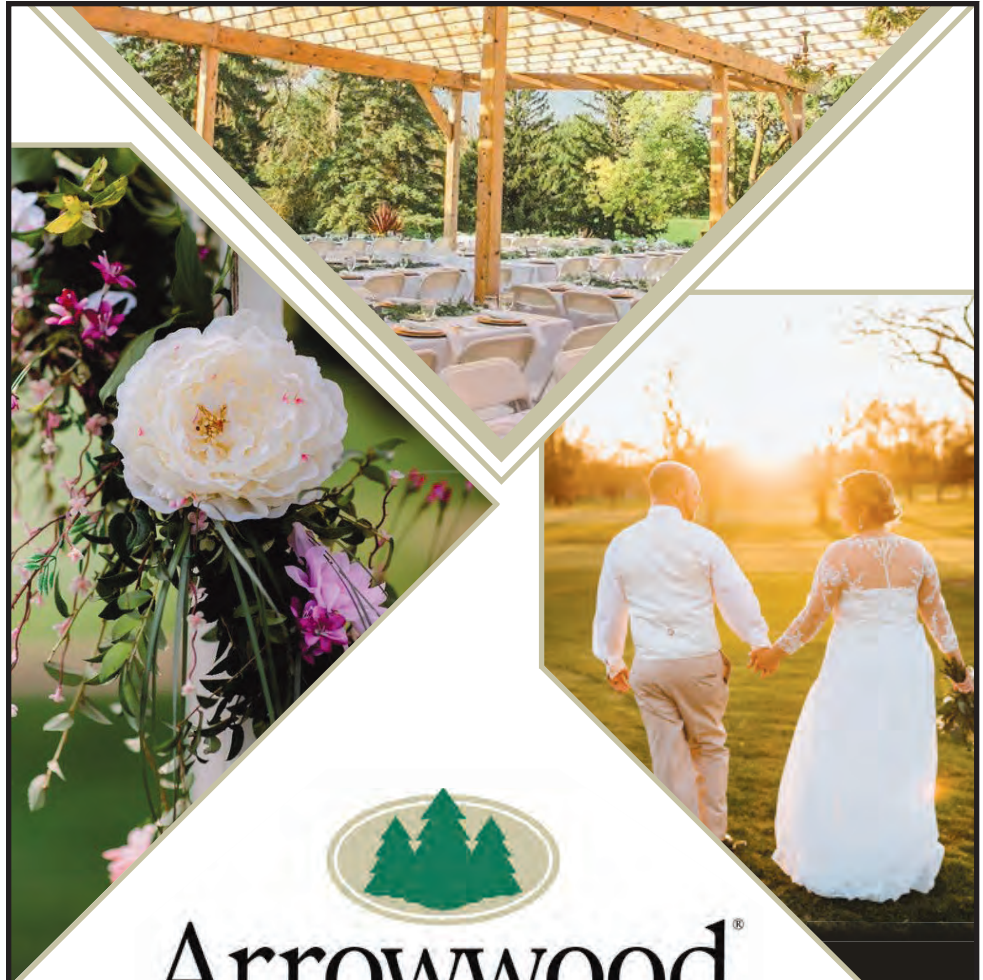
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How to pick the perfect wedding dress

Planning a wedding requires making many different decisions. The choice of wedding attire is among the most crucial decisions that couples must make. Whether the wedding is traditional or customized to suit couples' personalities, brides and grooms want to look their best when they say, "I do."

Many brides-to-be spend a significant amount of time looking for their ideal wedding dresses. What defines the right gown depends on personal preference and is unique to the person doing the search. For example, a dress that sets a fairy tale scene for one bride may not necessarily align with the tastes of another. According to Bridal Atelier, the average bride-to-be tries on three to seven dresses before finding the right one. The following tips can help those shopping for dresses find a look that makes their big day even more special.

1. Don't get hung up on perfection

Many brides get caught up as they search for the one dress they consider perfect. No dress is likely to check every box. Getting hung up on a desire to find a dress that has it all may make it hard to see the beauty in other dresses. Remember, with the talents of an experienced tailor or seamstress, most dresses can be tweaked to suit your vision of the ideal gown.

2. Consider the season

Getting married during the hazy and humid days of summer is an entirely different experience than tying the knot during the heart of winter. The fabric of the wedding dress should complement the season, whether it's lightweight and breezy for a warm day, or more substantial and cozy when darting to the ceremony in snowfall.

3. Flatter your figure

Chances are brides-to-be know which cuts and styles are most flattering. Mimic those style choices in the wedding dress. If you want to take focus off of full hips, choose a basque or asymmetrical waistline. Gowns with substantial straps or higher necklines may be better if you have a larger chest. Sheath and mermaid style gowns are options if you are confident with your figure and want to show off your curves.

4. Try a bit of this and that

Don't go into a wedding dress appointment with firm parameters. Although you may have a ball gown style in mind, after trying on other options something with a less voluminous silhouette may actually catch your eye. Many brides also automatically defer to strapless gowns, when various straps and sleeves can be very appealing.

5. Arrive with a firm budget

Weddings can be costly. It's important to set a budget for the wedding dress just as you will with other expenses. There are plenty of dress designers across a wide spectrum of price points. A willingness to consider and ultimately purchase a less costly dress can help you stay on budget.

Browsing through magazines and looking online can provide wedding dress inspiration as well. Also, when in doubt, defer to the experts at bridal shops who have experience choosing dresses that brides are inclined to love.

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65 Years

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Married April 14, 1957



60 Years

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Married April 28, 1962



60 Years

Frank & Marlene Hoffman of Spencer
Married June 24, 1962



65 Years

Terry & Pat Rosene of Sioux Rapids
Married August 18, 1957



60 Years

Jim & Connie Jackson of West Okoboji
Married September 17, 1961




70 Years

Tom & Peggy Muhlbauer of Milford
Married November 20, 1952



60 Years

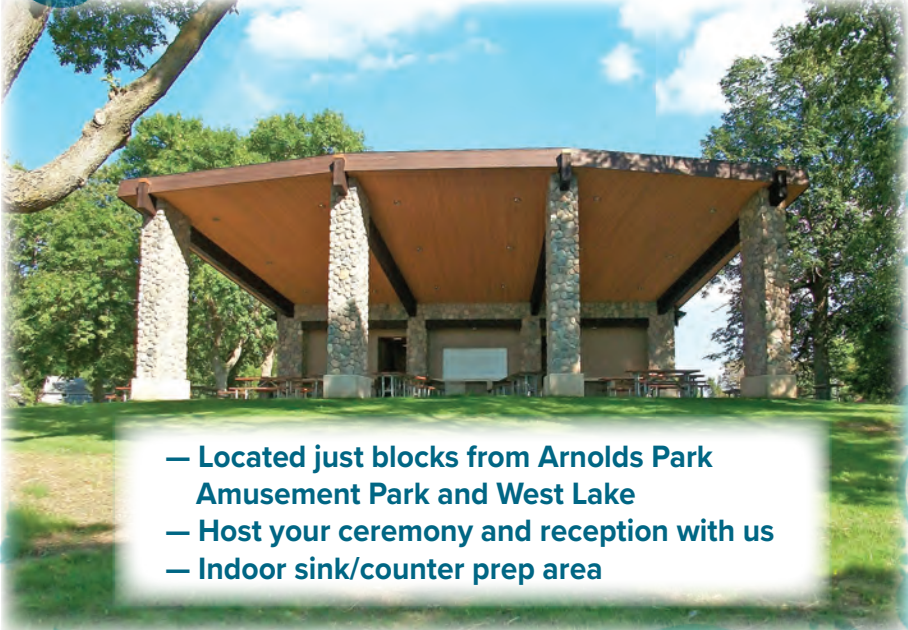
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