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SOUTHSIDE Wedding

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- CREATE YOUR OWN -

STORY









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Cupcakes by Carrie Davies, owner of Geri Girl Bakery, are on display at a wedding reception.

Carrie Davies, owner of Geri Girl Bakery in Edinburgh, has been baking sweet desserts for four decades and says many of her clients are choosing small cutting cakes as another dessert option.

"I have done three tiers lately, but I haven't done more than that," Davies said. "I am still doing tiered cakes, but most of my weddings have been a cutting cake or a small, two-tiered cake and cupcakes or a dessert bar, which is a little bit of everything."

Traditional wedding cakes of several tiers high haven't gone completely by the wayside but recently it is more of an economical decision.

Not only have ingredient costs risen considerably, Davies said, but a cake requires the necessity of a professional cake cutter, which can run in the neighborhood of \$200 for a large cake. Cutting a wedding cake in the customary two-by-two-inch slices is certainly an art form and not for the faint of heart, because not only does the entire cake have to be dismantled but one wrong cut and the cake is ruined and you won't have enough to serve all the guests.

"You have to have someone who knows how to cut it," she says. "It is time consuming and keeps the baker at the venue."

Just up the road in Greenwood, Scott McCorkle, owner of Sweet Escape Cake Company, says he and his staff have been witnessing a trend of wedding parties opting for three-tiered cakes, which equals about 74 servings, with a smaller dessert option on the side, like cake pops, cookies or cupcakes.

"Giving guests several options seems to always be a home run," McCorkle said. "We are certainly trending that way in 2023."

McCorkle said cupcakes gained popularity a few years back due to their presentation value, however, recently that popularity has increased as cupcakes offer convenience and aren't so hard on the budget.

"The majority of wedding attendees prefer a slice of cake over a cupcake," McCorkle said. "Unless both are preferred, then those who love cake love having the option of both."

Another trend that is on the rise, Davies said, is the deconstructed tiered cake. It has the same layers, but each is displayed at varying heights on its own pedestal.

Wedding cakes are beautiful, but cupcakes have their own sweet benefits and versatility, Davies added.

Often displayed in a tiered fashion on a stand of multiple levels, the stand itself can also be decorated to complement the cupcakes and wedding décor.

Before making the final decision about what dessert to offer, it is good to also consider the logistics of storage.

"Almost every venue has a fridge you can place a cake in, but you would be hardpressed to fit an equal amount of cupcakes in a similar fridge," McCorkle said.

When it comes to cost, a single tier of cupcakes is going to be about \$300, whereas the average tiered wedding cake starts in the neighborhood of \$600.

If there is one piece of advice Davies has for those who are planning their weddings, it is don't save the cake for last.

"Cakes aren't inexpensive and, unfortunately, for all of us, we have had to raise our prices," she says. "People think they are going to do the dessert last and then find out they don't have enough left in the budget."

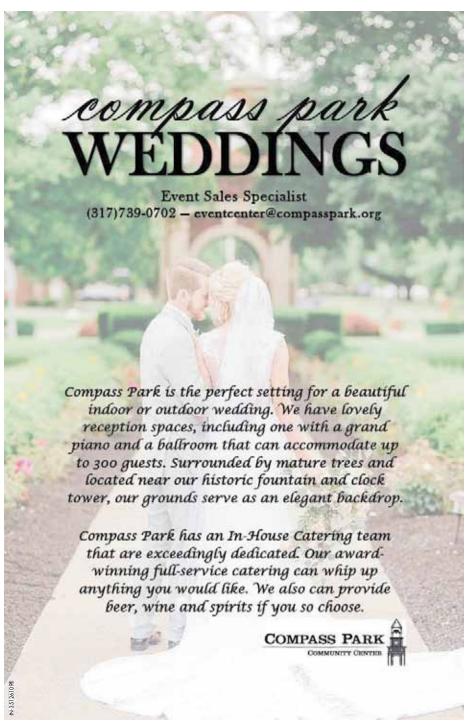
Book the wedding date with the baker early and with a deposit, Davies recommends, then work out the details as the date gets closer. You don't have to pay in full up front, but it is good practice to get the ball going early in the planning process.

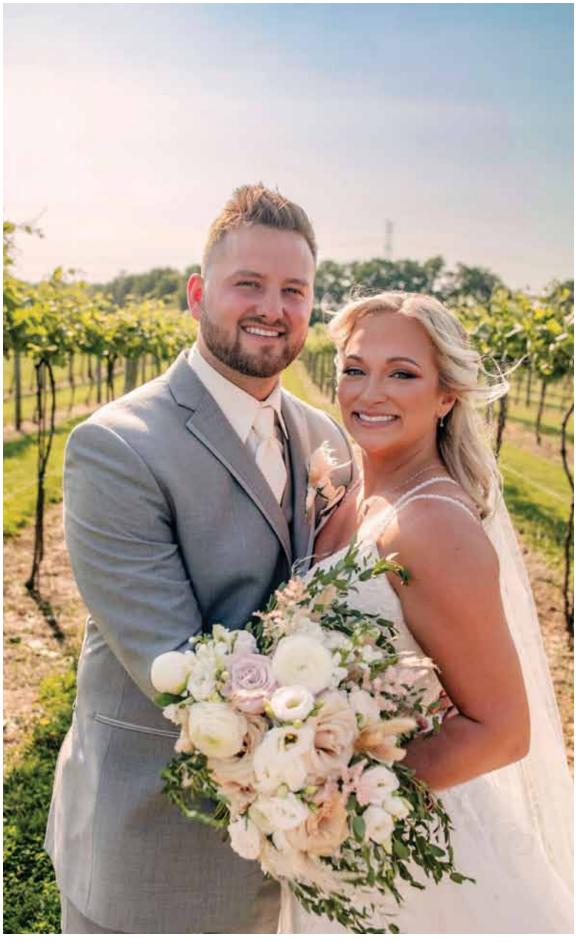
Also, make sure to taste test, Davies added. If caught in a cake vs. cupcake conundrum and you really want to supply dessert for guests, selections of pies also work well, Davies said.

"I have done different things to where I've done a selection of pies that were precut," she says. "There are lots of ideas out there if you don't like cake. Some people come in and say their fiancé doesn't like cake — so mini cheesecakes could be an option. There's a lot of ideas out there."



Cupcakes by Geri Girl Bakery are a common alternative to the classic tiered wedding cake.













Wedding planners and venues adjust to shifting trends



STORY BY GREG SEITER

No two weddings are ever alike. In fact, while some couples continue to embrace traditional practices, others prefer to mostly reflect individual flavor in their respective ceremonies. Regardless, perhaps more so than ever before, wedding planners and venue administrators realize they must embrace the possibility of change while continuing to expand service and on-site options in order to keep up with public demand.

One of the most notable shifts in today's wedding industry has to do with the time of year in which many ceremonies now take place.

"Outdoor fall weddings are becoming more popular," said Amy McQueen, private events manager for The Sycamore at Mallow Run in Bargersville. "October is filling up even faster than June."

Left: Chelsi Mitchell and Nathan Gilbert were married at The Sycamore at Mallow Run in 2022. Photography by Erin Feldmeyer with Erin Kay Photography, LLC // Top right: Shelby Koons and Kyle Alford were married at The Barn at Bay Horse Inn in 2020. Photography by Erin Kay Photography, LLC // Bottom right: Madeline Schabel and TJ DellaVilla held their reception at the Garment Factory in 2021. Photography by Ali Elizabeth Photography



Guests enjoy Madeline Schabel and TJ DellaVilla's wedding reception at The Garment Factory. Photography by Ali Elizabeth Photography

Amanda Cottingham Johnson, owner of The Barn at Bay Horse Inn in Greenwood, agreed. "Our highest demand now is September and October. It's hard to say why that is.

"People are also starting to get married on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Sometimes, even on Mondays," she said. "I guess that could be budget related since it's cheaper to get married during the week."

The growing interest in late-season weddings could be connected with a desire to incorporate fall colors.

"Our indoor and outdoor spaces are equally beautiful," McQueen said. "We're surrounded by vineyards and natural elements. We even try to capture the outdoor warmth indoors so clients don't feel like they have to do a lot of additional decorating. Even if they plan an outdoor event but have to move things inside, they can still have an outdoor, nature feel."

Both indoor and outdoor ceremonies are also an option at The Barn at Bay Horse Inn, a venue that has a horse barn and farm on property along with a log cabin that doubles as an Airbnb rental.

"I feel like people appreciate the land we have and the many places there are in our wooded areas to take photos," Cottingham Johnson said. "We take really good care of and have a lot of pride in the land. Our land-scaping is gorgeous and you really don't have to do much decorating here.

"Depending on the season, we go overboard on landscaping and flowers. The place pretty much sells itself. It's upscale but reasonably priced."

Local industry experts are seeing other

trend changes as well including those specific to wedding ceremonies and receptions.

"We have a lot of couples who don't do the garter toss, are keeping the ceremony short and aren't waiting until the ceremony for their first look," said Julia Stevenson, wedding coordinator for Garment Factory Events in Franklin.

According to Stevenson, couples are also incorporating pets into weddings and naming specialty cocktails after those animals for

events either prior to or after ceremonies.

"Couples seem most concerned about accomplishing everything in such a short timeframe. Therefore, many couples are sticking to what they want rather than what people expect," Stevenson added.

The one-stop-shop concept makes it easier for couples and their guests to cut back on wedding-related time commitments.

Garment Factory Events has space for a ceremony, cocktail hour and reception. For an additional charge, rehearsal dinners are also a possibility.

At The Barn at Bay Horse Inn, clients can opt to utilize "The Barn," which provides seating for up to 300 during a sit-down dinner or space for up to 800 during a cocktail reception, the 35-acre outdoor space and even "The Saloon," an intimate area that allows for approximately 60 seated guests or 100 standing.

"The Saloon is open if they do a bar option," Cottingham Johnson said. "Most do cocktail hour in the Saloon, then they go into the main space for their reception. We have a really good setup here."

Options are also plentiful at The Sycamore at Mallow Run with rental possibilities that include areas referred to as the Estate Room, the Homestead Room and The Gallery.

The Estate Room offers more than 4,700 square feet with panoramic exterior views



Chelsi Mitchell and Nathan Gilbert are joined at the alter at The Sycamore at Mallow Run. Photography by Erin Feldmeyer with Erin Kay Photography, LLC

while the Homestead Room, perfect for small receptions, provides a little more than 1,500 square feet. The Gallery, a multi-purpose foyer, is often used for cocktail receptions.

"The Homestead is intimate. We do small weddings, bridal showers and rehearsal dinners there," McQueen said. "With the Estate Room, you also get two bridal suites and groom space."

Regardless of party size, food is also an important wedding party consid-

"We have a list of preferred caterers with menus that range from barbeque to upscale," McQueen said. "Clients can go with another caterer if they want for an additional charge but our caterers are amazing."

The Barn at Bay Horse Inn also has a preferred caterer's list but according to Cottingham Johnson, the utilization of other caterers is not allowed at the facility.

"We do in-house catering only," Stevenson said. "Clients can choose plated dinner service, buffet style or specialty stations."

No matter the extensiveness of a given wedding and affiliated meals or receptions, advance planning is a must.

"Couples should book around a year in advance if they're looking for a Saturday during peak wedding season," Stevenson said. "If you are looking for a Saturday during our slow season, some of our couples book around nine months out."

McQueen and Cottingham Johnson both say wedding venues should be secured at least one year prior to the desired date.

"We're booking into 2024 now," Cottingham Johnson said.

Those wanting more information on The Sycamore at Mallow Run can find it at sycamoreevents.com.

Learn more about the Barn at Bayhorse Inn at barnatbayhorse.com.

For additional information regarding The Garment Factory, visit garmentfactoryevents.com.



Shelby Koons and Kyle Alford pet a horse at The Barn at Bay Horse Inn. Photography by Erin Kay Photography, LLC











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BEGINNING

Local couple begin their life together with a perfect wedding ceremony

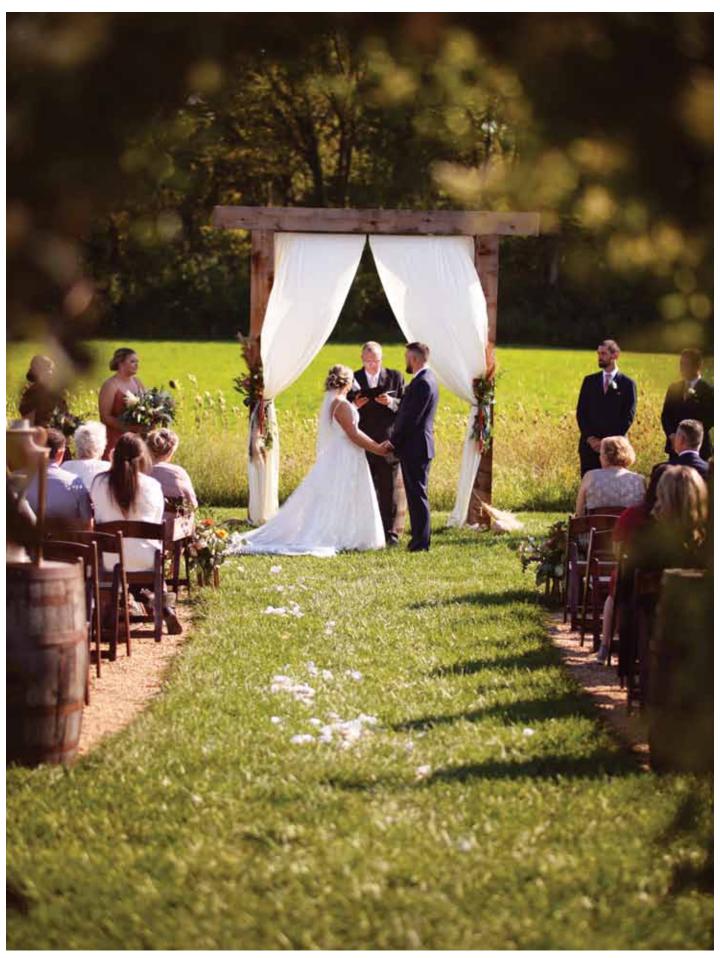
STORY BY CHERYL FISCUS JENKINS // PHOTOGRAPHY BY DASEE JANE PHOTOGRAPHY

hey stood back-to-back holding hands and separated by a door, reciting their wedding vows to only each other in a private meeting before the ceremony began. In the midst of a busy day, it was a first

touch moment for Alex and Kelsey Hammer, and a ritual allowing them to privately express their lifelong commitment to each other. Staying with tradition, the door blocked any glance of the groom to the brideto-be. Tears flowed.

"We are a very touchy-feely couple," Kelsey said. "In front of a bunch of people, we are private. We wanted to keep that between us."

The peaceful time was proceeded with one small "freak out" period when Kelsey realized she had left her written vows at home — the only hitch on the couple's day of bliss. The Hammers agree their Sept. 17, 2022, outdoor nuptials at The Barn at Crystal Spring Farm in Franklin turned out perfectly, from the sunny warm weather to a pair of one-yearolds behaving well as ring bearers.



The young couple had just over a year to plan the event and relied on friends and family to help pull the day together.

"It really was the perfect no stress no drama day," Kelsey said. "It was filled with so much love. I wouldn't have changed anything about it."

The Hammers met on Instagram in 2019. The two had previously graduated from Franklin College — Kelsey in 2016, with a degree in art studio and digital fine art photography and Alex in 2018, with a degree in accounting and finance.

Their first date in March 2019 consisted of active rounds of putt-putt, bowling and go-karts, setting the tone for their outdoor adventures to come.

"I wanted to have a good time," Alex

Kelsey added: "We didn't just want to sit and awkwardly be at dinner."

After keeping in touch following the outing, they officially became a couple two months later.

The Hammers quickly learned during the COVID-19 pandemic how much they loved hiking together, and they have set goals of visiting all of Indiana's state parks. Kelsey, originally from Mitchell, spent much time at Spring Mill State Park in her youth, and as a child, Alex, originally from Greenwood, went boating and stayed in park cabins with his parents.

Alex, who works in the internal auditing division at Toyota Industries in Columbus, proposed in August 2021 at the top of snow-capped Pikes Peak in Colorado. Fortunately, another vacationing couple from Indiana secretly took pictures of them for recorded memories. Driving 16 hours home together gave them ample opportunity to plan a wedding.

"It really was the perfect no stress no drama day. It was filled with so much love. I wouldn't have changed anything about it."

KELSEY HAMMER





Kelsey had attended a baby shower at The Barn at Crystal Spring Farm and had worked with the owner in her job as an advertising account executive with the Daily Journal. She loved the service there and how all details were easy to plan.

The couple each had seven attendants, plus one niece pulling a wagon with the two ring bearers and another niece tossing flower petals down the aisle. The bridesmaids wore dresses in three different colors — terra cotta, rosewood and spice, and the groomsmen donned navy blue attire with the groom in a terra cotta colored tie and the others in rosewood.

The bride ventured into dress shopping with plans for a sparkling, intricately detailed ensemble, but she found her fit in a simple plunging neckline with a glitter and pearl belt and white Converse athletic shoes with sheer laces. She was comfortable the whole day, she said.

The flowers screamed fall with white and terra cotta roses, eucalyptus and a small eclectic ornamental grass stem. The meal, catered by Golden Corral in Bedford, included bourbon ranch chicken, prime rib, macaroni and cheese, green beans, mashed potatoes and rolls. The caterer, who was a family friend,







even brought to-go boxes for the 75 guests so nothing would go to waste.

"Some people laughed when we told them it was from Golden Corral," Alex said. "But it was so good."

Instead of candle lighting during the ceremony, the couple played on their name by hammering shut a unity box, which was filled with letters to each other and pictures of their dog, Milo. A sign reading, "We Are So Glad You Are Here," which Kelsey made at her parttime job at Board & Brush Creative Studio, greeted guests at the wedding and now hangs in their Franklin home.

The disc jockey played a mix of pop, hip hop, country and slow music. The couple danced their first number to "Diamonds or Twine" by Ryan Hurd and also included a last dance to his song "To a T," stealing one more moment as a couple before being celebrated by guests with sparklers. The Hammers took Sunday to recover from the festivities, and left for Jamaica on Monday, where they snorkeled, rode paddle boards, golfed, read and climbed a water fall.

It was Alex's first time out of the country and a first for the pair to stay at an all-inclusive beach resort, which contributed to a perfect honeymoon. They also realized the beach will

be a nice vacation area to take children sometime in the future.

The Hammers have settled well into married life, and they can easily recall what drew them together.

Alex loves his wife's fun-loving free spirit and the way she speaks her mind. Kelsey says her husband keeps her centered and is very caring and loving. Both agree the wedding day was a beautiful beginning to their life together, and it is difficult to imagine the event being any better.

"If we didn't have to pay for it, I would do it all over again," Kelsey said.



TOUCH

STORY BY FAMILY FEATURES

Personalize your wedding with unique additions to traditions

wedding day is filled with symbolic tradition, from varied religious customs to the never-ending circle reflected in the rings and the types of flowers accentuating the celebration. Even with all the traditional rituals to consider, nearly every bride and groom can find ways to give their special day some unique touches that reflect their personality and love.

Music sets the mood for every wedding, and it's an easy place to put your own spin on the celebration. Whether you forgo the traditional bridal march entirely or simply look for an arrangement that gives an updated twist to the classic version, let guests know this isn't your average wedding by setting the festivities against a soundtrack that lets your true character shine.

The wedding party is intended to be a collection of those nearest and dearest to the bride and groom, who help ensure the day goes off without a hitch and who lead fellow revelers in celebrating the start of the new couple's life together. That being said, there's no reason this group must be limited to women on her side and guys on his, or even that it's limited to humans — a beloved pooch can make for an adorable ring-bearer, after all.

Photography is an essential element of your big day, but think beyond the images you'll capture throughout the wedding and reception. Photos lend a personal touch, no matter what your color scheme or theme. Integrate photos of the two of you at various stages of life, together as a couple and with loved ones (perhaps even some you're honoring in memoriam). You can display these at a table with the guest book, as part of the table centerpieces, or even on the gift table. Or take things digital and load all your images into a slide show set to music.

Make favors meaningful. Forgo more



common items like bubbles and chocolate, and instead, send a little of yourself home with your guests. Maybe it's a memento from a place with special meaning to you both, or a bottle opener shaped like a bicycle to represent the way you met. Just think about the moments and things that define you as a couple and do some searching online. You'll probably be surprised by how quickly the options pile up.

Serve up a menu that shows guests more about your life together. Your loved ones can order basic beef or chicken anywhere. Instead, give them a glimpse into you. Make your main course the same food you enjoyed on your first date or during another monumental moment in your courtship. Or plan the entire menu around a region that you hold close to your heart.

Weddings are filled with traditions, but that doesn't mean you can't put your own touches on the day for a special event filled with memories that are uniquely your own. Find more advice for life's special moments at elivingtoday.com.



WEDDING PARTY ROLES



A wedding can be a wonderful and memorable experience for all of those involved. That's why you ask friends or relatives to share in the event and serve in your wedding party. Your offer is a wonderful honor, one that carries with it varying degrees of responsibility, depending, on the role each person will be playing. To help you decide whom to ask to be in your wedding party, here is a list of titles and responsibilities for each participant's role.

BRIDESMAIDS

Along with walking in the wedding procession, bridesmaids attend the shower and contribute to the bridal gifts. Bridesmaids, who are typically sisters or friends of the bride or groom, also dance with the groomsmen during the reception. To be further involved, each can be given specific roles, like reading a religious passage at the ceremony, providing assistance with choosing wedding vendors or helping to address wedding invitations.

FLOWER GIRL

If the bride has a sister who is especially young, that sister typically fills the role of flower girl. Since most flower girls are very young, their responsibilities are generally limited to carrying a basket of flowers during the processional and, depending on the bride's preference, tossing flower petals on the ground to mark the bride's entrance.

PARENTS OF THE BRIDE

The bride's parents may be responsible for hosting the wedding, if they will be completely financially responsible for the event. In some cases, the father of the bride escorts his daughter down the aisle alone, but in other instances or in religious ceremonies, both parents may accompany the bride. In all cases, it's her preference. The mother of the bride may help fund or contribute to the planning of the bridal shower if the maid of honor needs assistance. These parents may also foot the cost of an engagement party or dinner to meet the groom's family.

PARENTS OF THE GROOM

The groom's parents should host a rehearsal dinner prior to the wedding. They may also choose to contribute to the wedding if they desire. In most cases, the groom's parents have limited responsibilities, but can be involved as much as the wedding couple would like. Traditionally, the groom's mother confers with the bride's mother on what color gown she is wearing, so as not to go with the same shade. The groom's parents may walk down the aisle in advance of the rest of the wedding processional and take their seats.

MAID OF HONOR

The maid of honor is a role typically filled by a sister or a very close friend. It is the equivalent of the groom's best man. The maid of honor's role, therefore, is typically very involved. Among her many responsibilities, the maid of honor accompanies the bride on shopping trips for her wedding dress while also planning the bridal shower, bachelorette party and coordinating the bridal party gift for the bride. Also, the maid of honor helps the bride get dressed on her wedding day, holds the groom's wedding ring during the wedding and may also help in the writing of invitations. The maid of honor will also typically act as a witness to the wedding and dance with the best man at the reception. If the woman you're asking is married, her title will be matron of honor.

RING BEARER

Like the flower girl, the ring bearer is a very young member of the family, only the ring bearer is a male. The ring bearer's role is to carry a pillow with the rings sewn on it during the processional. Some couples choose to have the ring bearer and the flower girl walk next to one another during the processional.

BEST MAN

Perhaps the most well-known responsibilities of the best man are organizing the bachelor party and giving the toast at the reception. But the best man, who is typically a brother or best friend of the groom, also has a slew of other responsibilities. In addition to helping the groom choose his tuxedo and get dressed before the wedding, the best man coordinates the couple's gift from the groomsmen and takes care of the newlyweds' transportation to the airport after the reception or the next morning. The best man may also hold onto any payment that's due to the reception site or the donation for the house of worship and take care of any final financial details. He also holds the bride's wedding ring during the ceremony.

GROOMSMEN

Groomsmen are the male equivalent of the bridesmaids, typically having nearly identical responsibilities. Sometimes, groomsmen can act as ushers for guests arriving at the ceremony. Groomsmen walk in the wedding processional and attend and help organize the bachelor party as well.





COUNTDOWN TO THE BIG DAY

To help you get a better understanding of how to plan a wedding and when you should be making certain decisions, here's a time frame you can follow to help ensure your wedding goes off as smoothly as possible.

© 10 TO 12 MONTHS BEFORE

If you haven't done it already, this is a good time to announce your engagement and introduce your respective families. Since most reception halls and churches have busy wedding schedules, it is also important to book both as early as possible, preferably at least a year in advance of your wedding day. It's also a good idea to start putting together a guest list around this time and ask your parents whom they'd like to invite as well. Also, since your budget will determine just about every aspect of your wedding, sitting down and determining what you can spend and developing a savings plan should be first and foremost.

© 6 TO 9 MONTHS BEFORE

This is the time when you want to start booking some services, such as a florist, caterer, a DJ/band and a photographer. However, some of the more experienced DJs and bands, as well as photographers, might have their schedules booked a year in advance, so this might be something you'll want to consider doing shortly after you get engaged and choose a date. Also, this is a good time to inform any guests who will be traveling significant distances of the date of your wedding. The earlier your guests can book a flight, the less expensive that flight will be.

This is also a good time to order gowns for both the bride and bridesmaids, as some manufacturers require a few months to ship to bridal shops. You might want to ask someone, such as your priest or rabbi, to be the officiant of your wedding. And much like out-of-town guests will save travel dollars the earlier they learn of your wedding date, you will likely save money, too, if you book your honeymoon around this time.

4 TO 5 MONTHS BEFORE

This is a good time to decide on wedding invitations, of which there are many styles to choose from. Also, now is ideal to start hunting for a wedding cake by sampling a number of different bakeries' cakes before ultimately making a decision. Just to be sure, confirm that all of the bridesmaids have ordered their gowns and start looking for a tuxedo for the groom, as well as the groomsmen. If you haven't done so already, purchase your wedding rings and let any other people you'd like to participate in your wedding (ushers, readers during the ceremony, etc.) know of your intentions.

2 TO 3 MONTHS BEFORE

Finalize your guest list and mail out your invitations. If your guest list includes a considerable amount of people who are spread out geographically, mail the invitations as close to 12 weeks in advance as possible. This is also a good time to finalize your menu choices for your guests, and find all your wedding accessories such as the ring pillow, candles, etc. Also, since it is tradition to provide gifts for those in the wedding party, as well as the parents of the bride and groom, this is a good time to decide on and purchase those gifts. Just to be safe, confirm that all groomsmen have ordered their tuxedos and finalize all transportation, both to and from the wedding and to the airport for your honeymoon.

1 TO 2 MONTHS BEFORE

Schedule the first bridal-gown fitting. Also, finalize the readings you'd prefer during the ceremony and mail them out to anyone who has agreed to do a reading. If your family prefers to host a small gathering for close family and friends after the wedding rehearsal, the night before the wedding, this is a good time to order any food or drinks you might want to serve that night or make a restaurant reservation.

© 3 TO 4 WEEKS BEFORE

Confirm your honeymoon arrangements and see if your wedding rings are ready. This is also when you should get your marriage license and check the guest list to see who has and hasn't RSVP'd. For those who have yet to RSVP, you might want to contact them so you can get a closer idea of what the head count will be. You should also prepare and order your wedding program around this time.

1 TO 2 WEEKS BEFORE

Get a final attendance count and submit it to the caterer as soon as you know of it, while also providing a final seating chart. Pick up the wedding gown and tuxedo. Make sure the wedding party picks up their attire. Also, finalize your vows and confirm all wedding-day details such as transportation, photo schedules and addresses. And don't forget to pack for your honeymoon.

THE DAY BEFORE

This is mainly when you rehearse for the ceremony and make any final confirmations you might have to make. Also, make sure to get some sleep so you'll look good in all of your wedding-day photos.



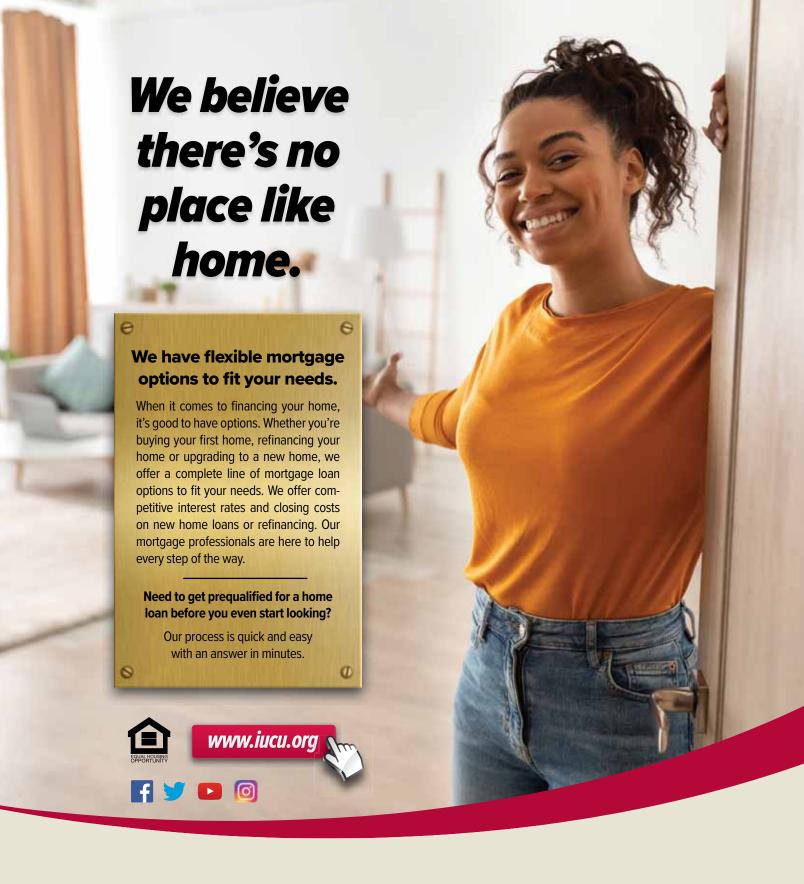
TOTAL MUSIC_____

WEDDING BUDGET

TOTAL WEDDING BUDGET



CEREMONY	FLOWERS
Location fee	Ceremony
Officiant fee	Bride's bouquet
Marriage license	Bridesmaids' bouquets
Rings	Corsages & boutonnieres
Pillow	Reception centerpieces
TOTAL CEREMONY	Flower girl basket
	Bathroom arrangements
RECEPTION	TOTAL FLOWERS
Reception site	
Food	PHOTOGRAPHY
Drinks	Photographer's fees
Rentals	Videographer's fees
Cake	TOTAL PHOTOGRAPHY
Favors	
TOTAL RECEPTION	TRANSPORTATION
ATTIRE	Limousines
	Buses/transport for guests
Gown	TOTAL TRANSPORTATION
Headpiece/veil	
Undergarments/hosiery	STATIONERY
Shoes	Invitations
Accessories	Calligraphy
Jewelry	Postage
Makeup	Thank-you cards
Hair	TOTAL STATIONERY
Tuxedo	GIFTS
Shoes	GIF15
Cufflinks	Wedding party
Men's grooming	Parents
TOTAL ATTIRE	Other
	TOTAL GIFTS
MUSIC	HONEYMOON
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Band/DJ	Accommodations
Extra musicians	E 1
Extra musicians	Food TOTAL HONEYMOON





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