

THE

Current Trends in Weddings

by Kimberly Owens

For some, it's a once-in-a-lifetime event. Grandmothers speak of it with longing, about the most beautiful, romantic, memorable day of their lives. For others, it can be one event in a succession of others. Thrice-divorced women and men speaking of the first time, second time and so on. But for all of them, it's a day to remember.

Most of us *would* remember a day where we dressed our friends up in the hottest colors of the time, tangerine orange with neon pink accents. Our friends certainly remember. Others remember when that drastic Victorian look was in, or how beautiful the bride was dressed in full *Gone With The Wind* regalia, or how the wedding singer did an awesome cover of "White Wedding."

It's true, wedding trends come and go. Looking back at the photos, we are reminded of the trends long since relegated to the wedding mishap list. But something that has become much more popular over the last few years has been style, elegance and simplicity, and all the ingredients in a well-done wedding. Sure, there is still the wedding with the garish bridesmaids' dresses, but the decor is classy. All right, so it may really *be* a Hawaiian luau, but the catering is exquisite. Doing the wedding, and doing it well, has become the hallmark of the wedding industry.

So where does this leave us in the grand trendy scheme of things? The recent generation of weddings certainly doesn't disappoint. Trends are still out there, and there are still up and coming ideas, which will, in a season or so, become the full-fledged trend. So what are these ideas? What are the current trends in weddings?

"Color," says Jamie Schaff, CSEP, PBC, president of Rare Affairs in Atlanta. "Brides

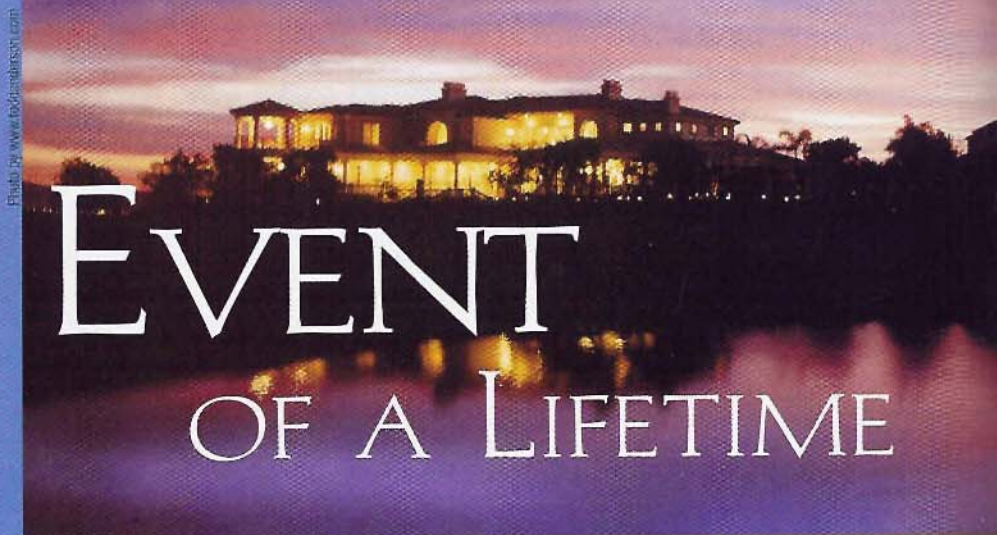


Photo by www.rodmarini.com

Photo by Mr. Vasquez

aren't afraid of it anymore and they realize that everything from their bouquet to their linens are more flattering when they are not basic white or ivory. Another popular option that I'm seeing is that brides are selecting the color and having each bridesmaid select her own dress style so it suits her and she's more comfortable."

"Weddings have become smaller, more intimate affairs," says Heather Snively, vice president of Just Marry! in Winter Park, Fla. "The guest lists consist of 50 to 75 people, but the couples are spending the same amount of money. The quantity of people has lessened, but the quality of the event has improved."

"There is a more prominent fusion of religion and culture into ceremonies and receptions," says Beverly Ann Bonner, president of Wedding Beautiful in Norwood, Mass. "Brides and grooms are bringing all aspects of their heritage into the day, such as ceremonial customs, an explanation of the tradition in the guests' programs and perhaps family participation in the reception."

"Stations have become more trendy in the food and beverage aspect of receptions," says Andrea Milton, senior director of catering at Spanish Hills Country Club in Camarillo, Calif. "Coffee, espresso and cappuccino bars, mashed potato bars as well as carving stations keep people moving from one place to the other."

"I'm also seeing more couples who wish to incorporate their pets into their wedding," says Schaff. "With many couples living together before marriage and jointly owning pets, it only makes sense that they would want their four-legged furry child to participate in their nuptials."

Photo by www.toddanderson.com



While themes are still popular among the bridal set, they have been brought up to an entirely different level. Gone are the days of pineapple and coconut slivers in a drink being indicative of a tropical locale. Faux palm trees swaying in the breeze, ocean sounds through a hidden sound system, pigs roasted in an underground pit and sunset lighting are more apt to be found in these increasingly elaborate and detail-oriented themed celebrations.

"One of the best things happening right now is the expansion of the linen and rental industry," says Schaff. "Just a few years ago, there was not a large selection of unique and beautiful linens, chairs or tabletop items that were different. Now you can find just about anything you want to match any kind of theme."

"I've found that recent weddings have been much more romantic," says Bonner. "Angles and decor are often softer, rounder and less blunt. Brides have, for the most part, been opposed to anything too contemporary and daring."

"The themes, be they color, a bride's favorite flower, or a special location and era, are being carried through every aspect of the wedding," says Milton. "You'll find complementary guest favors, flower arrangements, decor, table settings and everything in line with the theme. No stone is left unturned."

"Each wedding has become more of a personal event, and brides and grooms are putting their individualized stamp on every part of the wedding," says Snively. "One couple I know loves motorcycles. Introducing motorcycles into a classy wedding was a challenge, but when you start with custom ideas, it really works. The wedding was definitely their own."

"The wedding should always complement the couple," agrees

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Bonner. "Every aspect should have a personal touch. It makes the ceremony more intimate, and includes the guests in the couple's interests. If the groom loves hockey, and the bride is a volunteer fire fighter, the event reflects their interests."

"One couple loved car racing," says Milton. "They had an ice sculpture of a race car, and tables named after race tracks throughout the country. The theme was carried throughout, and the couple was able to share their passion with their guests."

Another trend in weddings is the destination wedding. Couples choose different locations for their nuptials, perhaps on the beach, in a grand hotel in a grand city, or in a small inn nestled in the country. Destination weddings attract guests for weekend excursions, giving everyone a chance to get away from their daily lives and completely immerse themselves in the joy of the event.

"About 50 percent of our business is comprised of destination weddings," says Snively. "They have essentially become wedding weekends. We help plan the rehearsal dinner, golf tournaments for guests, and brunches as well as the wedding and reception. Children's parties have also become an aspect of these weddings."

Bonner finds that the same is true in her area. "These events have become three-day weekend weddings for sure," she says. "Everyone goes to the rehearsal dinner, to the wedding and to the morning brunch. The guests are involved in every aspect of

the wedding, and the planning reflects that."

Favors for wedding guests could be considered the ugly stepchild of wedding planning. It seems as though planners and couples no longer want to do them, more for practicality's sake, but they are provided out of a sense of duty, as a gesture for the guest to remember the wedding. Rest assured, they will remember it anyway. But as a practice, favors are still given out. These special gifts rise and fall in complement with the current trends as well.

"I find that many couples either don't like the idea, or would rather use the money for other purposes that they feel would make a greater impact, for example, adding a few more hors d'oeuvres, upgrading the wine and adding a champagne toast," says Schaff.

"But some of the more unique wedding favors include personalized champagne and wine bottles, light-up jewelry and decor, custom-printed aluminum cans and custom-designed chocolates," says Schaff.

"Favors are present at fewer weddings, but still a good two-thirds of them," says Snively. "Cookies are big now, so are custom-burned CDs, but something I really like is digital photography at the event so people can get their own photos taken."

"I have this idea, and none of my brides have taken me up on it, but I think it's great," says Bonner. "Little brass and silver sugar spoons. A sugar spoon is something everyone can use."

Given the current trends in weddings, it begs the question of what some of the best wedding ideas are, transcending trends and time periods. Some ideas will live forever because they work for the event, its following reception and for almost every couple.

"The head table has changed," says Schaff. "Now couples are using oval tables for the entire wedding party, or they've decided on the 'sweetheart table' for just the



two of them. Bridesmaids and groomsmen of the opposite sex are more prevalent. Some brides and grooms opt to have no attendant at all, making the ceremony more intimate."

"Doing the formal photography before the ceremony and reception has turned into a great idea that couples are embracing. It cuts down on hang time for the guests," says Milton. "I've seen dancing before and between courses of the meal as well, and that makes for a more energetic reception."

"I like welcome baskets for guests in destination weddings," says Bonner. "Also, cakes are no longer the white cake that dominated in the past. The cakes reflect the couple and feature fruits, berries and fresh flowers. They've become their own budget line and are the focal point of the reception."

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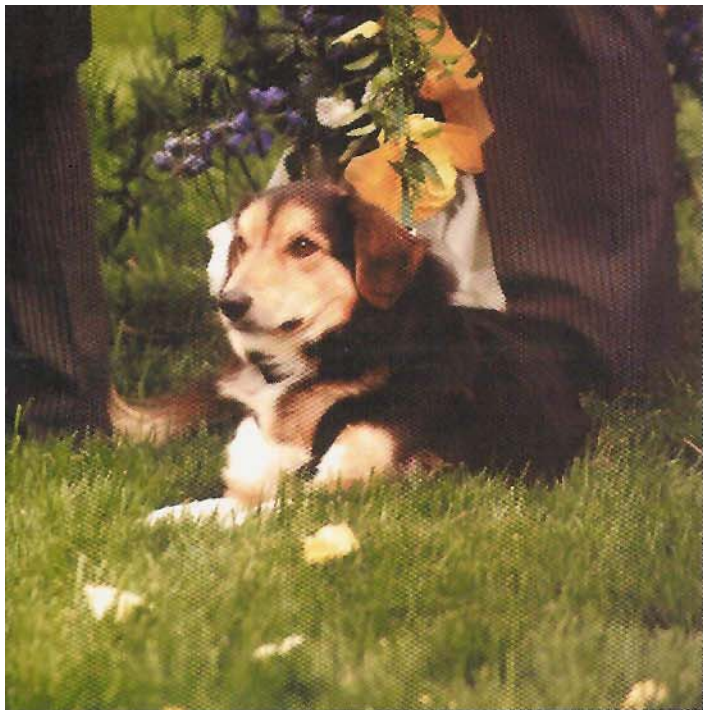


Photo courtesy of Rare Affairs

"The food presentation has become more creative," says Snively. "The first course is plated, the second buffet, the third is something else. The food service has become more fluid. Also, photos that are more candid than posed are something great that will last. Lighting is as important as the floral presentation."

"I think the best ideas are those which make a wedding personal and unique," says Schaff. "We work with clients to help them figure out what their priorities are and then incorporate those priorities with their own sense of style. Establishing this up front helps us all work toward the common goal of making the wedding about the bride and groom, allowing their own personal stamp to be placed on the event."

But what are some wedding ideas that should be avoided?

"Almost any aspect that calls for the participation of a live animal is ripe for disaster," says Milton. "Be it dove releases, butterfly releases or gold fish on the table. Inevitably, something bad will come from that."

"The horse and carriage, while a beautiful picture, is not a good idea," says Snively. "I've had more horses bolt and do other horse things at the wrong time. It doesn't work out in life the way it does on paper."

"As with anything in the special events business," says Schaff, "we must be very careful to weigh creativity with what is practical and viable."

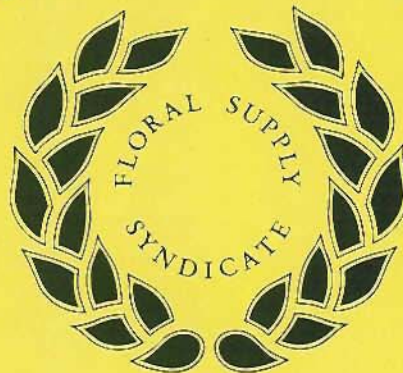
So for this once in a lifetime, or couple times in a lifetime event, the decor, flowers, food and entertainment will make an impression in the minds of couples and guests alike for the rest of their lives.

"This is a joining of two people in a special and memorable event," says Bonner. "I am in awe of every wedding that I do." ♦

Kimberly Owens is associate editor of Event Solutions.

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