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Keys to selecting a wedding menu

STAR NEWS GROUP

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

SEE MENU PAGE 11



COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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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Transportation options for your wedding day

STAR NEWS GROUP

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

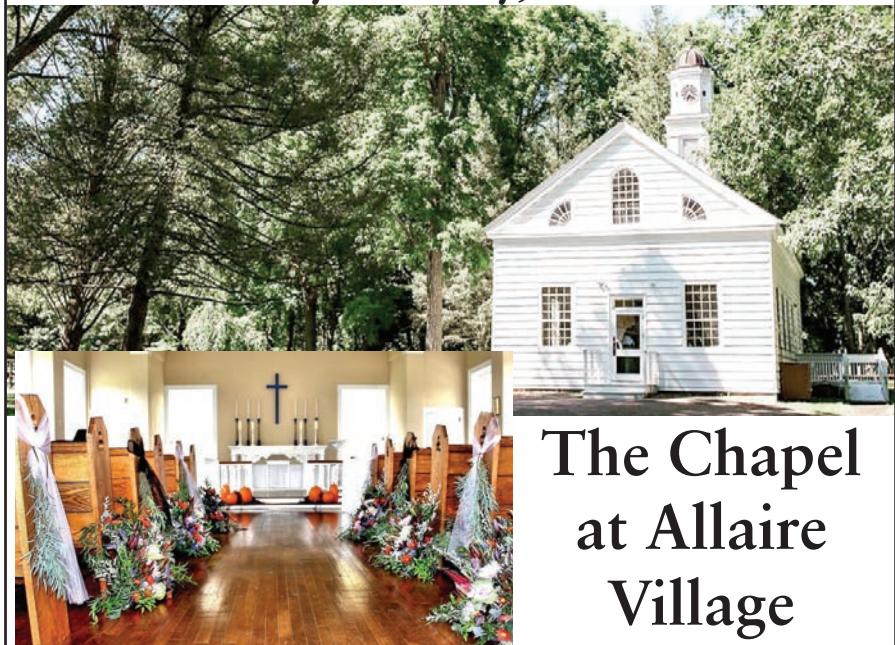
Couples can consider providing a shuttle to and from the airport or between other points to facilitate ease for the wedding party and guests. A shuttle can take individuals from the reception site to a nearby hotel if overnight stays have been booked. A shuttle can bring certain individuals back to the 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.



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

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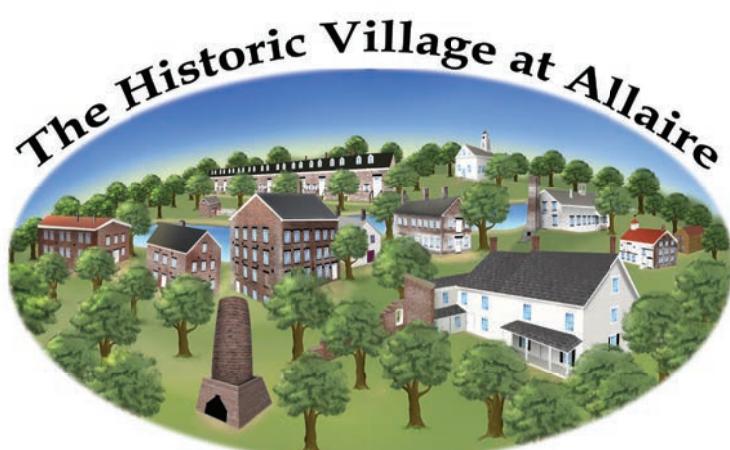
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Time management tips for your wedding day

STAR NEWS GROUP

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 per-

tinent 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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Maintaining and distributing a schedule of the day's events, including hair appointments, can help engaged couples keep their wedding day timeline on track.

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Take a bite of these wedding cake options

STAR NEWS GROUP

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 bread-

like, 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

SEE CAKE PAGE 11



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

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Questions to ask when vetting wedding vendors

STAR NEWS GROUP

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



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SEE VENDORS PAGE 15

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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Wedding cake options

CAKE

FROM PAGE 9

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."

Picking a reception menu

MENU

FROM PAGE 6

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 the 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.



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How to give weddings a modern touch

STAR NEWS GROUP

No two weddings are the same. Some couples go to great lengths to personalize their weddings, while others make a few minor tweaks to traditional components to make ceremonies and receptions more reflective of their style and the sentiments they hope to convey.

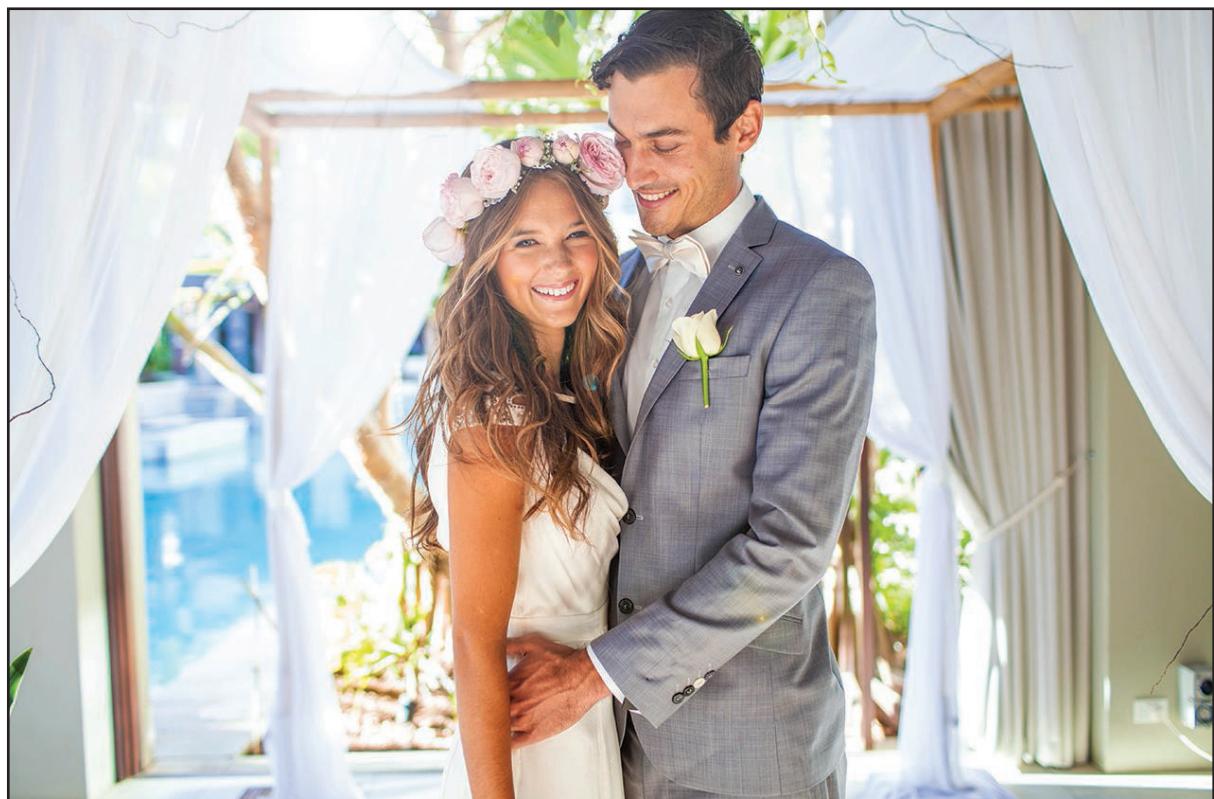
Embracing modern trends is one way couples have looked to set their weddings apart from traditional ceremonies. There are no rules governing weddings, and that affords couples certain freedoms as they seek to incorporate a modern sensibility into the festivities. For example, couples can modernize certain components

of their weddings while remaining loyal to more traditional elements, or they can fully embrace a modern aesthetic. That choice of how modern to make a wedding is up to the couple tying the knot, but the following are some ways to give weddings a modern touch.

LEAVE A SMALL CARBON FOOTPRINT

Eco-conscious couples can embrace an environmentalist ethos when planning their weddings by doing everything they can to eliminate waste and promote conservation. Send electronic invitations and save-the-date cards in lieu of paper alternatives and

SEE MODERN PAGE 17



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Embracing modern trends is one way couples have looked to set their weddings apart from traditional ceremonies.

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The responsibilities of bridal party members

STAR NEWS GROUP

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



COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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

SEE BRIDAL PAGE 15



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Questions to ask vendors

VENDORS

FROM PAGE 10

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.

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?

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.

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.

Bridal party members responsibilities

BRIDAL

FROM PAGE 14

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 petals 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.



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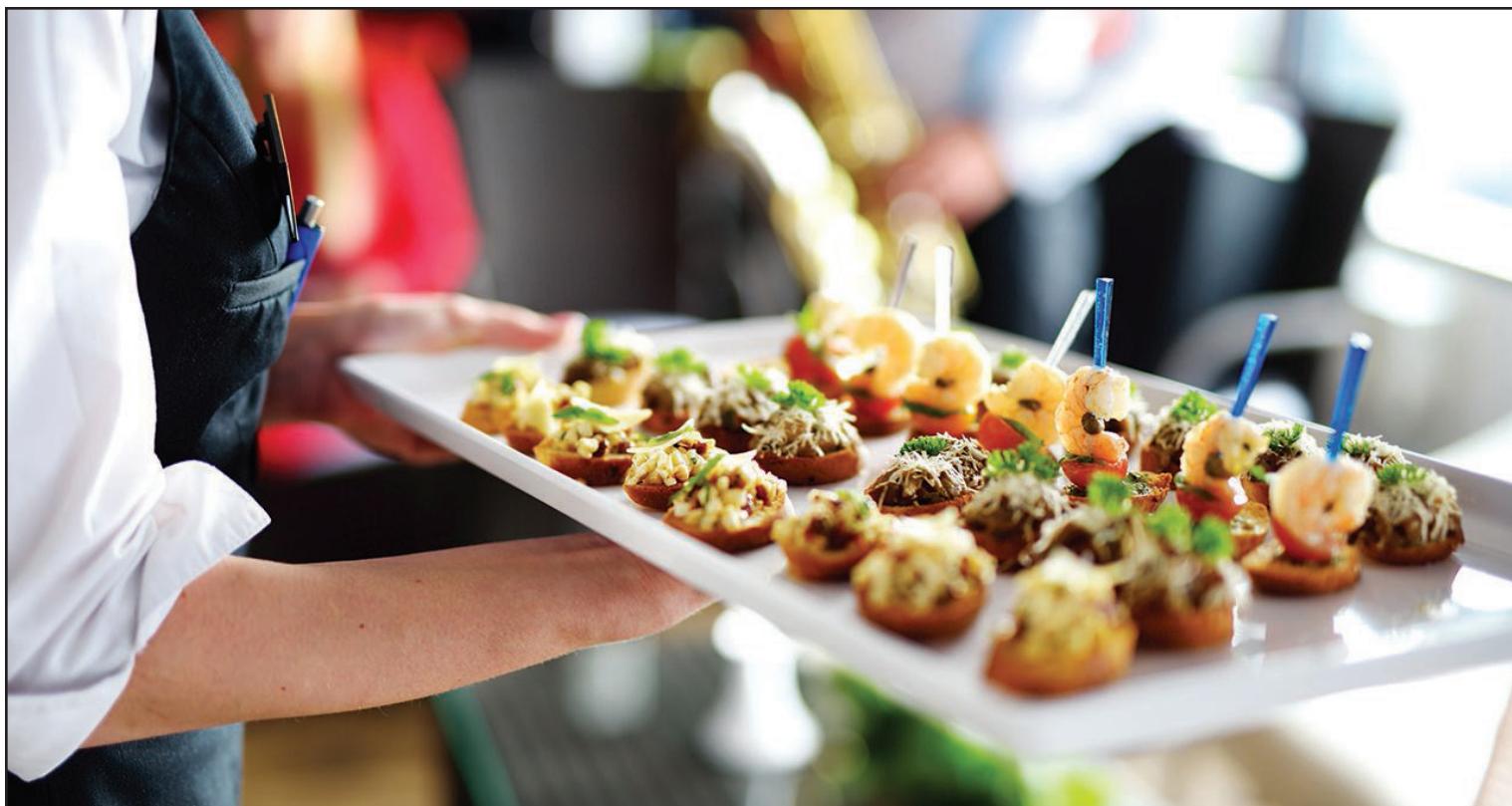


Simple tips to plan a fun and relaxing cocktail hour

STAR NEWS GROUP

With so much on their dockets 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



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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 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 corn-hole 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.

Modern touches for weddings

MODERN
FROM PAGE 12

choose a reception venue that serves only locally sourced food and beverages. In lieu of wedding favors, which tend to be individually wrapped, make a donation in guests' names to a local environmental group and share that information with loved ones. When picking a hotel for guests, find lodging that incorporates sustainability into its day-to-day operations.

**RETIRE CERTAIN
TRADITIONS**

Couples need not feel pressured to incorporate traditions that no longer reflect modern sensibilities. It's up to cou-

ples to determine which traditions to retire, but customs like the garter toss and bouquet toss may no longer resonate with modern couples or their guests. In addition, brides who want to be walked down the aisle by both of their parents, as opposed to just their father, should not hesitate to do so.

**LOOK FOR A
MODERN VENUE**

One of the most awe-inspiring ways to give a wedding a modern touch is to choose a venue that reflects a modern aesthetic. Vaulted

ceilings, white walls and floor-to-ceiling windows can create a clean, modern feel. Outdoor cere-

monies also can create a modern ambiance.

ADJUST YOUR ATTIRE

Black tuxedos and white wedding dresses are among the first things to come to mind when imagining traditional weddings. Couples can stay formal but embrace a more modern look by choosing more colorful tuxes for grooms and groomsmen and picking a wedding gown with a flair of color. Brides also can allow bridesmaids to pick their own bridesmaid dresses to expand the modern look even further.

There's no shortage of ways for couples to give their weddings a modern touch.

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Pointers for post-wedding brunch

STAR NEWS GROUP

A post-wedding brunch is a nice way to wrap up a wedding weekend and gives a newly married couple a chance to spend more time with close friends and family, particularly if the couple isn't immediately leaving for the honeymoon. A brunch is the perfect way to send guests on their way with a few extra hugs and full bellies.

A brunch is not a necessity by any means, but it is a nice gesture and a good way to wrap up a wedding weekend. Couples who plan on hosting brunches can consider these tips.

- Delegate: The happy couple already has a lot of details on their plate to ensure the wedding



COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

A post-wedding brunch is the perfect way to wrap up a successful wedding celebration.

occurs with minimal hiccups. A parent or member of the bridal party may want to take on the task of planning the brunch to alleviate stress on the newly betrothed.

- Funding: There are no hard rules about who

will pay for the brunch, but typically it is the person who hosts it. Couples may want to set aside funds in their budgets for the brunch, or parents of the couple may want to contribute.

- Timing: Seeing as it likely was a late evening prior, the brunch should occur as late as possible in the morning, with 11 a.m. or noon a good start time so everyone has a chance to sleep in and recuperate.

- Ease: The brunch planner should make it easy on himself or herself by finding a venue that is close by. Sometimes that venue may be a lodging location if the couple arranged for overnight accommodations.

- Gifts: There is no need to offer another favor at the wedding brunch. However, if any favors from the wedding were left behind, they can be displayed at the brunch in case any guests forgot to take theirs.

- Duration: A 2- to 2½-hour brunch is sufficient.

- Food: Brunch implies a mix of breakfast and lunch treats, which can include bagels, muffins, omelets, waffles, cold cuts, and quiches. While cocktails like mimosas or bellinis may be offered, they're not necessary after a night of indulgence. In fact, coffee and tea may be more coveted.


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