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Bridal Guide

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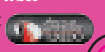


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PLANNING

Keys to mastering the save-the-date

By Metro Creative Connection

Many couples' weddings take more than a year to plan. Couples want all of the special people in their lives to witness their vows, and giving guests advance notice can ensure as many loved ones as possible attend the ceremony.

To be certain that guests have ample notice to clear their schedules, many couples now turn to save-the-date cards, which announce weddings well in advance of the actual wedding day.

Save-the-date cards once were reserved only for weddings that required travel or special circumstances, such as destination weddings. But such cards have now become commonplace for all weddings. That's because many people plan vacations or business trips anywhere from four to six months in advance. Busy people require plenty of notice to include this important date on their calendars, particularly when wedding dates fall during popular travel seasons or around the holidays.

Kleinfeld Bridal, a premiere New York bridal boutique, says that save-the-date cards are typically mailed six to eight months prior to the wedding, though some are sent as early as a year before the big day. Once a date and a location is secured, save-the-dates can be ordered and mailed.

Save-the-date cards require couples to assemble their guest lists well in advance of the wedding. The



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leading bridal resource The Knot notes that everyone who will get a wedding invitation should also receive a save-the-date card. There's no turning back once cards are sent, so couples will need to be certain everyone they want to attend is getting advanced notice.

It's acceptable to mail save-the-date cards even if some wedding day details are still up in the air. Guests really only need to know the date and location of the wedding. Couples also can use the save-the-date card to direct invitees to a wedding website where guests can learn the details of the wedding as they unfold.

RSVP information does not need to be included on the save-the-date card.

Save-the-date cards are much less formal than invitations, so couples can have fun with them.

They can showcase couples' clever personalities or funny quirks. Keep in mind it is in poor taste to mention gifts or registries on save-the-date cards. There will be plenty of time to direct guests to registries later on.

Couples are increasingly turning to save-the-date cards when planning their weddings to make sure busy friends and family will have enough time to make plans to attend their weddings.

JEWELRY



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Stunning ring alternatives

By Metro Creative Connection

White diamonds have been the traditional engagement ring stones for decades. While shoppers have experimented with gold, silver, platinum, and other precious metals for ring bands, the star of the show has long been that twinkling, pristine diamond.

Even though diamonds may be a "girl's best friend," they may not fit every woman's style, particularly the bride who likes to buck tradition

and think outside the box. According to Money magazine, the average engagement ring costs more than \$5,800. In addition to being one of the most expensive gemstones, diamonds have become quite commonplace. Some women even eschew diamonds for moral reasons.

Whatever the driving force behind shopping for alternative gems, women who want to set themselves apart from others - and men who want to "wow" their significant others with unique and

eye-catching rings - may opt for other stones.

Moissanite

This crystal naturally occurs in meteorites and is nearly as hard, dense and scuff-resistant as a diamond. Some feel moissanite offers more brilliance and fire than diamonds. Moissanite is a white-colored stone, so it can mimic the look of a diamond.

And since it can be made in the laboratory at a fraction of the cost

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RECEPTIONS

Successful toasts help shape social events

By Metro Creative Connection

A toast is a drink raised in the health or honor of someone. Such salutes are typically accompanied by some heartfelt words or tokens of advice. Toasts are a common component of social gatherings, including retirement parties, milestone birthdays and weddings.

Toast of the town

It's difficult to pinpoint who originated the practice of toasting.

Several ancient societies would raise a glass in honor of deities or special guests. Ancient Greeks offered libations to the gods as a part of ritualistic practices and also as a point to drink to each oth-



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er's good health. Ancient Romans at one point instituted a practice that all people must drink to Emperor Augustus at each meal.

The term "toast" has an interesting history.

Dating back to the 16th century, "toast" refers to a piece of toasted bread. A piece of toast was commonly added to wine during this time because wine was quite inferior in quality then compared to modern vintages. Stale bread was placed into the jug to soak up acidity and improve the flavor. The wine also improved the palatability of the old or spiced bread.

According to National Geographic magazine, by the 18th century, the term "toast" had been transferred from the floating piece of bread to the person honored by the toast. Eventually, "toast" represented the drink raised or the words offered with the gesture.

Prepare for a toast

Toasts can be off-the-cuff remarks shared in the moment, but for many special events, they should be prepared well in advance. Nowadays, some toast-givers devote extra time to preparing toasts, particularly because they know these sentiments can live on indefinitely on social media.

Giving a toast can induce anxiety, but some nerves can be relieved simply by doing one's homework and not procrastinating.

Writing tips

A person giving a toast is trying to gain the attention of a group of people who may not be very attentive. These tips can im-

prove the content of the toasts and their delivery.

- Keep "you" out of it.

This toast is not about you. It's about the person you are honoring. Therefore, do not put any self-congratulatory messages in the toast.

Make it all about the person - even beginning the toast with that person's name.

- Hook people in.

Open the toast with a good joke or anecdote that will help introduce the person of honor.

For example:

Jake is a great guy because he's the type of person who will offer to meet you at your dorm room at 2 a.m. with pizza and beer to get you through a study session.

Too bad he has a horrible sense of direction and repeatedly shows up at the wrong door.

- Tell a story.

Reference the person in the toast, other audience members, and even yourself if you can be painted in a self-deprecating light.

- Keep it short.

This is a toast, not a monologue.

Be brief so that the audience doesn't lose interest.

- Set a five-minute limit.

- Wrap it up.

Conclude the toast by trying the story back to the introduction and making sure to include the audience once more.

This will help you get the biggest laughs and applause.

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Jewelry

FROM PAGE 3

of even lab-made diamonds, it's a frugal option. A nearly flawless one-carat moissanite gem can cost less than \$1,000.

Lemon quartz

This is the trade name for a lemon-yellow stone that is a variety of color-enhanced transparent quartz. Quartz is turned into this sunny hue through an artificial gamma ray irradiation process. Like other quartz gemstones, lemon quartz is considered to be very durable and is suitable for all types of jewelry.

Sapphire

Sapphires tend to be blue stones, but they also come in peach, pink, yellow, green, and white. Sapphire may not sparkle as much as a diamond

or even moissanite. However, with the right cut, it can be hard to distinguish any lack of luster. Sapphires are the third hardest mineral and are about one-third the price of diamonds.

Morganite

According to the blog Bridal Musings, morganite is currently one of the most popular choices for engagement rings. Its pretty pink hue is romantic and feminine. It also sits at around the same hardness as sapphires, ensuring rings will endure.

Vividly cut rubies, emeralds and tanzanite - all gems that are rarer yet less expensive than diamonds - can make beautiful rings. Some couples also may opt for rings without gemstones, such as Claddagh or "true lover's knot" rings.

FASHION

This is it

Selecting a comfortable wedding gown

By Metro Creative Connection

Many brides-to-be visit bridal shops with specific goals in mind regarding the style of their wedding gowns. Some women come equipped with magazine tear-outs or pull up ideas on their mobile phones. Others may have an entire scrapbook filled with various ideas they've been compiling for years.

Much consideration is given to wedding gowns. The cost and silhouette of the dress may garner the bulk of that consideration, but brides might want to spend more time considering comfort.

Depending on the time of day their weddings take place, brides can spend 12 hours or more in their wedding gowns on their wedding day. However, when shopping for their gowns, brides may prioritize beauty over comfort, even though it's entirely possible to find a gown that's both stunning and comfortable. When staff and friends or family who have come along to offer

advice start to blush over wedding gowns, brides-to-be may feel pressured to downplay any discomfort they feel.

To make sure brides look flawless and elegant but are still comfortable in their wedding gowns, consider the following tips.

- Know what to highlight and what to cover up. No two body types are the same, and many women feel certain parts of their bodies are their best assets while they want to downplay others. Try on gowns that play up your best features. If you have shapely legs, consider a dramatic gown with a slit to show them off. Certain gowns can enhance the decollete or show off an hourglass shape. Remember, many gowns can be modified so that you feel secure and confident. Sleeves can be added or fabric placed to cover up any perceived flaws. Confidence and pride are important parts of the comfort factor.

- Get sized correctly. Bridal gown sizes do not coincide with street sizes.

Depending on the manufacturer, brides may have to select gowns that are several sizes larger than they would normally wear. This should not be a cause for alarm. Brides should go by their measurements. Attempting to squeeze into a dress that is too small will only lead to discomfort on the wedding day.

- Purchase the right undergarments. Improperly fitting bras, shapewear and other undergarments can lead to discomfort as well.

Some seamstresses can sew in supportive cups to remove the need for separate bras. Brides can explore various options to reduce the visibility of certain accoutrements.

- Move around in the gown. Brides should not just stand in front of the mirror and smile when trying on gowns. Put them through their paces. Try sitting, bending and even a little dancing. Make sure the dress is comfortable to move around in.

GOWN » PAGE 6



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RECEPTIONS

Tips for a special mother/son dance

By Metro Creative Connection

Weddings celebrate the unions of happy couples ready to pledge their lives to each other. In theory, the wedding day spotlight should be shared equally by brides and grooms. But brides often eclipse their

grooms, as guests are drawn to stunning bridal gowns.

Though grooms might play second fiddle for much of their wedding days, there is one moment when all eyes are on the groom and a special lady in his life. The mother/son

dance is a wedding tradition that many grooms embrace as their opportunity to show their mothers how much they love and appreciate them. The mother/son dance is an ideal time to create a special moment, and the following are some tips to personalize the

dance.

- Precede the bride and her father. Make your own tradition and switch up the timing of the dances. Be the first to take a spin on the dance floor and set the tone for the other traditional songs to come.

- Create a photo mon-

tage. Work with an entertainment company or photographer to create a slideshow of images showing you and your mother together and separately. If possible, include some photos that were shot during the wedding ceremony, asking the photographer to

capture the look on your mother's face during pivotal moments of the ceremony.

- Show off your dance skills. One increasingly popular wedding trend is for fathers and brides to choreograph the father/

DANCE » PAGE 6

CEREMONY

Saying more than just 'I do'

Treat guests to personalized vows

Metro Creative Connection

Couples who choose to write their own wedding vows recognize how special such personal gestures are. Writing one's own vows can impart a personalized and special touch to the ceremony. But as anyone who has stared down a blank piece of paper or blinking cursor can attest, a case of writer's block may encourage couples to abandon the idea of writing their own vows.

Writing vows can be nerve-racking. Many couples are unaccustomed to speaking in front of crowds, and then there is the challenge of turning life-altering feelings into language that will appeal to the masses.

But couples struggling with their vows need not throw in the vow-writing towel. With some practice and guidance, anyone can write cherished vows that will be remembered for years to come.

- Skip the schtick. Jokes may pop up in speeches throughout the evening,



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but wedding vows can be your chance to truly speak from the heart. Humor may come across as insincerity. Rather, list the words that describe your

feelings for your future spouse, and build on that.

- Tell a story. If you need inspiration, look to a moment in your relationship when you really knew

this was the person with whom you wanted to share your life. Relay the story, but keep it brief. Try to be as specific as possible, and recognize that it's ac-

ceptable to be playful with your words. When it's really coming from the heart and not the head, you'll know it.

- Borrow from traditional words. Take traditional vows and tweak them to make them your own. This works especially well for those who have trouble getting started or are unsure of which format to follow. Incorporate key words, such as "partners," "love," "friends," "joy," and "forever."

- Be sure the officiant is on board. Depending on the type of ceremony, the officiant may have final say over what can or cannot be included in your vows. Religious ceremonies, for example, may be limited to certain scripture readings and traditional vows. Before you devote any time to writing vows, ensure that it's all right to include them. Otherwise, save personalized sentiments for a special toast at the wedding reception.

- Decide on a mutual structure for the vows. If you and your spouse will

not be writing the vows together, agree on a format that you both will follow. Otherwise, you might be writing about your unending love, and he or she may be promising to keep updated on favorite sports teams or television programs. You want the tone and style of the vows to be cohesive.

- Dig deeper. Look into the future and project how you hope your life to be in 10 or 20 years. Explain all of the reasons you want to be together for the duration.

- Read the vows several times. Read over your work and make sure the language is clear and there are no glaring errors. It may take a few versions to get the final version right where you want it.

- Get a second opinion. Ask someone you trust to listen to the vows and offer feedback. This needs to be a person who will be honest and not just tell you what you want to hear.

Personalized vows can add an extra special touch to wedding ceremonies.

Gown

FROM PAGE 5

- Try different options. The gown brides have in mind may not be the one they ultimately go home with. Explore different styles and materials. Choose cooler, breezier fabrics and lightweight gowns, like crepe, georgette or organza, for summer weddings. Heavier fabrics, such as brocade, may be more comfortable in the winter.

Wedding gowns can be both beautiful and comfortable for those who know how to shop.



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Dance

FROM PAGE 5

daughter dances.

Grooms and their mothers can follow suit, particularly if you both have some stellar dance moves.

- Let Mom choose the song. Give your mother the opportunity to express her sentiments to you, as mothers of the groom do not typically toast their sons during weddings or even rehearsal dinners.

- Invite other son/mother duos up.

If the idea of dancing alone with your mother is a bit intimidating, give other mothers in attendance an opportunity to share the spotlight.

Celebrate all mothers in attendance, encouraging any mothers and sons who are present to dance together.

Grooms may not garner the bulk of guests' attention on their wedding days.

But they can take steps to make their special dances with their mothers more memorable and unique.

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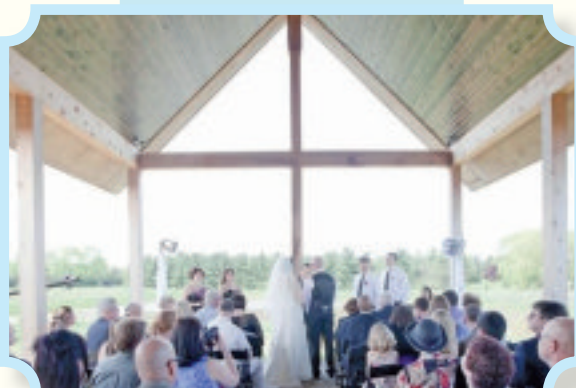
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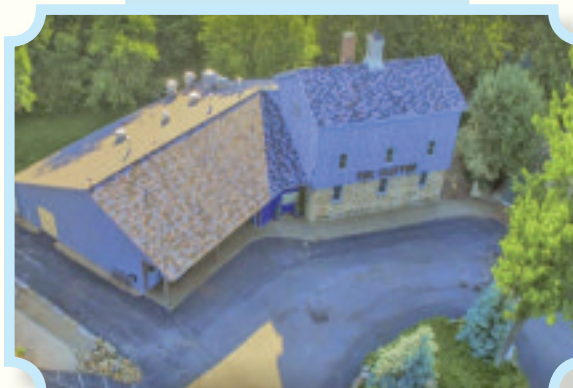
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