



Weddings

Cortland Standard

March 17, 2021

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All about the Bride

The Perfect Dress for your body type

One of the most important factors to consider when searching for the perfect wedding dress is what silhouette will best flatter your figure. While the consultants at a local bridal boutique can offer more personalized recommendations, here are a few basic tips for some common body shapes.

- Hourglass. Show off your natural curves with a sheath dress or a mermaid gown, and accentuate your chest with a sweetheart neckline.
- Pear-shape. Choose an A-line or ballgown silhouette to accentuate your natural waistline, and balance the full skirt with a boat neckline or cap sleeves.
- Rectangle. Create a sexy silhouette with a bias cut or fit-and-flare dress in a lightweight fabric, and opt for a V-neckline and low back.
- Diamond. Select a gown with a flared skirt and thin straps or a detailed bodice that will draw attention to your upper body.
- Inverted triangle. Balance your proportions by pairing a high neckline and long sleeves with a slit or asymmetrical skirt that emphasizes your legs.
- Round. Opt for the flowing skirts of an empire-waist gown, and provide support for your chest with a boat neckline and an elegant off-the-shoulder look.

Keep in mind that these are just guidelines, and the important thing is that you feel comfortable and beautiful in the dress you choose.

3 Tips for choosing the perfect wedding jewelry

Are you wondering what kind of jewelry to wear on your wedding day? Here are three tips to help you match your accessories to your wedding attire.

Be yourself. If you never wear jewelry in your day-to-day life, you shouldn't be dripping in jewels on your wedding day. However, if you love the way you look in big chunky earrings or long necklaces, go for it.

Match the metal to the dress. Pure white dresses look best with silver jewelry, while ivory or champagne fabrics pair well with gold. If you've chosen to wear a

blush-hued gown, opt for rose gold.

Consider the neckline. High-necked or halter dresses look best with statement earrings and a simple bracelet.

A V-neck is practically begging for a beautiful necklace to fill the space. And a sweetheart or strapless gown goes with anything, from a choker to a pendant or even just the right earrings.

On your wedding day, less is more. Your radiant face, your beautiful gown and your new wedding ring won't need much embellishing.



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Bride Guide: Factors to consider when dressing for an outdoor wedding

From a picture-perfect view to the relaxed atmosphere, there are plenty of reasons to have your wedding outside. However, you'll need to take particular care when choosing your dress, shoes and hairstyle to ensure you look and feel your best. Here are some things to consider.

The ground. If you'll be walking on grass or sand during the ceremony, stilettos are out of the question. For comfort and balance, choose shoes with a wide heel, or better yet, an elegant pair of ballerina flats.

The wind. A long veil, flowy skirt and

loosely pinned-back hair can quickly get out of hand on a gusty day. Consider a birdcage veil and opt for a secure updo style with beautiful pins to hold your hair in place.

The temperature. For a summer wedding, sandals and a strapless or sleeveless dress are the way to go. Consider a matching jacket or shawl in case it gets cool in the evening. For a fall ceremony, opt for long sleeves and booties.

To find the perfect dress and accessories, visit the stores in your area.



How to *Ice* your wedding day makeup

All eyes are on the bride on her wedding day, and all cameras are too. Here are some makeup tips to ensure you look your best.

Be yourself

Your wedding isn't the right time to try out a new look. Instead, strive for a slightly enhanced version of the makeup you normally wear. For some, this may be dark eyeliner and a bold lip and for others, it may be a natural but radiant look.

Do a test run

Try out your wedding day makeup in advance. If you're doing it yourself, run through applying it a

few times. If you're hiring a makeup artist, schedule an appointment a few weeks before the big day. Doing a test run will ensure you're happy with the results.

Use the right products

Even if you're not usually the emotional type, plan for tears on your wedding day. Opt for waterproof mascara, high quality liquid foundation and lipstick that won't smudge.

Don't forget to pack a kit that includes concealer, blotting papers and your lipstick for touch ups throughout the day.

A wedding dress you can dance in

They may look striking, but many wedding gown styles restrict your movements, making it hard to dance. Here are some things to consider if you're shopping for a wedding dress you can move freely in.

Light fabric. A flowy dress made of a lightweight fabric is sure to be comfortable enough to dance in.

Separates. Choose an elegant halter top or corset and select two different bottoms. Wear a long tulle skirt to imitate the look of a ball gown for the ceremony and swap it out for a shorter style for the reception.

Tea length. There's no rule that says a wedding gown must be long. Choose one that ends just below



your knees for a vintage style you can move in.

Reception dress. Choose a second dress that's easier to dance in for the reception. This is a great option for brides who don't want to have to choose between two looks.

If you must wear a ballgown or a mermaid-style dress, choose one that can be modified throughout the day. Bustling a long train or removing a layer of tulle may be all you need to dance the night away.

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Flowers and their various meanings



Flowers can represent various emotions and often play a prominent role at weddings.

From the bouquet to baskets, you can look to various blooms to send the right message for your big day. In fact, each type of flower conveys its own unique message.

ProFlowers and Pickup Flowers note that the following are some popular blooms for special occasions and the messages those flowers are traditionally associated with.

- Amaryllis: This flower is symbolic of splendid beauty and can be used to indicate worth.
- Aster: The aster symbolizes patience, elegance and daintiness.
- Calla lily: This bloom symbolizes magnificence and beauty, as well as

purity and innocence. That is why Calla lilies are often the flower of choice in wedding bouquets.

- Carnations: These are one of the most popular flowers in the world and are generally symbolic of love and fascination.
- Daffodil: Daffodils symbolize regard and chivalry. They also can be indicative of rebirth, new beginnings and eternal life. A single daffodil can signal misfortune, while a bunch expresses joy and happiness.
- Gerbera daisies: With large, beautiful blooms in a wide assortment of vibrant colors, gerbera daisies are a favorite flower for cheerful sentiments.
- Gladioluses: These tall, striking flowers are eye-catching and make great gifts

for significant others. The gladiolus symbolizes honor, infatuation and strength.

- Iris: Irises represent faith, hope and wisdom and are cherished for their big, beautiful blooms.
- Peony: This flower, which resembles a rose, symbolizes a happy life, happy marriage, prosperity, and good health.
- Rose: Roses symbolize love in its various forms, and different colors of roses symbolize different things. For example, yellow roses represent care and friendship, while pink roses are given as a token of admiration.

Choosing flowers that best represent the feelings the bride and groom want to convey can help to make things even more memorable.

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4 Fresh Ideas for decorating tables

The centerpieces at your wedding are sure to be the decor that your guests notice the most. Here are four fresh ideas for centerpieces that will make a statement.

Potted plants.

A welcome change from cut flowers, potted plants can be taken home by guests and enjoyed for years to come. Anything goes, from cute succulents and cactuses to tall orchids and even herbs or flowers that can be transplanted outdoors.

Terrariums or lanterns.

A geometric glass vase or container will complement almost any type of wedding esthetic. Fill it with moss and cut flowers for a romantic look or sand and seashells for a beachy vibe. Or, substitute the vase with an old lantern if you want to create a more rustic look.

Candles.

A wedding is the perfect time to indulge in a romantic,

candlelit dinner. Tall tapers in a variety of different candleholders are ideal. Or, use candles of varying heights to add visual interest.

Suspensions.

If the ceiling and venue allow for it, consider hanging your centerpieces from above. Flower arrangements, candles and other items can be hung to add ambiance to the table and will dramatically impact the look of the room as a whole.

No matter what type of centerpiece you choose, make sure it's not so tall or wide that it gets in the way of conversation around the table.



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How to find your wedding Florist

Weddings join the lives of two loving individuals so they can share their future with one another. Various elements help make weddings both momentous and magical.

Some weddings adhere to themes that are designed to make an impression and showcase couples' personalities. Floral arrangements are key components of wedding themes, as they help to establish ambiance at both the ceremony and reception.

Flowers can easily help couples achieve a desired vibe, whether that's rustic, romantic, modern, or even whimsical. Skilled florists may use a variety of flowers and foliage, as well as dramatic displays to help create the couple's wedding day vision. According to an internal study from the wedding advice and planning resource The Knot, which surveyed more than 27,000 couples who got married in 2019, the average cost of wedding flowers was \$2,000 in 2019. However, the cost of floral arrangements can vary depending on the scope of the arrangements and choice of flowers, including whether they're in season or not.

It is essential for couples to spend time vetting potential florists to find one who will produce their desired vision at a price that fits their budget. These guidelines can make the process go more smoothly.

• Establish your theme early on.

Floral arrangements will complement

and enhance other elements of the wedding, including color scheme and the wedding theme. If your wedding theme ties into a specific season, you will work with the florist to find blooms and other pieces that coordinate. For example, winter weddings with white, ice blue and silver color schemes may coordinate with white ranunculus flowers, dahlias, dusty miller foliage, and viburnum berries.

• Bring swatches and photographs to consultations. It is easier to explain color palettes to a florist with examples in hand. Show the florist the types of arrangements you prefer and have actual fabric swatches from bridesmaid gowns or groomsmen vests so that colors can be complemented.

• Create a list of desired items.

Florists may sell items a la carte or have packages of common floral pieces for wedding celebrations. Types of floral arrangements include bridal bouquet, bridesmaids' bouquets, maid of honor bouquet, corsages for mothers/grandmothers, boutonnieres for groomsmen and fathers/grandfathers, flower girl headpiece, petals to sprinkle, table centerpieces,

altar arrangements, pew or chair decorations, and cake decorations.

• Go easy on aroma. Tread lightly when selecting blooms that have strong aromas. They may be beautiful, but many people are sensitive to smells. Allergies also may be exacerbated by flowers with strong aromas. Discuss options with the florist before proceeding.

• Explain your budget. Research the average cost of floral arrangements and let the florist know what you can afford. This can help the florist narrow down options or make substitutions that fit your theme and your budget.

Couples can take certain steps as they choose floral arrangements for their weddings. Cost should not be the only factor in the decision, even though it is an important one.



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Music is an important component of wedding celebrations

Few things set the mood of a wedding more effectively than music. Beautiful songs often are incorporated into wedding ceremonies, and romantic or upbeat songs intermingle to create a festive mix at receptions.

Playlists curated specifically for weddings can be found online to help couples narrow down their options. According to Wedding Forward, a wedding planning guide, wedding planning experts and modern couples agree that wedding playlists should be have a 60/40 split of classics and new wedding songs.

Music is a personal choice, but couples may benefit by considering who will be in attendance at their weddings. In so doing, couples can ensure the music played at their weddings reaches as many people as possible there:

- Wedding processional song: The wedding processional is the moment the wedding party walks down the aisle. Music may be a traditional hymn, classical music or a favorite contemporary song.
- Bridal processional song: In many traditional wedding ceremonies, the bride walks down the aisle separately, with her father or both parents. She customarily will have a different song from the rest of the wedding party. While "Bridal Chorus/Wedding March" is a traditional choice, some brides may prefer a different tune.
- Wedding recessional song: Again, depending on

the ceremony location and choices, the recessional may be a classical piece or a hymn. Some couples choose an upbeat song for their first official promenade as a married couple.

- Wedding party entrance song: Couples can ask their music vendor to put together the majority of the songs for their reception, but they may want to choose their own wedding party entrance. This song typically is a fast-paced, upbeat song that gets the crowd pumping and ready for a fun night. Think "Dynamite" by Taio Cruz or "Can't Stop the Feeling!" by Justin Timberlake.
- First dance: The first dance song is another personal choice for the couple. Slow songs traditionally are chosen, but couples who want something a little different have increasingly selected faster songs and paired them with rehearsed choreography. "Thinking Out Loud" by Ed Sheeran has become a popular first dance song.
- Other songs: Couples also will select songs to complement dances with their parents, cake cutting, garter toss, and any other special traditions or moments. They also can make requests to include songs of different eras to appeal to guests of all ages.

Music is an important component of wedding celebrations and deserves some extra consideration to ensure everyone has a great time while cutting a rug.



3 tips for a memorable first dance

Your first dance as a married couple can be as exciting (and as nerve-racking) as walking down the aisle. Here are a few tips to ensure it's a moment you'll look back on fondly for years to come.

1. Choose a well-known song, or ask your DJ to create a mashup of genres so you can transition from a graceful waltz into an energetic salsa or swing dance routine.
2. Hire a professional to choreograph the dance, and be sure to rehearse it (in the shoes

you'll wear at the wedding) until you feel comfortable with every step.

3. If neither of you are particularly good dancers, opt for a slow romantic song and go all out on light or smoke effects to make your simple moves look more dynamic.

Above all else, don't worry too much about putting on a show for your guests. It's your day after all, so make your first dance a moment you'll enjoy.



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Questions to ask before booking a photographer



Various components combine to make weddings beautiful and memorable. Couples rely on photographers to capture the smiles and moments that helped make their events unique and to ensure the big day is remembered for years to come.

The trusted wedding resource The Knot notes that an internal study found that, among 27,000 couples who got married in 2019, an average of \$2,400 was spent on a wedding photographer to document their big day.

Couples who want to find the best photographer for their wedding day can ask several questions before making their final decision.

What style do you specialize in?

Photographers may be able to shoot various styles of photos, but may specialize in a specific type. For example, some photographers specialize in photojournalism, while others may excel at portraiture. Going with a photographer who has the most expertise shooting the style you prefer will help produce the desired results.

Who will be shooting my wedding?

Certain photography studios have several photographers working under one roof. Just because you meet with one does not necessarily mean that photographer will be on site, unless it is specified in the contract.

Have you ever worked at my venue before?

Photographers may be familiar with several local wedding venues and houses of worship. A photographer who has experience working in the locations where couples will tie the knot and subsequently celebrate might produce the best results, but lack of experience

with particular venues need not exclude other professionals.

Can we see a full gallery of a recent wedding?

According to Brides magazine, unlike an album or a highlight gallery, a full gallery provides a better sense of a photographer's style and attention to detail.

Will photos be color balanced and retouched?

Skilled photographers are capable of capturing winning photos. But photos can be enhanced further in the studio with retouching software to bring out specific effects. Some photographers will polish all proofs, while others only will work on the images ultimately ordered. Confirm retouching details before signing the contract.

What's included in the photo packages?

A detailed price list helps you compare one photographer to another and decide which elements are covered. Additional prints, having a photographer's assistant, ordering albums for the parents, or ordering a large framed print can alter costs significantly. Explore all prices to ensure you're getting the best value. In addition, consider how many hours of event coverage are included in the price.

What is the payment timeline?

Photographers may accept deposits for their services but expect a different timeline of payment. Some may require payment in full before the wedding, while others may offer a payment plan that includes a final payment when picking up proofs or albums.

Wedding photography is one of the essential elements of a wedding and helps tell the story of couples' special day. Asking key questions can help couples find a photographer who will produce the desired results.



Easy but awesome photo booth ideas



Are you planning to set up a photo booth at your wedding? If you do, your guests will love hamming it up in front of the camera, and you'll wind up with a slew of fun, candid mementos. Here are some backdrop ideas for a photo booth you'll love.

Sequins.

For an old Hollywood feel, choose white, silver or gold. Or put a modern spin on it and choose reversible sequins that your guests can play with to change the look.

Flowers.

A wall of flowers is the perfect romantic backdrop. Match the blooms to your wedding colors or opt for white or red roses. Alternatively, create an ombre effect from light to dark using a variety of flowers in an array of hues.

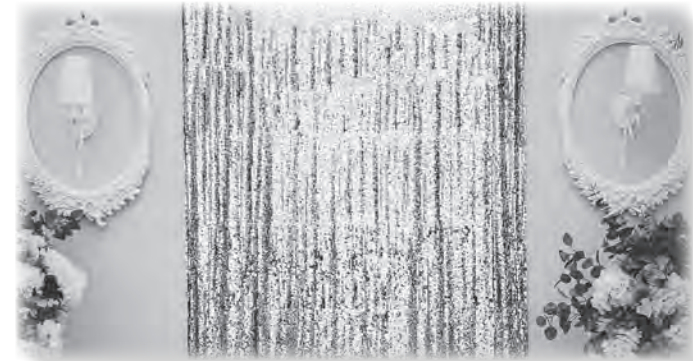
Balloons.

The trick to nailing a balloon backdrop is to use balloons in various sizes and shapes. Choose pastel tones for a soft look or go for bright colors for a more whimsical touch.

Wood.

A wall of wood planks decorated with ivy and twinkle lights will make your guests feel like they're hanging out on your back porch. This backdrop is well-suited to a rustic or country themed wedding.

Don't forget to include props to take photos with. Frames, hats and mustaches on sticks are classic, as are comic book-style word bubbles with fun messages on them.



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COUPLE FORGOES HUGE WEDDING IN PANDEMIC



Emily VanGorder and Jon Rodriguez wed at Jon's childhood home in Baldwinsville, August 1, 2020.

By **KATIE KEYSER**
Living and Leisure Editor
living@cortlandstandard.net

Emily VanGorder did a "Save the Date" announcement to more than 200 people for her fall 2020 wedding that would take place in Rochester.

Then the pandemic hit.

"With COVID, things changed drastically," said Emily, 30, a product manager in Five Star Bank.

The Cortland native and her husband-to-be, Jon Rodriguez, 31, who opened a Bailey Place Insurance office in Rochester a year and a half ago, scaled back, to 17 people, for an intimate ceremony with family and a few friends at Jon's childhood home in Baldwinsville.

Their save the date was changed to an unsave the date invitation, said VanGorder, now Emily Rodriguez.

"We figured my parent's house would be a good place to do it," Jon Rodriguez said.

His parents lived in a secluded neighborhood with a small body of water next to the property.

"It's a nice setting," he said.

The couple married Aug. 1.

"We reached out to people who were going to be invited," Emily Rodriguez said. "We would love to celebrate with everyone this year,"

The couple plan a big party for everyone who was originally invited.

According to The Knot, a worldwide wedding marketplace, 35% of the couples who had an upcoming wedding planned during the pandemic, postponed to 2021 or later.

And of the couples who married in 2020, a third plan another celebration, according to its guidebook for COVID-19 weddings. The sight at www.theknot.com is full of resources and has an app for planning a wedding with COVID-19 guidelines by state.

Emily is the daughter of Garry and Val VanGorder of Cortland. Jon is the son of Joseph and Joanne Rodriguez of Liverpool and Florida. "They sold the house a week after the wedding," Jon Rodriguez said. "It was like the last hurrah for them."

The couple now lives in Rochester, where they went to school at Nazareth College.

"We had a big bridal party," Jon Rodriguez said, but the new setting limited the guest list. "Emily had nine girls. I had like eight guys. We cut that out."

Digno Caminero was Jon's best man.

Emily's sisters, Stephanie Shutts and Aubrey Lang and friend Jenna Phelps were her bridal party. Lang was matron of honor.

"I wore my wedding dress. I already had it ... Jon wore a wedding suit. Everyone wore suits. The girls wore summer

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Emily & Jon Rodriguez celebrate surrounded by family and friends.
Photos provided by Emily Rodriguez.

After the wedding, they had a cocktail party. A photographer and videographer took photos. The couple did their special dance and speeches.

All the guests were tested for COVID-19 beforehand. Masks were not needed.

The couple did a "mini-moon," Emily said — a couple of days in a cabin in Naples.

"It was really nice," Jon said.

Though the two have a big group of friends, and Emily has a huge extended family, they

enjoyed their smaller wedding.

"It was great," Jon said. "I would tell people, don't wait. Just do it. We didn't want to wait."

"You spend so much time planning the big day," said Emily.

But you can lose sight of what's important, she said. The pandemic helped them focus on details that mattered.

"We saved a ton of money," Jon said. "We went from zero in the bank account after the wedding to now having something in the bank account."

colored dresses, not formal wear," Emily said.

She carried a bouquet of wild flowers. Their rings came from Hayden Jewelry in Syracuse, where Jon got Emily's engagement ring.

On the day of the wedding, Emily got ready upstairs with her sisters and mother. Jon was downstairs getting ready with the men.

Jon's parents live at the end of a private lake and they have a turn around driveway.

The driveway became a formal

wedding aisle, leading to a central spot where a flower-laden archway was set, on an oriental rug. Wooden chairs were set up for guests.

Nell Shutts, niece of the bride, was the flower girl and stole the show, Jon said.

The couple's first date was a John Legend concert in Syracuse. Five years later, Jon proposed before a John Legend concert at Turning Stone. Emily walked down the aisle to John Legend's "Stay With You" on the arms of both parents.

Emily's brother-in-law, her older sister's husband, Shaun Shutts of Cortland, married the couple.

He had obtained the necessary ordination paperwork to marry couples from a previous wedding.

Shaun pointed out the intimacy of the smaller wedding.

"We went into our vows," said Emily. "His were so much better than mine."

"No they weren't," Jon said.

"We did little paragraphs," he said. "I did one or two sentences.

Hers was like a novel," he laughed. The two emphasized their love for each other.

Shaun pronounced the two formally united as a couple; the couple kissed and walked down the aisle, to a Grateful Dead song, "They Love Each Other."

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Wedding Checklist



The question was popped and the proposal joyfully accepted. Now it's time to plan the wedding. Here's a month-by-month checklist to make sure you don't forget a thing.

12 months before

- ♡ Decide on the type of wedding you'd like (civil or religious, big or small)
- ♡ Choose a date
- ♡ Determine the number of guests
- ♡ Establish a budget
- ♡ Pick venues for the ceremony and reception (it's best to reserve early)



11 months before

- ♡ Make your guest list
- ♡ Choose a caterer (meet with a few first)
- ♡ Select your wedding party
- ♡ Hire a wedding planner



10 months before

- ♡ Start shopping for a wedding dress
- ♡ Decide on a theme for your wedding
- ♡ Choose an officiant if you haven't already done so

9 months before

- ♡ Book a photographer
- ♡ Reserve a block of hotel rooms for your out-of-town guests
- ♡ Purchase a wedding gown
- ♡ Shop for the groom's attire and purchase it



8 months before

- ♡ Meet with your officiant to plan your ceremony
- ♡ Book your entertainment (DJ, band, MC, etc.)
- ♡ Shop for and purchase your bridesmaids' dresses
- ♡ Design and order the wedding invitations and save-the-date cards

7 months before

- ♡ Create a gift registry
- ♡ Hire a florist
- ♡ Plan your honeymoon



6 months before

- ♡ Send out the save-the-date cards
- ♡ Book your hair and makeup appointments for the day of (also schedule trial runs for both)
- ♡ Book a hotel room for the wedding night if necessary

5 months before

- ♡ Create a schedule for the big day
- ♡ Decide on dates for bachelor and bachelorette parties
- ♡ Shop for and purchase shoes, jewelry and accessories

4 months before

- ♡ Reserve wedding day transportation for the wedding party
- ♡ Select alcohol and other drinks for the reception
- ♡ Taste and choose your wedding cake
- ♡ Buy wedding bands
- ♡ Shop for and order the groomsmen's attire



3 months before

- ♡ Purchase wedding favors for your guests
- ♡ If you'd like your loved ones to say or read something during the ceremony, let them know
- ♡ Write down your vows
- ♡ Decide on activities for the reception (photo booth, dancing, games, etc.)



2 months before

- ♡ Send out your wedding invitations
- ♡ Do trial runs for both hair and makeup
- ♡ Give your music selections to the DJ or MC



1 month before

- ♡ Finalize the schedule for the big day
- ♡ Choose a seating plan for the reception
- ♡ Break in your shoes

1 week before

- ♡ Visit the desired beauty professionals (hair colorist, esthetician, etc.)
- ♡ Practice reading your vows
- ♡ Write out checks to pay your vendors

1 day before

- ♡ Get your nails done
- ♡ Give the checks to someone you trust to pay the vendors

Day of

Enjoy!



Savings strategies for weddings

The question was popped; the engagement ring presented. What's the next step on the road to the wedding? Saving should definitely be on couples' minds.

A wedding is likely the most costly party couples will ever throw. According to The Knot's 2019 Real Weddings Study, the average cost of a wedding in 2019 was \$33,900. There are many different costs associated with weddings. Some are predictable, while others are unexpected.

Investopedia says the vast majority of couples budget too little for their weddings and also end up spending more than they had planned. Various strategies can make it easier to save for a wedding and avoid a post-wedding financial hangover.

Get informed

It's impossible to budget for a wedding and ultimately save without knowledge of what services and items cost in the region where you live. A wedding in New York City will be expensive, while a wedding in Mississippi will cost a lot less, indicates SuperMoney's guide to wedding costs.

Conduct some research and find out what photographers, florists, transportation providers, reception halls, and wedding wardrobe vendors charge for common services. This will paint a vivid picture of what a wedding may cost in your area.

Flesh out the budget

Once you have gathered estimates, you can then figure out a financial goal. This also is when you can determine where to rein in spending and where you might want to splurge. If having a video memory of the wedding is not a top priority, you can skip videography

services. If you have a special flower that you like, you may want to budget more for that bloom even if it isn't in season.

Set up a dedicated savings account

One of the easiest ways to save for big-ticket items like a wedding, home purchase or other financial goals is to use an automatic savings account that may be available through your bank or employer. An automatic savings plan will pull a set amount from a personal checking account into a savings account through auto-draft. The bride and groom can link individual checking accounts to one savings account to contribute jointly.

Avoid overspending

An analysis of your spending habits will likely reveal areas where you can scale back so you can devote more funds to wedding savings. Do you need a takeout coffee in the morning or can you brew a pot at home? Might you be able to scale back on streaming services? Do you feel comfortable buying less expensive store brand groceries over name brands? Small cost savings can quickly add up.

Add up gifts

Factor in deduction of expenses that other people will commit to covering for wedding expenses, but only if you have concrete confirmation. A parent may host the rehearsal dinner. One's relative may offer to pass down an antique wedding gown to wear. But rather than simply removing these gifts from your savings calculations, keep them as a safety net to put toward unforeseen expenses.

Saving for a wedding can be challenging. But various strategies can help couples plan their dream weddings without breaking the bank.



Factors to consider before booking a holiday wedding

Holidays are conducive to festive atmospheres. Whether it's seasonal celebrations for Christmas or Chanukah or summertime soirees on Fourth of July or Labor Day weekends, there's no denying festive vibes tend to prevail when holidays turn up on the calendar.

Weddings also are marked by festive atmospheres, and many couples are tempted to make their nuptials even more jovial by saying "I do" during holiday weekends. Before making that decision, couples may want to consider a host of factors as they try to determine if a holiday weekend wedding is for them.

Availability

Guest availability is a big consideration for couples as they try to decide if holiday weekend weddings are a good fit. Many families have holiday traditions that they might be reluctant to give up. For example, families who build their annual vacations around the Fourth of July may already have booked their trips by the time the wedding date is announced. Couples who anticipate inviting a sizable number of guests may want to avoid holiday weekend weddings to ensure all of their friends and family members will be in attendance.

Travel

Travel is another potential red flag for holiday weekend weddings. Asking guests to travel during weekends that are notoriously busy in regard to travel may be asking too much or it might make things more convenient for some guests. A 2019 report from the Transportation Security Administration

indicated that nearly 27 million passengers were expected to pass through airport screening checkpoints during that year's Thanksgiving travel period. Some guests may be reluctant to travel on busy holiday weekends, while others who are already traveling to the wedding destination may see holiday weddings as a great way to see their families and attend a wedding without having to pay for separate flights. In addition, some guests may be more likely to travel during a holiday weekend knowing they can return home at their leisure since they don't have to work on Monday. Couples can gauge their guests' temperatures on holiday weekend travel before making their decision.

Cost

Cost is always a consideration when planning a wedding, and it merits consideration for couples toying with the idea of getting married on or around a holiday as well. Venues tend to be less expensive on Fridays and Sundays, so couples who tie the knot on holiday weekends when no one has to work on Monday might save a considerable sum of money by tying the knot on Sunday. But venues and vendors may charge couples more if they get married on the Saturday of a holiday weekend. Competition for venues and vendors also may be greater during holiday weekends as people celebrate the holiday. That means couples may have to spend more to book their desired venues and vendors if they hope to get married during holiday weekends.

Couples must consider a host of factors as they try to determine if holiday weekend weddings are right for them.





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The best ways to store and serve *champagne*



No celebration would be complete without a champagne toast. Champagne is a vital component of many special occasions, such as anniversaries, retirement parties and, of course, weddings.

Champagne is a sparkling wine from the Champagne region of France, though the term "champagne" is often mistakenly used in reference to any type of bubbly.

Champagne is a wine and, like merlot or pinot grigio, it has specific storage and serving temperatures to ensure top flavor. According to ThermoWorks, wines have specific layers of flavor that are most effectively enjoyed when they're experienced at the proper temperature. In wine, temperature affects alcohol, acid and aromatics. ThermoWorks suggests a temperature of 45 F for champagne.

In addition to controlling temperature, there are other ways to help ensure champagne reaches the palate in optimal fashion. Grape Escapes, a wine tasting and touring company, says that champagne is already aged properly before being sold, so it does not necessarily benefit from extra aging in the bottle. When kept too long (beyond 10 years for vintage cuvées), some effervescence may be lost and the flavor will change.

Bottles of champagne should be stored horizontally in a well-chilled environment. They should be kept away from bright or artificial light. Chilling also will help reduce the "pop" and overflow of the bubbly. If you purchase champagne and need to chill it for serving, you can achieve this by either chilling it in the fridge for three hours

before serving, or in a Champagne bucket in a mixture of ice and water for 30 minutes.

Etiquette experts say it is preferable to open a bottle of champagne with a hiss rather than a large pop. To achieve this, chill the champagne and also open the bottle very slowly and with a great deal of control.

When the champagne is opened, Daniel Brennan, PR and communications director at Champagne Laurent-Perrier, advises taking your time pouring a little champagne into each glass to allow the bubbles to settle. Then return to the first glass to pour more, helping to make the champagne less likely to froth. Do not tilt the glass like pouring a beer, rather pour the champagne gently down the inside of the glass.

The shape of the glass comes down to preference. Traditional coupes look the part, but tulip-shaped flutes will produce more bubbles and help capture the flavor and aromas of the champagne.

It's ideal to drink all of the champagne in a bottle, as it will begin to lose its fizz immediately after opening, yet that isn't always possible. A specialized champagne stopper will help keep the champagne fresh for up to two days after opening. Afters the bottle has been opened, refrigerate it.

Do not wash champagne glasses in the dishwasher. Hand wash and allow to drip dry. Soap or fibers from towels can impede bubble formation in the glass during subsequent pourings.

Learning how to properly store and serve champagne can enhance special occasions.

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5 things to consider when choosing your wedding cake

As one of the key components of most weddings, decisions about the cake shouldn't be left until the last minute. Here are five factors to consider before you order yours.

1. The number of guests

You want to make sure there's plenty to go around. However, it would be a shame to waste your money on an excessively large cake and have to throw some out.

2. The wedding theme

The cake is as much a part of the decor as the flowers. Don't hesitate to bring a copy of the invitation, color samples and pictures of the decorations to guide the baker.

3. The design

In addition to choosing the shape of the cake and the number of tiers, consider what decorative elements you'd like to incorporate. Fresh flowers, edible gold leaves and chocolate lace are just some of the many choices.

4. The flavor

From praline mouse to passion fruit, you might be surprised by how many options are available. Fortunately, most cake shops offer tastings to help you make your choice.

5. The ingredients

If you have a limited budget, determine if you favor high-quality ingredients over a refined look. You should also consider if any of your guests have allergies.

Contact cake shops in your area to schedule a consultation and make sure your cake checks all the boxes.



Food & drink stations for your wedding reception



Are you looking for a way to make your wedding a little different? Any of these fun food or drink stations are sure to get your guests talking.

Snacks

Instead of passed hors d'oeuvres, create a fun snack bar. Pickles, charcuterie or even popcorn with various toppings are all great ideas for a laid back crowd. For a more luxurious touch, try an oyster bar or sushi station.

Dessert

Forgo the traditional wedding cake and offer your guests their choice of dessert. From donuts and pies to cupcakes and your favorite childhood cereals, anything goes. For summer weddings, cool down with ice cream, gourmet ice pops or sundaes.

Late night eats

After several hours of dancing and drinking, your guests will be ready for a late night snack. Think French fries with different dipping sauces, grilled cheese sandwiches or even a make-your-own-taco bar.

Drinks

While many weddings have a cocktail bar, you can also offer fresh juice, your favorite craft sodas or beers from nearby microbreweries. Or, a coffee bar complete with flavored syrups is a great way to encourage the party to keep going all night.

Remember to tailor the food or drink station to your wedding and location. This will personalize the experience and make it more memorable.

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How to host a socially distant wedding



It's likely that few people heard of "social distancing" prior to 2020. That changed as the novel coronavirus COVID-19 spread rapidly across the globe and the world found itself in the midst of a deadly pandemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines social distancing as keeping a safe distance of at least six feet between yourself and other people who are not from your household. Public health officials continue to champion social distancing while acknowledging the fatigue that many people have experienced as the pandemic stretched on for months. Though much of the world hit the proverbial pause button, life went on during the pandemic. Perhaps nowhere was that more evident than at the altar, where many couples still tied the knot, albeit in scaled back ceremonies that adhered to social distancing guidelines in their communities.

Engaged couples who have yet to tie the knot

no doubt recognize that planning a socially distant wedding will not be the same as organizing more traditional ceremonies and receptions. While planning a socially distant wedding presents some unique challenges, couples can take certain steps to ensure their big day is memorable and safe.

- Spread the socially distant word. Let guests know what they're in for should they decide to take part in the festivities. Many people have strictly followed social distancing guidelines, while others have been reluctant to do so. Couples intent on keeping themselves and their guests safe from COVID-19 should emphasize that their weddings will be socially distant affairs so there's no confusion come the big day.
- Stream the wedding online. Stream the wedding online for those guests who won't

be in attendance. By the end of 2020, millions of people had already "attended" weddings via platforms like Zoom, so loved ones may be experienced virtual guests by the time couples walk down the aisle in 2021. Couples who may need some help planning virtual affairs can visit the virtual wedding coordinators at Wedfuly.com, who recently partnered with Zoom to help couples bring their ceremonies online.

- Pare down the in-person guest list. Couples who planned large weddings prior to the pandemic can still invite all of their loved ones to witness the festivities online, but pare down

the in-person guest list to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Limit in-person guests to immediate family and those people who are part of your social distancing bubble.

- Plan a party for down the road. Couples can still celebrate their nuptials with family and friends down the road. Plan a post-pandemic reception and let guests know you will fill them in on the details once social distancing restrictions have been lifted.

Socially distant weddings may require couples to take some unusual steps as they try to tie the knot while keeping themselves and their loved ones safe.

3 reasons to say 'I do' to a small wedding



While it can be a challenge to narrow down the guest list for such an important event, there's something to be said for having a small wedding. Here are three reasons to consider opting for an intimate celebration.

1. You'll save on expenses

If you have a limited budget, reducing the number of guests allows you to book a smaller, more affordable venue and lower the cost of food, drinks and decorations. Consequently, it may free up money for luxuries like a gourmet menu, designer shoes or a live band.

2. You'll likely feel less stress

It's generally easier (or at least less daunting) to plan a small wedding. You'll have more venue options, the seating chart will be simple and decorating will be quicker. Plus, if you don't like being in the spotlight, you'll probably feel more comfortable in front of fewer people.

3. You'll have more time for your guests

A small wedding means you'll have fewer people to greet during the reception. Rather than circulate from table to table all evening, you'll be able to spend quality time with loved ones and enjoy every moment to the fullest.

Indeed, a small wedding has all the makings of a romantic and memorable day.

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Throw a safe bachelor or bachelorette party



The consensus from public health professionals around the world is to maintain continued social distancing to help prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus. Various events have been modified due to the pandemic, and weddings and bachelor/bachelorette parties have proven no exception.

Couples may need to make certain changes to traditional gatherings like bachelor and bachelorette parties to stay safe. Wedding parties average four to five close friends or family members on each side, according to Martha Stewart weddings. Gatherings of five will likely comply with the limitations set for gatherings for indoor and outdoor venues. However, it's essential to check local regulations before planning festivities. Even if gathering with your wedding party is doable, you may have to think outside the box when it comes to how to enjoy these last hoorahs before the wedding.

Host it outdoors

The likelihood of spreading respiratory viruses like COVID-19 is greatly reduced in outdoor settings where respiratory droplets are more likely to be dispersed rather than concentrated. Restaurants and bars still offer outdoor seating options in many areas, and an intimate gathering for food and drinks outside can be a low-key way to spend an evening.

Try an "extreme" activity

Weekend travel has become a standard option for many bachelor and bachelorette parties. But

travel restrictions or personal health preferences may mean it's not prudent to take a trip to Las Vegas or Cancún. Booking activities that are a little edgy can add some adventure to the festivities if travel is a nonstarter. Some amusement parks are still open, so an evening of riding zero-gravity coasters or free-fall bungee jumps could satisfy everyone's adventurous side. Race tracks offer tourist options where novices can take high-speed spins around the course. When traveling in small groups, these activities can be possible.

Virtual karaoke

In-person karaoke nights may be unavailable, but there's a bevy of online sing-a-long apps that enable participants to sing with backing tracks either for solo performances or with others — even people around the world. Each member of the bachelorette or bachelor party can download the same app and then sing together. Laugh along to renditions of classic tunes or modern favorites.

Celebrate at home

It may not seem as glamorous as a night out, but home cocktail parties can be customized. Hire a mixologist to whip up special drinks for the occasion. Caterers may be available to cook personalized meals in your home, providing lessons along the way.

Bachelor and bachelorette parties may have to change as the world continues to confront the pandemic. With a few tweaks, these events can still be enjoyable and memorable.



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