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Options Abound
When Shopping for
Wedding Reception Venues

A wedding ceremony is a joyous occasion couples will remember forever. As couples walk down the aisle after making their union official, the focus then shifts to the reception, where a fun-filled night of food, laughter and dancing awaits.

Nothing can trump the ceremony in terms of meaningful moments, but wedding receptions tend to last far longer. That's why couples devote so much effort to finding the right reception venue. As couples get to work on planning their post-ceremony party, they can consider a wide range of reception venue options.

Banquet Hall

Banquet halls are perhaps the most traditional option for hosting wedding receptions. They're also among the most popular, as the The Knot 2022 Real Weddings Study found that one in five couples had their wedding receptions at banquet halls. There's no end to the options available to couples who want to host their receptions at banquet halls, which run the gamut from more intimate venues to larger sites that can host hundreds of guests. Some banquet halls offer various rooms and even different styles of rooms, from traditional to modern, all at one site. Because banquet halls are designed to host special occasions like weddings, couples may find they are an especially planner-friendly option.

Beach Venue

Beach reception venues are not limited to coastal communities. Though oceanfront venues are an option for couples who live on a coast or those opting for destination weddings, even landlocked locales have beach venues along rivers and lakes. When considering a beach venue, couples should inquire about contingency locations should Mother Nature not cooperate come the big day.

Boat/Yacht

Keeping with a water theme, couples may want to look into celebrating on a boat or yacht. This option can make for an especially memorable and unique experience, but it's important to keep guests in mind before booking a boat or yacht for your reception. Some guests, such as aging relatives or loved ones with young children (at home or at the reception), may want to attend the reception but not stay for its duration, which is not an option on a boat or yacht. Others may be hesitant due to seasickness or another preexisting medical condition. If no such issues are likely to present, couples may find it hard to beat the ambiance of a reception aboard a boat or yacht.

Campgrounds

The Knot reports a surge in the popularity of campground receptions in recent years. A campground reception can be ideal for couples who love the great outdoors and prefer a less formal and more fun-focused reception. This option may require a little extra coordinating on couples' part, as they will likely need to supply all of the food and beverages and may even need to arrange for guests to safely access the venue.

There's no shortage of locations for couples to host their wedding receptions. Each venue is unique, and couples can undoubtedly find a facility that has what they're looking for.

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Wedding Timeline Guide 2024

Wedding planning involves many movable pieces that ultimately need to come together on the big day. Planning is typically a months-long process, and adhering to certain monthly benchmarks can help couples stay the course. Brides magazine offers that the perfect engagement period is 12 to 14 months, which affords ample time to get organized and work with vendors. With that in mind, here's a 12-month timeline for couples getting ready to say "I do."

12 MONTHS OUT

At the start of the planning process, establish your budget, hire a wedding planner (optional), choose the wedding party, pick a date, and start to assemble a cursory guest list. This also is a great time to begin touring venues to get a feel for potential ceremony and reception locales.

11 MONTHS OUT

Now is the time to get a firm handle on the theme and scope of the wedding. Start picking wedding colors and overall design. Also, interview and hire vendors, such as photographers, bands and videographers. These vendors tend to book up quickly as wedding season draws near, so it's never too early to book them.

10 MONTHS OUT

This is a good time to start shopping for a wedding gown because it might take some trial and error to find the perfect dress. You also can start shopping for wedding party attire at this time. Check with formalwear vendors to see how long it will take for the gowns to arrive in the shop for alterations. If you haven't already done so, be sure to book the wedding venue.

8 MONTHS OUT

Reception halls may have their own schedules, but you should think about setting your menu at this time, including deciding if you will host a seated dinner, a buffet or something else. Eight months out also is a good time to finalize the guest list and send save-the-date cards. This also is a good time to visit stores to create registry gift lists.

6 MONTHS OUT

Meet with potential florists and other vendors, like transportation companies and hotels, to secure these arrangements. Your place of worship also may require certain classes or preparatory meetings, so be sure to inquire about these. Meet with a makeup and hair stylist and book a trial. Choose attire for groomsmen and give them a deadline for fittings and orders. If you will not be getting married in a place of worship, hire an officiant at this time.

4 MONTHS OUT

Grooms traditionally arrange the honeymoon, so this is a fine time to get those travel plans in order. If you need passports, you should secure them as early as possible, and no later than four months prior to the wedding to ensure processing times. Book cake tastings and order the cake if it is not part of the venue food and beverage package. If you haven't already done so, the bride should have an initial gown fitting, and wedding invitations should be ordered at this time.

2 MONTHS OUT

Secure your wedding license and buy wedding party gifts. Address and mail the wedding invitations. Undergo a second gown fitting and work with the seamstress for the final fitting date just before the wedding. Finalize any song selections with the DJ or band. The final details will occur in the last weeks before the wedding. Buy all the small accessories and items, undergo final fittings and check in with all vendors for final payments and to ensure they are on schedule. Notify the reception hall of the final guest count. Once the wedding day arrives, couples who have done their best to stay on schedule can relax and have a great time with family and friends.

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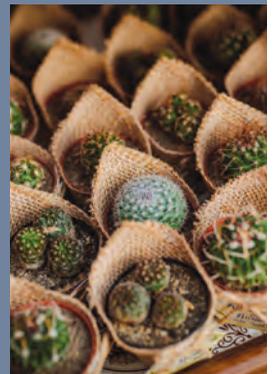
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#MOUWISTHETIME

by Jenna Snyder

Traci Smook, a local Spirit Lake girl, found “the one” after meeting Tyler Mouw at a friend’s birthday party at R Wine Bar in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on March 5, 2022. They went bowling and hung out the rest of the evening with friends. Tyler, who grew up in Edgerton, Minnesota, said, “It was love at first sight. I knew she was the one immediately after seeing her.” The first date they had together was one week later. Tyler was pretty persistent about taking her out, even though Traci wanted to take things slow, she agreed to meet him for some drinks at a local bar. She wanted the first date to be low key and chill, so they threw darts at The Liebrary, a sports bar in Sioux Falls, then went to Billy Frogs and sang karaoke. “This is not what I thought would happen on the first date,” said Traci. A little liquid encouragement later, the two of them are singing their hearts out together. “Tyler was very well spoken and had a way with his words, I was smitten,” Traci recalls. Their average dates consisted of dinner and drinks at their favorite places in Sioux Falls, followed by an evening of throwing darts! Fast forward to Christmas 2022. Traci and Tyler were visiting her family in Spirit Lake for the holidays. “I opened up an ‘early’ present, which we never do, so I knew something was up. I had my nieces and nephew sitting next to me. I opened up the box and inside was a piece of paper that said, ‘Make Uncle Tyler Official.’ I read it and immediately started crying. Next thing I know, Tyler is down on one knee! Needless to say, Christmas Eve 2022 was pretty special,” said Traci.

Not long after the proposal, they started planning for their wedding. Traci did almost every part of the wedding planning and loved it all. “Maybe in a second life, I’ll become a wedding planner,” she stated. With the help and ideas from family and friends, Traci’s vision she had from way back

when, was finally going to come to life! She created and designed all of the save the dates, RSVPs, wedding invites, programs, and Thank Yous. Traci mentions, “having the ability to create, design and plan most all of our wedding was definitely time spent doing what I love to do the most!”

Next on Traci’s list was to find the perfect wedding dress. She found a beautiful full lace, deep V-neck, round back, mermaid gown by White One called “Afterglow” from Elegance Bridal in Okoboji, Iowa. The panels and exposed seams sculpt this dress to perfection and Traci immediately fell in love. “Believe it or not, I was about to walk out of the bridal shop disappointed as I thought I had tried on all my top picks, when my consultant, Shannon, said, “try this one on quick! The second it zipped up perfectly, I had tears in my eyes, looked at my mom, and knew that this dress was the one”, said Traci. Lots of family mementos were used as well. Something old was wine glasses from Traci’s parents and her promise ring from Tyler. Her something new was her dress, shoes and jewelry, something borrowed was her sister’s veil, and her something blue was one toenail painted blue as well as having some blue in her garter!

The colors of emerald green and black set the tone for the wedding party. The bridesmaid dresses were emerald green and picked by each bridesmaid to fit their own style, giving them the option to purchase from a place of their choosing. The tuxes for the groomsmen were purchased from David Jones in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The groom’s tux was also purchased there but Tyler wanted his to be emerald green. The look or theme Traci and Tyler created was very “fall modern chic” but also classy for a fall wedding in Okoboji. Now to pick the flowers for the big day. This is where Traci had fun with all the beautiful fall colors. With the help and expertise from April, at

Hometown Florals in Lake Park, they created a gorgeous bridal bouquet and simple small round shaped bouquets of babies breath for the bridesmaids to carry. Traci’s bouquet had the perfect blend of fall colors including large toffee roses, copper cushions, Tibit white roses with a mix of Israeli Ruscus, silver dollar eucalyptus, and pampas grass spilling above and to the sides of the bouquet. Bits of babies breath were added in to match the bridesmaids bouquets and all were simply tied with a elegant ivory ribbon. The boutonnières were kept very simple but elegant with a copper cushion, a piece of silver dollar eucalyptus and babies breath. The wrist corsages that April created had copper cushions, babies breath and a simple ivory ribbon. “I really enjoyed working with April on finding the perfect fall colors to complete the look I was trying to create for our special day,” said Traci.

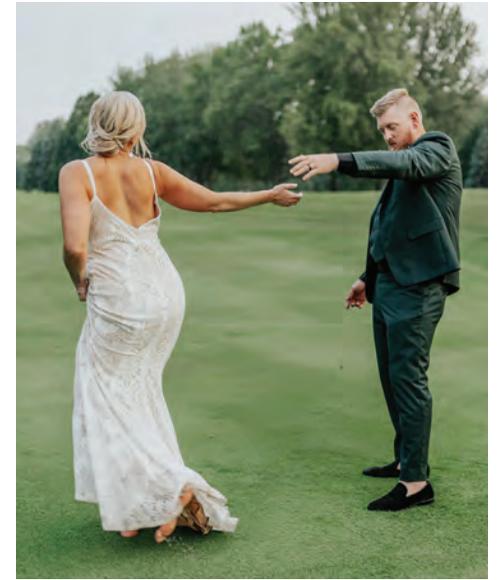
The night before their special day, they had the rehearsal dinner inside Arrowwood Resort in the Brooks room. Dinner was a choice of chicken and broccoli Alfredo, or meatball marinara with a house salad, catered by Minerva’s.

Finally, the big day, September 15, 2023, arrived! Traci and the bridesmaids had their hair done by Tyler’s sister, who owns a salon in Brandon, South Dakota, located in the Glo House building called Hair by Kaci. Local makeup artist, Kelli Lange, owner of Boji Bae Studio, in Spirit Lake, did all the girls’ makeup. “Hair and makeup was done onsite which made everything super easy for us,” said Traci. JG Media of Sioux Falls captured the day in video and pictures for the couple. “They are a husband and wife duo, both named Jordan and they did an incredible job capturing all the best moments of us and our special day,” mentions Traci.

The scene for the perfect, fall, Okoboji wedding was set in shades of emerald green, gold and black. The beautiful outdoor ceremony was held on Brooks Golf Course at Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center. The nervous groom, Tyler, waiting anxiously to see his future bride walk down the aisle beside her father, Tim Smook. “I will never forget this moment,” Traci recalls. “Walking down the aisle with my dad to marry my best friend.” For their unity section of the ceremony, they did a wine blending, Tyler had red wine and Traci had white. They mixed the two wines together and took a sip out of her parents’ wine glasses joining one another together in unity. At last, Tyler and Traci said “I Do” in the presence of all their family and friends. It was a gorgeous fall day filled with love and laughter!

The brides wedding party included two Matrons of Honor, her sisters, Sharla Larson and Andrea Smook Hill, her Maid of Honor and best friend, Whitney Nelson, bridesmaids were Jessica Anderson and Alicia Fosu, and two of her nieces were junior bridesmaids, Evalyn Larson and Hadley Hill. The groom’s wedding party included, best man, Shane Feikema, and groomsmen Dan DeWeerd, Ashley Souphimlara, Kye Winter, Amos Hill, and Tayden Larson as a junior groomsman. Traci had personal attendant, Rachel Stahlecker, to assist in making her day as perfect as it could be! (Michelle Wellnitz was Tyler’s right hand woman/his personal attendant). The sweet flower girl was Traci’s niece, Lenora Larson and the ring bearer, Tyler’s nephew, Chet Winter. “We are truly blessed with the best family and friends and are thankful for them every day,” said Traci and Tyler.

The guests gathered in the St. Andrews room at Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center for the reception following the ceremony, where they enjoyed cocktails and snacks. There was a social hour with open bar and a snack table set up with candy, homemade bars, pub mix, and popcorn from the Iowa Great Lakes Cinema 7 movie theater. The wedding party took a party bus down to The Pier in Arnolds Park, visited local bars and restaurants



on Broadway “the strip”, had a few drinks and took some pictures before making their entrance at the reception.

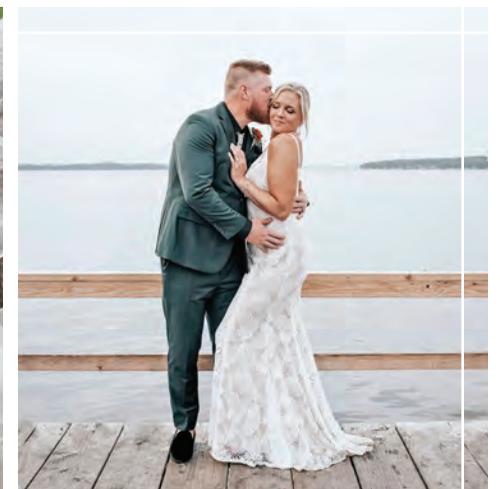
The bride and groom wanted to offer something different and unique to their guests during the reception, so they hired a Caricature artist, Casey Christensen, out of Mankato, MN, for the evening and the guests got to keep their drawing!! “It was a super fun surprise, not even my family knew about it,” Traci mentions. “We wanted it to be a huge fun factor for our wedding reception!”

The mood for the evening was elegant and classy, featuring white table cloths, emerald green napkins folded off the table under each plate. The simple table centerpieces were a mix of small clear glasses with candles, rustic tree stumps, a natural twig grapevine ball, and twinkle lights mixed in with babies breath all from CinTa Party Rentals in Spencer, Iowa. “Cindy and Tara were great to work with! They helped out with all the little stuff and we are very appreciative of them for all their help. Our guest book was a wood slab cut from the “wedding tree” in Okoboji at the old Inn! We had our name burned into the center and our guests signed around it. I thought it was so cool to bring in something local into our wedding and very unique”, Traci stated.

The meal for the evening was catered by Minerva’s. The guests were offered their choice of roast beef or chicken with potatoes and seasonal veggie blend. Tyler and Traci had sirloin, jumbo shrimp, potatoes and veggies for their meal. “We loved the food and had great feedback from all of our guests!” Their dear friend, Laura Wingert with Sugar High Desserts, out of Sioux Falls, made Tyler and Traci their favorite cheesecake with raspberry and lemon curd filling. She also made little truffles and mini cheesecakes for the guests to enjoy!

Epic Sounds by CJ was hired to keep the party entertained throughout the evening. Traci and CJ actually grew up and went to high school together. “It was great to have him deejay our wedding! He did an amazing job, everything was perfect and he entertained the crowd just the way we wanted,” said Tyler and Traci. The newlyweds first dance was to “Can’t Have Mine” by Dylan Scott, and the father-daughter dance was to “My Little Girl” by Tim McGraw. Tyler’s mother passed away 10 years ago so Tyler did not have a mother-daughter dance but instead paid tribute to those not with them by having an ‘In Memory Of’ plaque with her name and their past grandparents’ names written on it. The entire evening was spent with their closest friends and family dancing the night away and it couldn’t have been any more perfect!

Traci and Tyler have many memories of their special day! A few that really stand out to them would be the caricature artist and running around



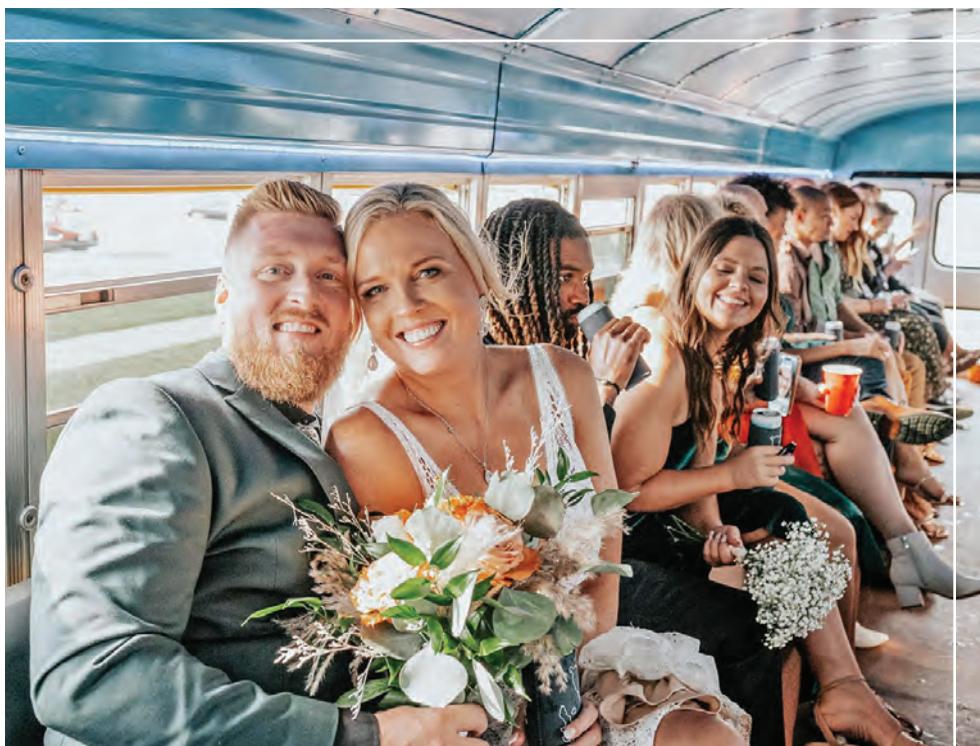
on the golf course barefoot for pictures! Traci mentions getting "iced" by her maid of honor, but the one moment they will never forget is their first look/touch! Traci recalls, "It was just the two of us and the photographer/videographer, we both had written notes for each other and read them aloud while standing on both sides of a tree. The photographer told us we could hold hands and then look at each other. It was a moment we will never forget. The absolute best part of our special day!"

Every wedding has something that doesn't go as planned and of course Traci and Tyler's wedding had a few glitches. Traci totally forgot to give her speech to her parents. She mentions having the whole thing typed out on her phone and she completely forgot about it. "I was super bummed," Traci stated. She ended up reading it to her parents a few days after. Traci also mentions forgetting to do the bouquet and garter toss, but the biggest glitch of them all is that they forgot to sign their

marriage license. They realized this the next day after their officiant was already out of town, so they had to meet up with him, her matron of honor and the best man to get it signed.

The lovely couple received many great gifts from their bridal registry at Target and Amazon. Two days after the wedding they boarded a plane and were headed to Ocho Rios, Jamaica, for their honeymoon. Tyler and Traci spent the week at an all-inclusive resort and enjoyed the special time with one another, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Traci and Tyler reside in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Traci is a graphic designer for Octane Ink in Tea, South Dakota, and Tyler is a truck driver for CHS out of Sioux Falls. Congratulations, Traci and Tyler! May your love for one another last a lifetime! Wishing you many years of happiness, adventure and love as you continue on this journey as husband and wife.



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The Benefits to Hosting a Wedding Ceremony and Reception at the Same Venue

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

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

- **Streamlined planning:** Rather than having to coordinate with two places, all of couples' attention can be directed to

one location and working with one party coordinator. This can reduce the propensity for mix-ups.

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

- **Seamless transition:** Sometimes there can be an awkward period between the ceremony and the reception. In such situations, a ceremony may end but the cocktail hour is still an hour or two away. A ceremony and reception in one locale can eliminate the gap, as such venues typically begin the cocktail hour a short time after the ceremony has ended.

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

- **Outdoor ceremony:** Couples who want to exchange vows outdoors often can do so when they have one wedding location because the nuptials are taking place outside of a house of worship, which may not allow for an outdoor wedding due to the sanctity of the location.

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

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

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What To Know When Picking A Wedding Reception Menu

Lots of details require a decision when planning a wedding. Engaged couples may or may not enjoy tending to much of the minutiae involved in wedding planning, but the reception menu is typically one popular point of interest.

When picking a wedding reception menu, couples typically get to sit down with their venue operator or caterer and take a taste test so they can decide what to include and exclude come the big night. That typically results in some happy hearts and full bellies. But there's more to picking a reception menu than taste, and the following are some pointers couples can consider as they aim to provide a tasty meal for their wedding guests.

• **Resist the urge to make the menu reflect your personal preference.** Couples, particularly those footing the bill for their own weddings, may be tempted to pick exclusively foods they like for the reception. Though it's important that couples get to enjoy their first meal together after tying the knot, it's good to ensure that guests get to have an enjoyable meal as well. Resist any urge to let personal preferences dictate the menu, particularly if you have a restrictive diet. For example, vegans need not insist everyone eat a vegan meal at the reception nor should meat lovers insist that every plate end up with some red meat on it. Diversify the menu so people with various preferences can fill up and enjoy their dinner.

• **Inquire about food allergies.** When inviting

guests, ask them to cite any food allergies they may have when they RSVP. Many banquet halls and caterers are now accustomed to accommodating diners with food allergies, but the earlier that information is communicated, the more time couples have to pick delicious foods that won't compromise the health of guests who must avoid certain dishes or ingredients.

• **Align food with degree of formality.** It's important that couples consider the ambiance of the wedding when picking a reception menu. A pig roast might be ideal for a backyard wedding, but something more formal is called for when dining in a lavishly decorated banquet hall. Couples can keep this in mind when choosing the menu. It's also notable that caterers tend to have a creative side, so they might be able to present certain foods in ways that match the vibe of the wedding even if those dishes would not ordinarily align with the ambiance of the reception.

• **Leave the experimentation to the cocktail hour.** If couples have certain exotic foods in mind, they can still serve those items but do so during the cocktail hour. Guests can simply turn down the chance to try exotic foods during the cocktail hour without going hungry. But a sit-down dinner should ensure every guest has something to fill their belly.

Picking a reception menu is a fun and filling component of wedding planning. Keeping some simple pointers in mind can help couples pick a menu everyone can enjoy.

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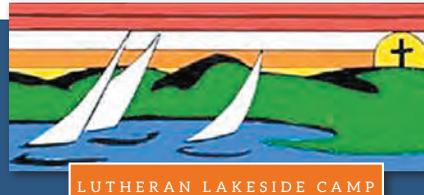
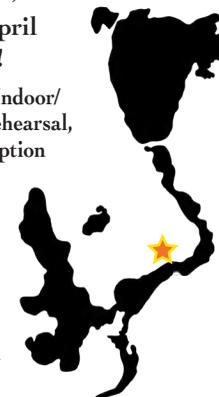
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The Responsibilities of Bridal Party Members



A couple's wedding day is one they will never forget. Guests' focus is squarely on the happy couple on the day they're set to make their union official. However, happy couples are not the only ones with important roles to play during a wedding.

Being asked to be in a bridal party is a unique honor. With that honor comes responsibility, as each person in a bridal party can do their own part to ensure a couple's wedding day is a success.

Maid or matron of honor

A maid of honor and matron of honor perform the same functions. The terms are simply unique because a maid of honor refers to a person who has not yet gotten married, while the term matron of honor is used for a person who has gotten married. Brides also may choose a man to serve as man of honor. Whatever title is appropriate, the person who serves in this capacity will help the bride plan the wedding, including being there to offer insight when shopping for a wedding dress. This person also may coordinate the bachelorette party and periodically speak with bridesmaids to ensure everyone is on schedule. The maid of honor will typically give a bridal toast during the reception.

Best man

Don't let the title fool you, as many couples now choose to have a best woman. Like the maid of honor, the best man may be asked to help with wedding planning and is typically tasked with organizing the bachelor party and toasting the groom during the reception. The best man also can help to ensure groomsmen are on schedule with tuxedo fittings.

Bridesmaids/Groomsmen

Bridesmaids stand beside the bride during the wedding ceremony. They can help with planning and help to resolve any last-minute issues that may arise on the big day, such as a vendor arriving late.

Groomsmen stand next to the groom during the ceremony and may be asked to help the best man plan the bachelor party. Both bridesmaids and groomsmen also may be asked to help host events leading up to the big day, such as a shower or engagement party.

Ring bearer/flower girl

The roles of ring bearer and flower girl are typically filled by young relatives of the couple, such as nieces, nephews or young cousins. The flower girl walks down the aisle in advance of the bride, spreading pedals as she goes. The ring bearer carries the wedding rings down the aisle.

Parents

If they choose to do so, parents of the happy couple can help to pay for the wedding. The custom of the bride's parents paying the entire bill has largely fallen by the wayside, as many modern couples now pay for their own weddings. Parents can offer to pay for the engagement party and/or rehearsal dinner, but such generosity is not expected of them. Serving in a wedding party is a unique and humbling honor. The roles of each person in the party vary, and party members who want to do their best for the couple can study up on their responsibilities in advance of the big day.

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Let's Stay Together

by Jantina Carney

June 2nd 2023, at Cedar Ridge Distillery in Swisher, Iowa, Logan Backhaus proposed to Jessica Jamenez. A moment neither one of them really remembers as they both "blacked out from all of the excitement and emotions", mentioned Jessica. However, she does remember Logan starting out the proposal stating he wanted to be with her for the rest of his life, and of course, as her eyes were swelling, she said "YES!!".

Logan and Jessica met in 2017, but it wasn't until the summer of 2022 that they had their first date. The evening was pretty low key, but yet very special. The couple walked Jessica's dog down to Arnolds Park to watch the Okoboji sunset and proceeded to spend the evening just enjoying each other's company and sitting on Jess's patio talking for hours. Logan said they both learned pretty quickly that they were a lot alike and the rest of the summer they pretty much spent all of their free time together, either playing a competitive game of mini golf or enjoying their time boating together. Logan worked at Maxwells that summer and Jess states - I found myself at Maxwells multiple nights a week just waiting for Logan to get off work!

After the proposal in June the wedding planning began. Their engagement was quite short as they married in September. The planning was quite eventful as neither one really knew what they wanted their wedding day to look like!

So in July of that year - they both decided on a traditional wedding in Spirit Lake where Logan grew up.

At the First Presbyterian Church in Spirit Lake, on Sunday, September 24, 2023, Logan and Jessica began their next chapter in life as husband and wife. Jessica stated that walking down the aisle and seeing each other for the first time that day was by far their favorite part. With many family and friends in attendance along with their wedding party of family and friends, there was just so much joy and love in that moment! Jessica wore a dress that she purchased from Elegance in Okoboji.... It was the train that made her fall in love with the dress. The guys wore tuxes from Evans in Spirit Lake, they chose black and white for colors as they wanted a timeless and classic wedding theme.

The morning of the wedding, while Isabel, Jess's sister, was getting ready to do her hair for the wedding, Jess decided to have her cut 6" off! Jess mentioned that she was glad she cut it as it turned out perfect. For something blue, Jess had Paradise Top Nails put delicate blue flowers on her nails. Jess said "I had quite a specific design and they did such a great job, they came out perfect". Some family mementos were a part of the beautiful day as well. Jessica wore the same earrings her mother wore on her wedding day which was her something old. For something new she had a customized pearl bracelet made



by a local jeweler to match her other wedding jewelry. Logan wore his late grandfather's cuff links and the cake server was the same one Logan's grandparents used on their wedding day. These very special family mementos just made the day even more special.

The presence of God could be felt during the wedding ceremony as Isabel, Jessica's sister, sang "The Blessing" by Kari Jobe. Jess states that it was such a special time to just feel the love and support from our friends and family and to just know God will be watching over our family and friends for generations. Colossians 3:12-14 is very special to Logan and Jessica. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

The glorious day continued with the reception which was held at the Roof Garden at Arnolds Park. Bloomsie Floral in Spirit Lake put together the most elegant and beautiful wedding pieces and bouquets which were mainly composed of white roses. And the day was captured perfectly by Sara Rolling. "WOW" is all Jessica could say when it came to the pictures that they will look at forever as they hang on their living room wall.

Nate T was in charge of the cocktail hour and reception music, not only did he help put together the best music, he was a huge help with making the night run smoothly! Maxwells catered the cocktail hour and dinner, which both Logan and Jess said was amazing, and were so easy to work with and the food was incredible. The dessert was a vintage inspired red velvet cake with cream cheese frosting from Playful Cupcaketions and they both agreed that it completely exceeded their expectations!

Wanting to have fun with their first dance, the couple chose "Let's Stay Together" by Al Green. The balance of the evening consisted of a lot of dancing and wonderful laughs with family and friends.

The couple enjoyed their honeymoon in Kauai and Oahu, Hawaii. Logan and Jessica live in North Liberty, Iowa, where Logan sells medical equipment and Jessica manages her own freelance marketing company.

Jess's advice to all of her engaged friends is to have no expectations and then everything will fall into place! She states that everything just ended up working in their favor to plan their wedding within such a short period of time, "but we have many friends and family to thank for that!"

Wishing Logan and Jessica nothing but the best as they start this next chapter in life and remember to love each other whether times are good or bad.

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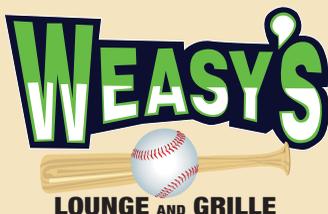
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Brides- and grooms-to-be rely on trusted friends and family to be part of their wedding parties. It is an honor to be asked to participate in the ceremony and share in the magic of the day. Many couples wrestle with the question of how many people to include in the wedding party. The trusted wedding resource The Knot says old school wedding etiquette experts advise there should be one groomsman and one corresponding bridesmaid for every 50 guests, but this isn't mandatory. Brides magazine reports that American weddings tend to feature five bridesmaids and five groomsmen. According to YoungHipandMarried.com, at weddings in Canada, the wedding party can expect to spend roughly \$366 to be in the wedding celebration. A 2018 Bankrate study indicates members of an American bridal party can expect to pay an average of \$728 to attend a wedding and other related events. However, in recent years this price may have increased due to inflation and the rising cost of travel. @metrocreativeconnection

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Tips to Plan a Perfect Honeymoon

Couples have much to look forward to when planning their weddings. In addition to the momentous occasion when they say "I do," couples can look ahead with excitement as they anticipate spending time with family and friends in a fun setting.

Though the wedding day is the focal point of couples' planning efforts, the post-wedding honeymoon also merits ample consideration. A honeymoon is the first trip many couples take together after tying the knot, and many will never forget this special excursion. As couples pore over the details of wedding planning, they may want to consider these tips to ensure their honeymoon is a trip to remember for a lifetime.

- **Identify your dream trip.** There are no rules regarding honeymoons. Though couples' budgets and professional obligations may factor into where they can go and how long their honeymoon can be, couples can discuss their dream trips and then determine if they can make those dreams come true on their honeymoon. Couples who have always aspired to backpack through Europe should consider that a possible honeymoon trip. If a food tour of Italy is on couples' bucket list, then investigate how feasible that might be for your honeymoon.

- **Stay up on current events.** It can be easy for couples to get lost in the weeds while planning their weddings and miss what's going on across the globe. However, knowledge of current events can be vital when planning a honeymoon. Faraway and exotic locales may seem tailor-made for a honeymoon, but that's only the case if such destinations

are not plagued by civil unrest, conflict, natural disasters, or other events that can affect how safe it is to visit such places. The U.S. Department of State maintains a free, easily accessible list of travel advisories at travel.state.gov. The Government of Canada maintains a similar list at travel.gc.ca. Couples are urged to visit these sites before booking their honeymoon, particularly if they hope to travel internationally.

- **Consider amenities and all-inclusive packages.** All-inclusive packages can be a great deal, particularly for couples who want their honeymoon to be all about relaxing at a single resort destination. All-inclusive packages cover the cost of food and most beverages, making these options both convenient and budget-friendly. When going this route, couples also should decide which amenities they want to access on their trip. Access to a gym and/or spa, activities like parasailing, and other perks are just some of the potential amenities couples can look for as they choose a honeymoon destination.

- **Collaborate.** A honeymoon may be the first trip couples take after tying the knot, and it can lay the foundation for future collaborative efforts. Planning travel is not always so easy, so couples can work together and make any necessary concessions so each person gets what they want out of the trip. Some simple strategies can help couples plan and enjoy a honeymoon they are likely to remember for a lifetime.

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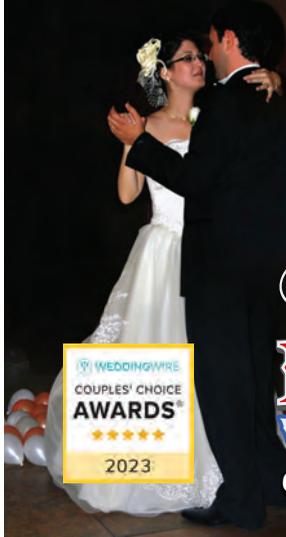
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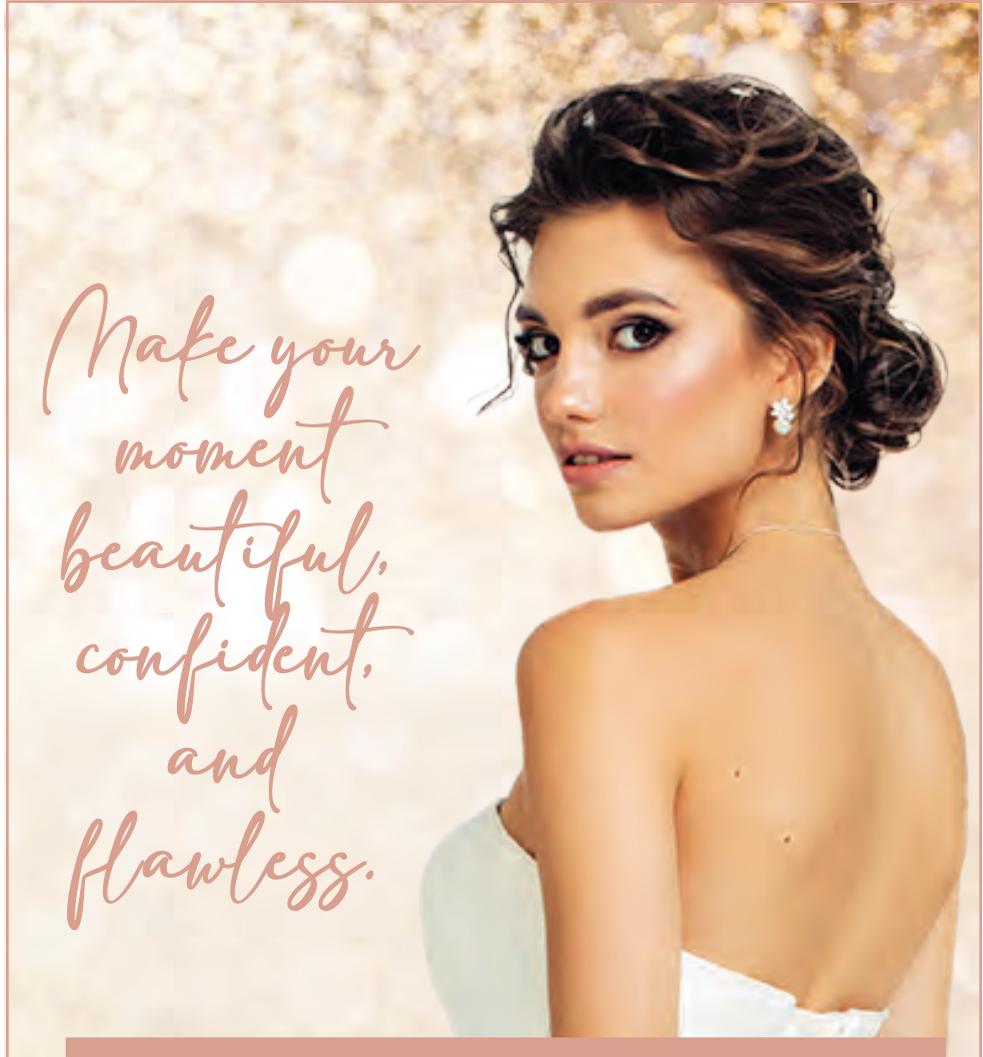


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Questions to Ask When Vetting Wedding Vendors



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.

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.

Couples are urged to exercise due diligence and ensure contracts with vendors specify all details before signing on the dotted line.

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**7 Reasons to Hire a
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The average cost of a wedding in 2022 in the United States came out to roughly \$30,000, according to a survey of 12,000 couples compiled by wedding planning site The Knot. The survey also found New Jersey and Massachusetts topped the list of most costly states to tie the knot.

When committing to as significant a financial investment as a wedding, couples may want to do all they can to ensure their big day is a hit. There are many advantages to hiring a professional wedding planner, who can take the stress out of a process that should be fun.

1. Serves as a sounding board: Wedding planners can take couples' ideas and turn them into reality. Seasoned planners know how to help a couple's vision come alive.
2. Lightens the responsibility load: A wedding planner takes time-consuming responsibilities off couples' plates. These can include scheduling appointments, dealing with vendors, conducting walk-throughs of locations, and more. This can be a big asset to couples who work full-time.
3. Offers a wealth of knowledge: A good wedding planner has years of experience handling weddings and will know which aspects will work and which may not. Also, a wedding planner can likely handle tasks expeditiously, while couples with no experience planning a wedding may not work so quickly.
4. Helps couples save money: Knowledge and experience also comes with contacts in the industry that can help couples save money. The planner likely knows where to get the best deals, and may be privy to insider pricing and other discounts.
5. Serves as a buffer: While everyone wants weddings to be incident-free, conflicts can and do arise. A wedding planner can serve as a mediator or run interference between challenging family members or even vendors.
6. Reduces overall stress levels: There's a measurable difference between the stress experienced by couples who don't hire wedding planners and those who do. The main goal of a wedding is for it to be memorable and for couples and their guests to enjoy themselves. By leaving the planning to someone else, couples can arrive at the big day feeling more relaxed and ready to have fun.
7. There is an extra person around: Wedding planners can field questions or handle tipping and other tasks on the wedding day, freeing up time for couples to have fun.
8. Wedding planners can provide support, expertise, company, and industry contacts to make weddings go smoothly. *@metrocreativeconnection*

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Clever Ways To Invite People To Be In Your Wedding Party



Plenty of love and effort goes into coordinating a dream wedding. Although the happy couple garners most of the spotlight on such momentous occasions, they're not the only ones who will feature prominently in the wedding.

The wedding party is made up of bridesmaids, groomsmen, a ring bearer, a flower girl, ushers, and other guests of honor, such as a couple's parents. The wedding resource The Knot reports that old school etiquette once indicated there should be one groomsman and one corresponding bridesmaid for every 50 guests, although four bridesmaids and four groomsmen tends to be the average nowadays.

Choosing who will be included in the wedding party requires forethought and should not be rushed. The rule of thumb is to ask roughly a year to eight months before the wedding so those asked have time to prepare. When that time comes, these fun ideas can help couples invite loved ones to be in the wedding party with style.

• **Say it with a treat.** Remember those heart-shaped candies that come out at Valentine's Day that are printed with various sentiments, like "Be mine"? Replicate the idea by giving prospective wedding party members cookies iced to look like tuxedos and bridesmaid gowns with a phrase like "Will you?"

• Give personalized drinkware. Whether it's wine glasses or flasks, have drinkware engraved with the

names of who is being asked so that everyone can toast when they say yes. In the event that someone declines, that person will still have a thoughtful momento.

• **Make custom scratch-off cards.** This is one gamble that is likely to pay off when you present loved ones and friends with scratch-off tickets that reveal the question, "Will you be my bridesmaid/groomsman?"

• **Put together swag bags.** Take a page out of fashion shows or celebrity parties and package some luxury items into gift bags for those special people you want to stand by your side on your wedding day. High-end grooming products, jewelry, electronics accessories, and more can be great gifts for those who are likely to be in your wedding party.

• **Gift robes or T-shirts:** Plan ahead for staged and coordinated photos by purchasing matching robes or T-shirts for all the besties in the wedding party. Those who are up for having a good time will have no problem wearing the matching outfits when out for wedding-related events.

• **Fill balloons with confetti and messages.** Ask friends and loved ones to pop balloons to reveal your request that they be in the wedding party. Engaged couples may have many close friends and loved ones they want to stand by their side during the wedding. There are plenty of fun ways to ask them to be part of the celebration.

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75 Years
Lawrence & Jolene Hansen of Spencer
Married February 1, 1948



70 Years
Allen & Loretta Rowe of Harris
Married February 4, 1953



75 Years
Aubrey & Connie La Foy of Arnolds Park
Married March 27, 1948



60 Years
Kenny & Glenda Kroger of Hartley
Married April 29, 1963



65 Years
Duane & Esther Gaudian of Lake Park
Married June 7, 1958



60 Years
Darwin & Marilyn Schnell of Estherville
Married June 11, 1963



65 Years
Jim & Marlene Avery of Spirit Lake
Married June 29, 1958



65 Years
Charles & Marilyn Wingert of Spirit Lake
Married August 2, 1958



65 Years
Dick & Donna Christoffer of Spirit Lake
Married August 3, 1958



62 Years
Dick & Loretta McClain of Harris
Married August 11, 1961



60 Years
Don & Charlotte Sarvie of Lake Park
Married August 18, 1963



60 Years
Ed & Jean Linhardt of Spirit Lake
Married September 7, 1963



70 Years
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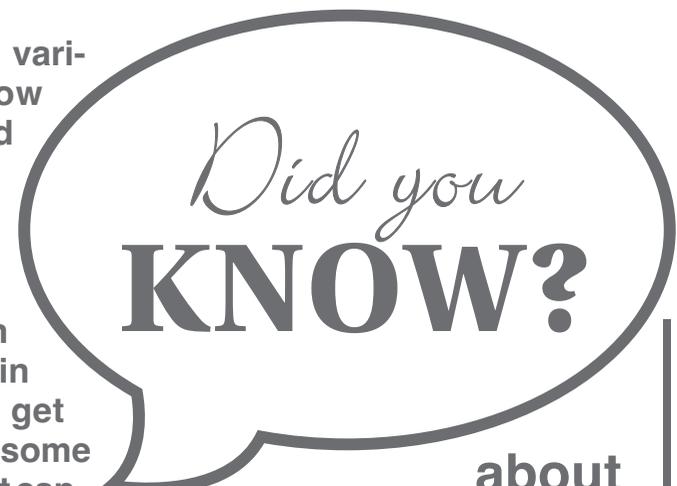


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A number of variables affect how much engaged couples will spend on their weddings. Personal preferences, location and the season in which couples get married are just some of the factors that can affect the final cost of a wedding. However, one aspect couples can count on regarding wedding spending is the reception will likely require the most significant financial investment. The Knot 2022 Real Weddings Study found that the average cost of a wedding in 2022 was \$30,000. The study also found that the biggest investment couples make is the venue. Couples indicated they spent

about 37 percent of their overall budget on a wedding venue. Though some couples may spend more than that and others may spend less, engaged couples currently planning their weddings should know that the cost of the venue where they will tie the knot will likely end up requiring the most significant investment of any component related to their wedding.

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How To Find The Right Officiant For Your Wedding

Weddings consist of a lot of moving parts. As engaged couples plan their weddings, many become masters at multi-tasking as they try to coordinate a day that will make them happy and prove fun for their friends and family.

Deciding on a wedding officiant is one of the tasks couples will have to address in advance of the big day. There's no shortage of officiants, from religious leaders to people who specialize in nondenominational ceremonies. As couples begin the process of looking for a wedding officiant, they can keep these strategies in mind to ensure they find the right fit for their wedding.

- **Determine the location and type of ceremony you want to have.** Before they begin searching for an officiant, engaged couples should discuss where they hope to get married and the type of ceremony they want to have. This may differ within the couple, as one person might prefer a religious wedding in a house of worship while the other might want a secular ceremony outdoors or in another location. The requirements to get married in a house of worship differ by faith, and restrictions may dictate who can officiate a wedding in a church, synagogue, mosque, etc. Couples are urged to learn the qualifications to get married in a house of worship before hiring a wedding officiant.

- **Take your time and meet with various officiants.** When the time comes to interview officiants, speak with as many as possible. The interview process can give couples a feel for what's out there and help them identify the type of officiant they want.

If a rapport develops between a couple and a particular officiant, that can make for a better ceremony.

- **Consider a friend or family member.** Couples have increasingly looked to friends or family members to officiate their weddings. Statistics differ considerably depending on the source, but the 2020 Brides American Wedding Study found that one in four couples are married by a friend or family member. A friend or family member serving as an officiant can lend a more personal feel to a ceremony, but couples should first confirm a loved one is willing to take on the responsibility, which will require the individual become licensed. It also may spark some nerves, so couples should confirm the person is comfortable doing so and should not pressure someone into performing the task.

- **Ask around.** Couples who don't know where to begin when looking for an officiant should not hesitate to ask around. Wedding vendors, including representatives at the location where the ceremony will take place, may be willing to recommend officiants whose work has impressed them in the past. Google Reviews and other review aggregators also can offer insight into officiants and their approach to officiating weddings.

Wedding officiants play a significant role in a wedding ceremony. Finding the right officiant may require couples to carefully consider their preferences, including the style of ceremony they want.

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Wedding Day Transportation Options

Weddings involve many moving pieces that must all come together successfully for one glorious day. Transportation is among the details that need to be sorted in advance, particularly when wedding parties and guests must move between ceremony and reception sites.

It is customary for the wedding party, which tends to include a couple's parents, to be provided a ride to both the ceremony and reception. Furthermore, couples may have to figure out what to do when the wedding is over, particularly if the reception and ceremonies are a good distance apart. Here are a few transportation options couples can consider.

Limousines - Limousines are classic modes of transportation to and from momentous events. They typically feature seating to accommodate six or more people. Limousines typically bring the wedding party to the ceremony, then wait for the duration and transport everyone to the reception. Then the cars will leave from there unless other arrangements are made.

Party bus - Many couples opt for a party bus to transport themselves and/or their wedding parties. Party buses are larger than limousines, and as their name implies, often establish a festive atmosphere. Couples may ask their wedding party members to meet at the ceremony location, and then a party bus will take everyone to the reception location after vows are exchanged. Party buses often



play music and have refreshments available. They can be entertaining on long rides.

Shuttle bus - Couples can consider providing a shuttle to and from the airport or between other points to facilitate ease for the wedding party and guests. A shuttle can take individuals from the reception site to a nearby hotel if overnight stays have been booked. A shuttle can bring certain individuals back to the ceremony site, a transportation hub or another centralized location where they can get to their own private vehicles and back home. The couple also will need transportation home or to embark on the honeymoon, so it's helpful to have reliable taxi service numbers or rideshare options at the ready.

Transportation is not a glamorous part of wedding planning, but it is a necessity that should be ironed out well in advance.

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Dig Into These Wedding Cake Options



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

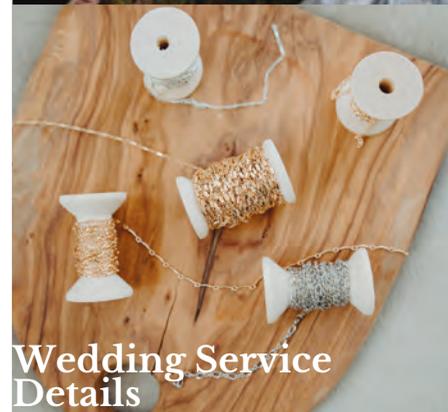
Couples and their guests look forward to indulging in wedding cake near the end of the reception. The looks and flavors of a wedding cake can be as unique as the couple saying, "I do."

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Time Management Tips For Your Wedding Day



As any married couple can attest, a wedding day has a tendency to fly by. Couples have much to do on the day they tie the knot, which can make the day feel like a whirlwind.

Certain skills can come in especially handy on a wedding day, and the ability to manage time is certainly one of them. As their big day draws closer, couples can employ these time management tips to slow the day down a little bit.

- **Create and distribute a schedule.** A schedule can ensure the happy couple and all members of the bridal party know when and where they need to be at certain times during the day. Include all pertinent information on the schedule, including when and where hair and makeup appointments begin, when transportation to and from the ceremony and reception site will arrive and, of course, the start time for the ceremony. A printed copy can help, but a digital copy sent via text or email can guarantee the schedule is accessible via smartphone at all times during the day.

- **Collaborate with your photographer in advance of your wedding day.** Couples can streamline wedding day photography sessions by collaborating with their photographer in advance. During these sessions, identify the bridal party shots you want to take and then create a schedule of photos so all party members know where they need to be and when. Some couples choose to schedule bridal party photoshoots before the ceremony, while others prefer theirs after the couple has

made it official. Regardless of which option couples prefer, schedule these photos so no time is wasted finding bridal party members.

- **Don't forget to set aside time to eat.** Anything can derail a wedding day schedule if it's forgotten when couples devise their initial plan for how the day will unfold. Couples might be less inclined to forget hair and makeup appointments and photo sessions because such components are integral to wedding planning. But couples should not forget to leave time for themselves and their bridal party to eat. Schedule a breakfast for all bridal party members (separate ones if couples insist on avoiding each other until the ceremony) to ensure no one sleeps in and throws off the day's timeline. Include time to eat lunch if the ceremony is in late afternoon or early evening. If you forget to schedule time to eat, the timeline will almost certainly be thrown off when everyone gets hungry and requires some sustenance.

- **Go over schedules with your vendors.** In the weeks prior to your wedding, reach out to your vendors to confirm the day's timeline. Do this prior to handing out a schedule to your bridal party so no one is confused if any last-minute changes are made. Couples have much to manage on their wedding days. Perhaps no component is more important to manage effectively than time.

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Simple Tips to Plan a Fun and Relaxing Cocktail Hour

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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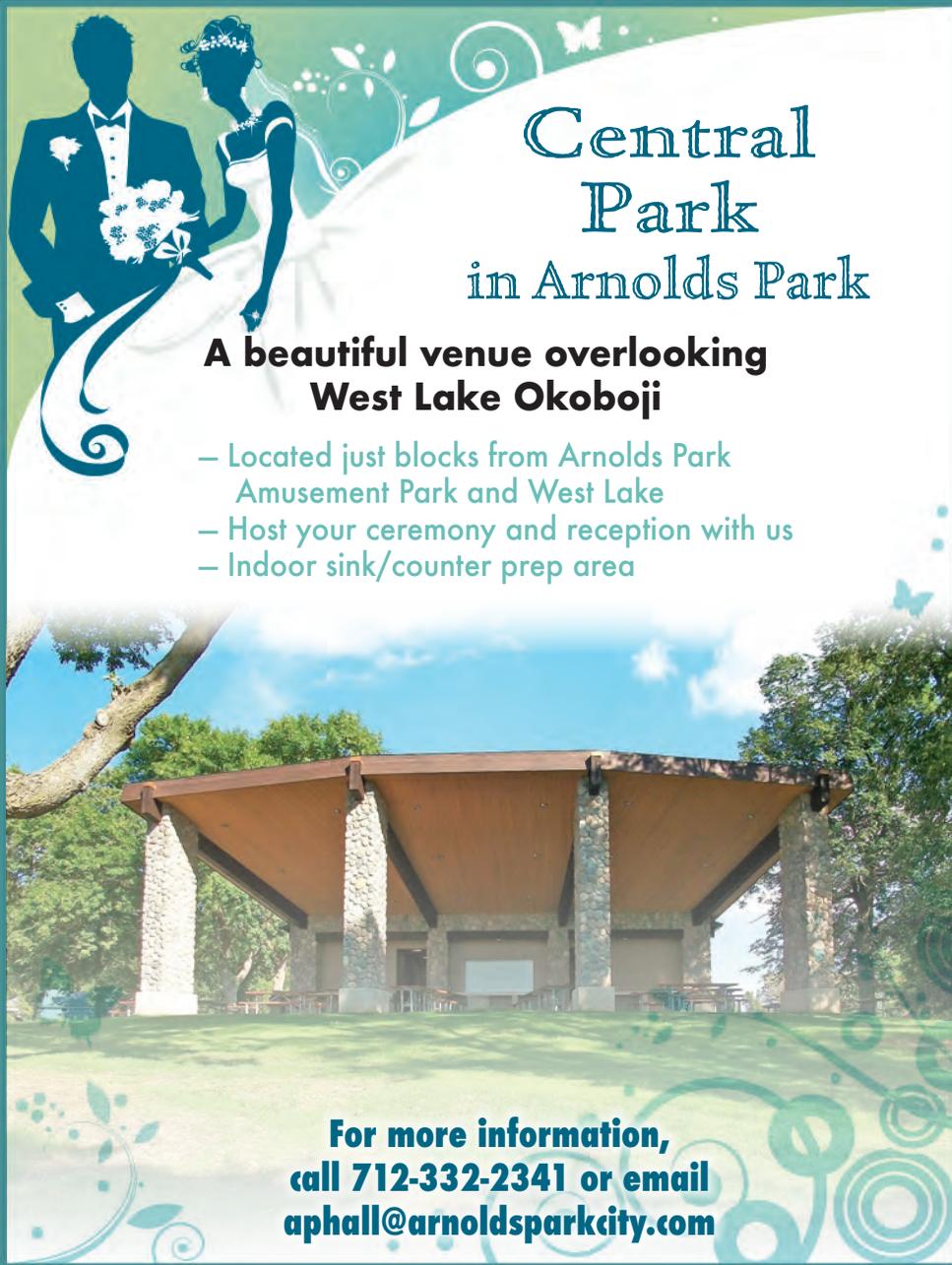
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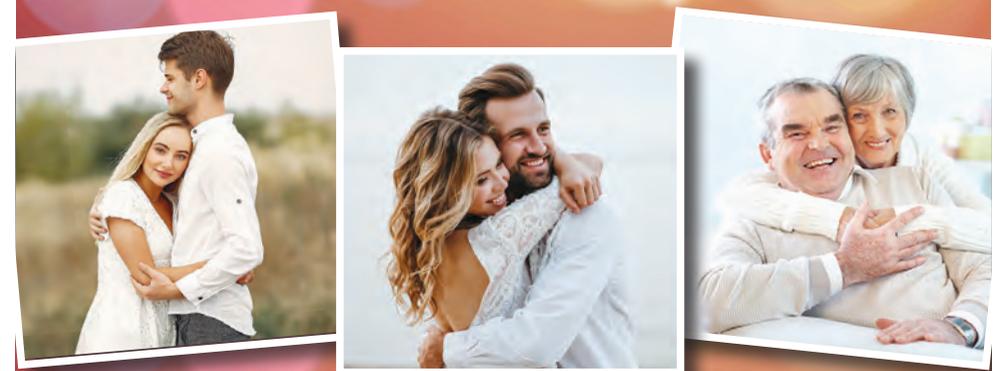
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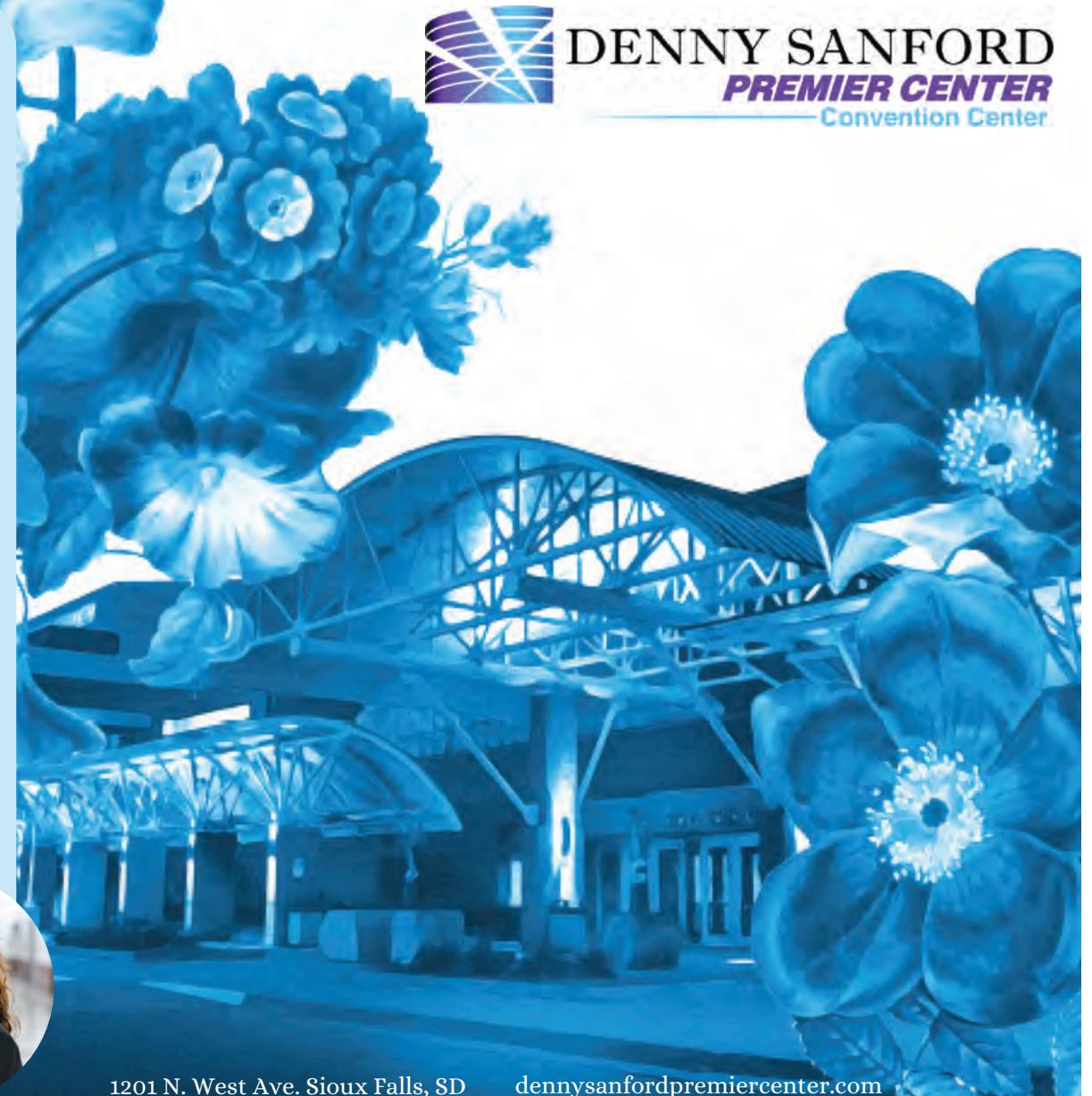
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Combine **Decadence** With Refreshment This Valentine's Day

Chocolate is often described as "decadent," and rightfully so. Few foods can make people feel as if they're being indulgent as well as chocolate. Perhaps that's what makes chocolate such a great fit for Valentine's Day. When giving that special someone some chocolate on February 14, you're not just giving them something delicious, but also a chance to indulge in a forbidden fruit.

But chocolate desserts can be more than merely decadent. In fact, this recipe for "Pasticcio di Cioccolato con Lampone (Individual Chocolate Cakes With Fresh Raspberries)" from Michael White and Joanna Pruess' "Fiamma: The Essence of Contemporary Italian Cooking" (Wiley) is both decadent and, thanks to the fresh raspberries, refreshing. The individual cake is an ideal Valentine's Day gift, as it serves to emphasize how that special someone is the only one for you.

Pasticcino di Cioccolato con Lampone
(Individual Chocolate Cakes With Fresh Raspberries)
Makes 8 servings

- 1 1/3 cups cake flour, sifted
- 1/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons cocoa powder, sifted
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 pint fresh raspberries
- Vegetable cooking spray
- Pinch of sea salt



- Preheat the oven to 325 F. Spray a standard muffin tin with nonstick spray or fill 8 of the cups with paper or foil liners.
- Sift the flour, 1/3 cup of cocoa, salt, and baking soda into a bowl and set aside. Melt the butter in a small saucepan and set aside.
- Combine the eggs and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a whisk attachment. Set the bowl over a pan partially filled with simmering water. The water should not touch the bowl. Using a whisk, beat the egg-sugar mixture until it feels very warm to the touch and all of the sugar has dissolved. Immediately remove the bowl from the heat and transfer it to the electric mixer.
- Whip the egg-sugar mixture on medium speed for 3 to 4 minutes until it triples in volume and is very thick and light colored. Add the vanilla and whip 2 to 3 seconds longer to blend. Remove the bowl from the mixer and gently fold in the flour-cocoa mixture.
- Place about 1 1/2 cups of the batter in a separate bowl and fold in the melted butter. Do this gently, as you do not want to overwork the batter. Fold this into the remaining batter. Divide the batter evenly among the cupcake tins. Bake in the center of the oven for 20 to 25 minutes, or until a toothpick or knife inserted in the center of one cupcake comes out clean. Remove and cool completely on a rack.
- While the cupcakes are cooling, combine the heavy cream with the confectioners' sugar and the remaining 2 tablespoons of cocoa, beat into soft peaks, and set aside.
- Remove the cupcakes from the tin and place them on dessert plates. Spoon the whipped cream on top, divide the raspberries among the plates and serve.

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