

2012 NORTHERN MICHIGAN

WEDDING PLANNER

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WEDDING PLANNER TIMELINE

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From rehearsal dinners and receptions to lodging and four-season recreation, Boyne Resorts are a wedding paradise

BY JIM AKANS

When planning a wedding destination, Boyne Resorts truly has something for everyone. From rehearsal dinners and receptions to lodging and four-season recreation, the tremendous variety of facilities at Boyne Mountain, Boyne Highlands, and Bay Harbor create the perfect backdrop for a memorable wedding and honeymoon experience.

Brie Woodhouse, Sales Manager for weddings and golf groups, states, "We have so many wonderful properties and exciting venues at each location, there are plenty of options for every interest and price point. We are able to work with each party to fit their needs, and what is great about holding a wedding event at a Boyne property is that even the guests can make a vacation out of their stay here."

There are over 33 award-winning dining establishments on the properties, from fine dining atmospheres ideal for rehearsal dinners and receptions, to light fare retreats perfect for intimate yet casual retreats for newlyweds. Likewise, lodging at Boyne Resorts covers a wide spectrum of settings and values. With an amazing 450 guest rooms and suites, and banquet rooms able to accommodate

The tremendous variety of facilities at Boyne Mountain, Boyne Highlands, and Bay Harbor create the perfect backdrop for a memorable wedding and honeymoon experience. COURTESY PHOTO



Boyne Resort properties are the perfect way to make every wedding event a "stay and play" vacation for all! COURTESY PHOTO

groups of up to 800 people, even the largest of wedding parties will be able to find a wonderful place to stay in northern Lower Michigan

There is also plenty to do outside of the wonderful room accommodations at Boyne regardless of the season. Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy 11 challenging golf courses in summer season and fantastic downhill skiing, snowboarding and ice-skating during the winter. Other exciting activities include tennis courts, swimming, fishing, boating, biking, zip line adventures, horseback riding, scenic chairlift rides, horse drawn carriage rides and more. For indoor fun, Boyne offers dinner theatre, Avalanche Bay Indoor Waterpark, live musical entertainment, yoga classes, two award-winning spas, shopping...it's all right here.

Boyne Resort properties are the perfect way to make every wedding event a "stay and play" vacation for all!

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Designing Your Own Invitations

BY AMANDA KNOLES

In the past engaged couples often spent hours perusing sample invitations and card stock before having their wedding invitations commercially printed. Today many couples are choosing to personalize their invitations using creative software programs and other tools. Many people create their own invitations because they want something unique and special that friends and family will save. Designing a customized logo or an illustration reflecting your wedding theme is a smart way to leave a lasting impression.

Using desktop publishing software and a computer it's possible to create professional looking invitations. It's a good idea to visit a professional printer or consult books on wedding etiquette to determine the proper wording for your invitations. If you aren't very skilled with computer programs, you can write out the words you want to use and enlist a computer savvy friend to help you. Adding your reception information to the text of the wedding invitation will save time and the cost of sending out reception cards.

Many stationery and office supply stores offer blank cards and envelopes in a variety of colors, textures, and weights. Some crafts stores offer prepackaged wedding kits. They are constructed for use on laser or ink jet printers. Be careful that the cards or paper you choose are compatible with the type of printer you plan to use (laser or ink jet.)

Ink jet printing on the wrong type of paper or card stock will result in bleeding ink. The weight of the card stock you choose should be at least as heavy as a business card. But you also need to make sure you don't choose a stock that is too heavy or it may bunch up and print incorrectly.

Another option is to choose plain card stock but print the text of the invitation on a contrasting colored paper that you will glue to the card. If you choose to use this method, you can be much more creative. With a heavier card stock, it's possible to punch holes and run ribbons or raffia through the card and attach the colored paper on top. You may also attach hand painted designs or glue on sea shells, leaves, flowers or lace to give the card three dimensional interest.

To create the text for your invitations you may use any word processing program such as Microsoft Word or Word Perfect, but if you want to use design elements it's best to use a creative software program such as Print Artist, Print Explosion, Print Shop Deluxe or Corel Draw. Most such programs have templates for cards and invitations and offer myriad designs and illustrations to assist you in creating card layouts.

You should choose a type style and font size appropriate for a formal or informal wedding. Obviously a more elegant style would work best for a traditional wedding. If you plan to be married outdoors you may choose a more casual style that fits with your chosen theme. For example a couple planning to be married onboard a ship might use a

sea gull, sailboat or other nautical design

If you don't trust your own design skills, consider hiring a graphic artist to design your invitations. Check with friends, business associates and your local phonebook for the names of graphic designers. Or call your local newspaper or department store for the names of local graphic artists they recommend. Explain your theme or any special requests to the artist but keep an open mind to design suggestions.

A custom invitation should express your unique style and personality. You may want to incorporate design elements that will also be used as decorations for the wedding and reception. For example, a couple who love orchids may use a drawing of an orchid in a beautiful vase on the invitation and try to duplicate the same look with centerpieces at the reception. A more casual invitation might use real leaves and dried flowers glued to the invitation.

You may want to consider using embossing tools or calligraphy to personalize your invitations. Calligraphy pens, embossing tools, powder, ink pads and stamps are available at crafts stores and offer an inexpensive way to give your invitations and envelopes a more elegant look. The tools can be used again later for crafts, scrap booking and creating your own stationery.

Add a festive touch to your invitations by putting a small bit of shiny confetti in each envelope. It's a fun gesture that lets your guests know you want them to help you celebrate.

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Choosing a Band or DJ for Your Reception

BY SANDY COOK

Many parts of your wedding ceremony and reception you want to do something different, something that is just for your wedding. Choosing musicians for your reception is not one of those places to try something new. You should always hire an experienced wedding band or disc jockey. Music can make or break your wedding party. Choosing a band or disc jockey to perform at your reception requires research.

Adam Sandler's portrayal of the wedding singer in the movie by the same name didn't win Sandler an Oscar but it did show the difference it makes at a wedding reception when you have an experienced entertainer handling the music and microphone at your wedding reception. Good music and a good emcee can make your reception a great celebration that your friends and family will remember.

This is one selection that you will make that needs to be thoroughly researched. You should always get references and speak to people that have hired the band or DJ for their wedding. Find out how the reception went. Did they hear good comments from guests about the music? What personality did the musicians add to the reception? What type of music did they play? When they took a break did they have prerecorded music playing during the break?

Here are some questions to ask the musicians you are considering:

Have you played at wedding receptions? – Make sure to get a list of references and upcoming receptions where you can listen to them.

Do you have a sample cassette recording I can listen to of your performances? – Not all recordings are good quality. Some only capture the voices and not the background music. If you are interviewing a band be sure to ask if current members of the band are on the sample or if band members have changed. Many bands change members frequently. Today's band members may not still be with the band six months from now when you are scheduling your wedding.

Can they play your special song(s)? – If you have specific songs that are meaningful to you and your fiancé' you should identify those now. A band may need to practice the song if they don't know it. A DJ may have to find the CD that con-



tains the song if they don't have it in their library.

Can they play requests? – As the party wears on often Uncle Dave will come up with that song that he and his bride used to dance to 30 years ago. Is the band versatile enough to do some "oldies but goodies" or does the DJ have library of songs that date back to the days gone by. This can be a vital part of making the event wonderful for your guests. They may go home disappointed if the musicians can't play their request.

Do they take breaks? – How often? What happens when they are on break? Do they have music to play in between?

What do they wear? – If you have all your guests all dressed up what will your musicians look like? If you have a desired dress code for the band or DJ you should make that clear now. A band will probably have show costumes they wear on stage. If you hire a "wedding reception seasoned" band or DJ they will likely have appropriate wear for your event. You just want to be careful not to have the band show up dressed in costumes or apparel that will make your guests feel uncomfortable.

Will they emcee the reception? – During the reception evening there will be numerous occasions for announcements, toasts, welcomes and other miscellaneous instructions. Will the bandleader or DJ serve as emcee? Have they done this before? Remember what you learned watching "The Wedding Singer." Good music and a good emcee can make your reception a great celebration that your friends and family will remember.

When you are interviewing a

band or DJ you should see them in action before making the decision to hire them for your reception. Ask them where they are playing next and go listen. You can make a clear decision on whether they are suited for your event after seeing them in action.

Wedding guests are used to mediocre food at the reception,

miscues during the wedding ceremony and uncomfortable chairs. However, they will remember how good (or bad) the music was at the reception. Take the time to research and find the musicians that will make your wedding reception an enjoyable event for everyone.

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The Engagement Announcement

BY JOE THOMAS

After you have told your parents, close relatives and best friends in person, or by telephone or a note in the mail it is time to announce your engagement in the hometown newspaper of both you and your fiancé. Before submitting your announcement you need to check policies for publication. Some papers limit photographs and announcements to weddings only. Many papers have a form you must fill out to submit information and photographs for engagement announcements. Check their web site for on-line submissions. A few will accept information over the phone but this is risky. This is the easiest way for mistakes to take place. If the paper does not supply a form you should type your submission checking it carefully yourself for typos and misspelled words. Keep the announcement short and on one piece of paper. At the top of the page insert the name, address and telephone number of a local family member who can be phoned to verify information.

Include full names of you and your fiancé, hometown, parent's names, information about schools, employment, military service, club memberships, community or school associations and military service. If you are submitting this announcement to a paper in your former hometown be sure to mention your connection to the local area of the paper's distribution. i.e.: graduated from high school, formerly of this town, your parents live in this



town, etc. If you submit a photo with your announcement make sure it is a good quality photo. Attach a typed identification line to the photo in case it gets separated from the article submission.

Generally, the parents of the bride make the announcement of the engagement. If your parents are divorced, the parent with whom you live should be the parent makes the announcement but you must mention both parents' names. If one of your parents has died your announcement might read:

"The engagement of Miss Jane S. Doe, daughter of Mrs. Jean Doe of Detroit and the late Mr. John Doe to Mr. James A Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Smith of West Palm Beach, Florida has been announced by the bride's mother."

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Selecting the Music for Your Wedding Ceremony

BY AMY KENNEDY

Traditional Music

If you are getting married at your church it is a good idea to talk with the pastor, music director or church administrator first. They may have some restrictions on the style of music played in the church. They may also have some great suggestions and may also be able to give you some recommendations based previous experience and also abilities of the resident pianist, organist and/or choir. If you plan to invite guest musicians or soloists to perform it's also a courtesy to discuss that in advance with the member of the church staff. In most traditional wedding services the music will fall into the following four sections:

1. Prelude — This music will be played from the time your guests arrive at

the church until the bride is set to begin her walk down the aisle. Generally the mood of the music should be light and celebratory. Some popular choices include:

- Bach's "Fantasia in G"
- Selections from Elgar's "Enigma Variations"
- Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"
- Selections from Handel's "Water Music"
- Schubert's "Ave Maria"
- Pachelbel's "Canon in D"
- Mozart's "Exultate Jubilate"
- Debussy's "Clair de Lune"

2. Processional — This is the selection that will be played at the bride's arrival and the procession of the bridal party down the aisle. It's almost always chosen for its stateliness and it must be long enough to last until the bride joins the groom at the altar. The most traditional choice here is:

Wagner's "Bridal

Chorus" from Lohengrin ("Here Comes the Bride")

A cliché you can get away with and it always makes people cry. But if you want to make a different statement, here are some alternatives:

- Handel's "Arrival of the Queen of Sheba"
- Handel's Aria in F major
- Purcell's March in C
- Clarke's "Trumpet Voluntary"
- Grieg's "Morning" from Peer Gynt
- Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro"

3. Incidental Music —

These selections would be performed at various points in the ceremony, usually by soloists although you might choose to insert a hymn that professes your faith or your love. The choice here is very personal. Popular choices are:

- The Wedding Song
- The Lord's Prayer
- Love songs that profess your undying love for each other

4. Recessional — Your grand finale. This selection is played at the conclusion of the ceremony as you walk together down the aisle together. Once again, tradition dictates:

- Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" from A • Midsummer Night's Dream

But, if you want to experiment with something a little different, try:

- Hollins' "Bridal March"
- Pachelbel's Toccata in C
- Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" from the Ninth Symphony

Non-Traditional Music

Your selections are somewhat determined by the location of the ceremony. Outdoor occasions may lack access to electricity, limiting your choices to pieces performed by instruments that don't use electricity like guitars or brass instruments and vocal soloists. Indoor ceremonies

may opt for the same or make use of recorded music. Nonetheless, you should try to follow the same basic structure (prelude, processional, incidental and recessional) as in the traditional ceremony described above, choosing music that suits the mood of each stage of the ceremony. Any of these suggestions would be suitable, though couples opting for a nontraditional service may choose any variety of music of personal significance, from classical to jazz, pop to folk.

The important thing is to plan your selections out well ahead of time and discuss them with the musicians/DJs. You should plan and arrange for the music close to six months before the event.

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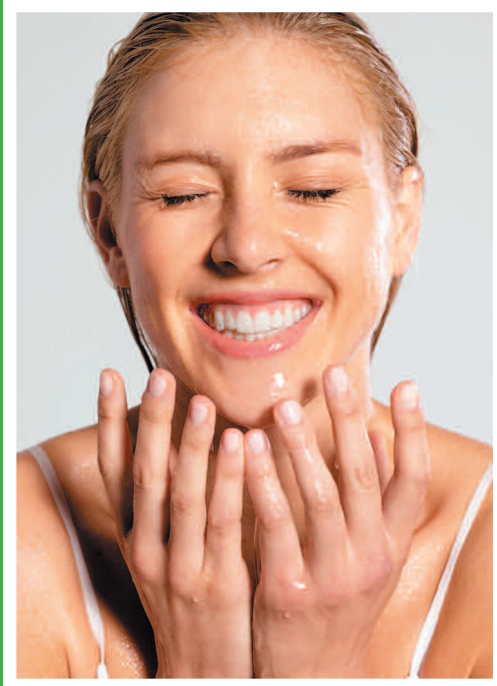
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Situated on a gentle promontory of Lake Charlevoix's southwestern shore, Sommerset Pointe Yacht Club & Marina is a gorgeous and intimate northern Lower Michigan destination for hosting a very memorable wedding rehearsal dinner or reception. COURTESY PHOTO

Situated on a gentle promontory of Lake Charlevoix's southwestern shore, Sommerset Pointe Yacht Club & Marina is a gorgeous and intimate northern Lower Michigan destination for hosting a very memorable wedding rehearsal dinner or reception. An exclusive waterfront destination near Boyne City, Michigan, Sommerset Pointe's spectacular settings blends an authentic maritime atmosphere with a wide array of contemporary amenities.

The distinctive waterfront clubhouse is the architectural interpretation of a great lake themed lighthouse. Respectful of its natural setting and handcrafted from the finest materials, the clubhouse has substance and style. The club's nautically themed great room and lakeside deck offer an ideal stage for member events and private celebrations.

Located just 20 miles from Sommerset Pointe, Charlevoix Country Club, northern Michigan's "Diamond In The Rough", is now under the same ownership and management as Sommerset Pointe Yacht Club, and many improvements are under way.

Fred Taylor purchased the Country Club in March of 2012, and the management staff for both entities, also known as "Team Taylor" management, includes; "Dayna Atkins -

VanAvery, Tim Beardsley, Heather Chappuies, Evan Chappuies, Chef - Russell Miller, Therese Smith, Ron Turner. Members enjoy a newly renovated club house, dining facilities, swimming pool, and fitness center - and of course a challenging, beautiful golf course. Member events throughout the season

include an Independence Day Celebration, 1970's Dance Party and Casino Night. Each Wednesday evening is Member's Night where country club members will be treated to complimentary hors d'oeuvres.

Sommerset Pointe and Charlevoix Country Club each offer fabulous dining facilities

An exclusive waterfront destination near Boyne City, Michigan, Sommerset Pointe's spectacular settings blends an authentic maritime atmosphere with a wide array of contemporary amenities. COURTESY PHOTO



that are open to the public Tuesdays through Sundays. The Blue Harbor Grille at Sommerset Pointe is a Tapas themed restaurant. Menu highlights include Beef Short Ribs, Garlic Smashed potatoes, Cajun Shrimp, Roasted Peppers and Onions with Penne Pasta, Seared Boneless Whitefish with Roasted Tomato Sauce and Spicy Pecans, Char-Grilled New York Strip Steak with Creamed Spinach and Roasted New Potatoes.

Shanahan's Prime! at Charlevoix Country Club is the area's only steakhouse. Specialty entrees include Prime Beef Carpaccio, Spinach and Ricotta Gnocchi with Sage Cream

Crispy Calamari with Mango Salsa and a Jalapeno Aioli, Kiteley's Farm Market Greens with Fresh Strawberry Vinaigrette and more. All steak cuts are aged, char-grilled prime beef served ala Carte, and include Filet, Petite Filet, Rib Eye, New York Strip and T-Bone.

Sommerset Pointe's convenient location is ideal for a wedding adventure with small town events only minutes away. Yet the beautiful blue water, pristine natural surroundings and charming hospitality are reasons to stay a lifetime.

For additional highlights and membership information, visit; www.sommersetpointeyachtclub.com and www.chxcountryclub.com

WEDDING P

BY JOE TALENT

It may seem as if you have plenty of time to plan your wedding that is so many months away. You may be surprised to learn that you should begin planning a big wedding a year before the event. To prevent things from slipping between the cracks and to help you stay on track, use the checklist that follows.

12 MONTHS BEFORE

The question has been popped and you're in planning mode. Now is the time to pick the date, decide the style and scale of the event, and work out a budget. (If you're still speaking to each other after this important initial planning stage, that's a very good sign.) Once you've accomplished the above, it's time to:

- Buy an engagement ring (if you haven't already). Visit your local Jeweler to get advice on selecting a diamond engagement ring. The quality of diamonds varies greatly and you should select a trustworthy jeweler for professional advice.
- Determine the size of your wedding ceremony and reception with both parents.
- Set a date for the wedding.
- Talk with your parents about the budget for the wedding and reception.
- Now is the time to hire a Wedding Consultant if you want professional advice in planning your wedding.
- Decide and reserve a wedding and reception site.
- Hire a photographer
- Hire a florist and begin looking at options for the wedding and the reception.
- Select bridal attendants, best man, and ushers
- Plan for your financial future together. Talk about financial goals and prenuptial agreements now.
- Contact your local paper for inserting an announcement of your

engagement.

9 MONTHS BEFORE

The date and location of the wedding have been set. Now you need to begin working on some of the details for the big day.

- Discuss the formality and customs of the wedding ceremony with your parents and fiancé.
- Plan the number of guests you will invite to the wedding and reception. This may be determined by the facilities where the ceremony and reception will be held.
- Start looking for a caterer. Begin looking at menu options for your reception.

6 TO 8 MONTHS BEFORE

Start shopping for what you and you fiancé will wear at your wedding. This usually takes some time to come to a decision you both agree on. You'll need extra time if your garments are being made to order.

- Choose a wedding gown and dresses your bridal attendants.
- Select a tuxedo for the groom and his attendants.
- Choose a person to officiate at the wedding. If your wedding will be held at a church you should select a pastor, priest, rabbi or reverend. If the wedding is non-religious you can hire a judge, magistrate or legally licensed official.
- Plan your honeymoon. Do this together.
- Determine the guest list and order invitations.
- Reserve a room for your wedding night.
- Make arrangements for music at your reception.
- Have your engagement party if you are planning one.
- Choose your caterer and design your plan for your reception.

2 TO 6 MONTHS BEFORE

- Make arrangements for the rehearsal dinner.
- Make arrangements for out-of-town guests.
- Make appointments for hair and nails. You may want to schedule a massage.
- Make final choices on food, wines and champagne.
- Address invitations.
- Make wedding gift wish list. Register at appropriate stores for bridal registry.
- Talk to the organist and musicians about music for your wedding ceremony
- Purchase the wedding rings.
- Make arrangements for wedding day transportation.
- Order your wedding cake.
- Begin looking for a new home.
- Purchase guest book and wedding album.

2 MONTHS AHEAD

- Finalize arrangements with the photographer, florist, caterer, musicians, reception hall, church and pastor.
- Have final fittings for bridal and attendants' gowns.
- Have fittings for groom and attendants tuxedos.
- Purchase gifts for bridal attendants, best man, and ushers.
- Send copies of ceremony plans to wedding participants. Identify their involvement.
- Write the your vows and plan your ceremony.

3 TO 6 WEEKS AHEAD

- Mail invitations four to six weeks before the ceremony. Include maps for out-of-town guests.
- Design an itinerary for your wedding day. Assign a time schedule for each task for you and your florist, caterer, photographer and reception host.
- Get your marriage license. Be sure to take your birth certificates. If divorced or widowed take the divorce



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decease or spouse's death certificate.

- Schedule your blood test. (Not required in every state)
- Make changes of names and beneficiaries to bank accounts, medical forms, credit cards and insurance.
- Pick up forms from newspaper to submit your wedding announcement.
- Make a record of all gifts and write the thank you notes as the gifts arrive.
- Make arrangements for a dressing room for the bride and bride's attendants.
- Send invitations to the rehearsal dinner.

2 WEEKS AHEAD

- Have your blood test.
- Go over final details with your caterer, florist, photographer, reception hall management, DJ or band, and the church administrator. (Or site administrator if your wedding is not at a church)

- Make lists of all last-minute questions.
- Go over itinerary to finalize time schedule. This is a time schedule for you, the florist, photographer, caterer and reception host.
- Give photographer the final list of pictures you want.
- Call guests who haven't responded to your invitation.

1 WEEK AHEAD

- Relax and enjoy your rehearsal and rehearsal dinner.
- Wrap and tag gifts for bride and groom attendants.
- Pack for the honeymoon.
- Give a final count of guests expected for the wedding reception to the caterer.
- Create a seating plan for the reception. Make place cards for seating at the head table.
- Make sure all attendants have had

final fittings of their gowns and tuxedos.

THE DAY BEFORE

Everything should be ready, relax. Enjoy the day. Pamper yourself. Spend the day enjoying your friends and family. Go to the spa; get a manicure or a massage. Get lots of rest. Tomorrow will be a busy day and you must be rested and ready to enjoy your big day.

THE BIG DAY

- Have a hearty breakfast. As the day goes on you may not take adequate time to eat.
- The bride should have your makeup and hair done about three hours before the wedding. Begin dressing one hour before the wedding.
- The groom should give the wedding ring and the marriage certificate to the best man to bring to the ceremony. Put fees for musicians and

pastor in separate envelopes.

- Music should start 30 minutes before the ceremony. Five minutes before the ceremony, seat the groom's parents. Immediately before the processional march, seat the bride's mother.
- The groom should dance first with your bride and then with your mother, your new mother-in-law and the bridesmaids.

AFTER THE WEDDING

- Send the announcement and wedding photo to local and hometown newspapers.
- Write and mail thank you notes.
- Love your spouse.

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Creative, personalized baked goods and pastries for your wedding from "Simply Sweet"

BY JIM AKANS

Brandi Alford, owner and chef of Simply Sweet, located near Alanson, thoroughly enjoys her role in creating personalized, delicious, and healthy baked goods, pastries and more for a very special wedding, birthday, anniversary, or any type of gathering. She holds a Bachelors Degree in Food Service Management and an Associate

Degree in Baking and Pastry Art from Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island, is the pastry chef at nearby Boyne Highlands Resort, and has been in the hospitality business for nearly a decade. These many years of training and experience have culminated in Brandi's unique ability to create distinctive treats designed specifically for her clients.

"I enjoy taking the extra time

and care to make each clients ideas come to life," she relates. "My bakery is able to make virtually whatever the client wants for their special event. They simply contact me and we sit down and go over their desires, can look through pictures of my previous work for ideas, and even do tastings of items they may be interested in. My specialty is what my client desires."

These customized sweets and treats from Simply Sweet are not only tantalizing to the taste buds, they are also created from the best quality ingredients.

Brandi observes, "Baking is not only an art...it is a science as well. I enjoy putting a healthy spin and treats that also taste good, using items such as unbleached and unprocessed flour. We are also well versed in Gluten allergies and understand the difficulty in creating products that taste good under these restrictions. We fully believe in making our product taste amazing as well as to look it."

So the wide variety of items offered by Simply Sweet not only



A Tiramisu cup, with a hand made truffle and a tuxedo strawberry. COURTESY PHOTO

An array of cupcakes Simply Sweet created for a wedding, with flavors that include mocha, pistachio, spiced run cake, and a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup. COURTESY PHOTO



look and taste incredible, it isn't too much of a stretch to say they are actually good for you!

Brandi notes that she prefers a minimum of 48 hours notice for orders for that special event, and whatever the size of the party, Simply Sweet can meet the clients needs.

Brandi Alford can be contacted at (231) 881-2113 or by email at alford.brandi@gmail.com

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Best Man & Maid of Honor Responsibilities

BY DELLA SERENE

One of the highest honors anyone can receive is being asked to stand up for a bride as the maid or matron of honor, and for the groom as his best man. But, with the honor comes great responsibility. In the weeks leading up to the wedding day, there are some time-honored requirements that the attendants must fulfill. Then, on the day, itself there are additional responsibilities that can only be trusted to someone who has shown loyalty to the bride and groom over the years. Because the bride and groom have a lot to think about, keeping the jitters to a minimum is a major part of the job description for the attendant.

Exactly what the responsibilities are will vary upon the needs and wants of the bride and groom and the scope of the wedding. The bride and groom will usually convey their requirements and carrying them out will not be a problem.

Traditionally, the requirements of the best man and maid or matron of honor has been to make sure the groom and bride shows up at the wedding and to warm up those last minute cold feet. After all, a person's wedding day is high on the list of all time important days in a person's life. The anticipation may be too much for some people to handle alone.

Robbin Montero, of A Dream Wedding, outlines the role of the best man and maid or matron of honor. "The best man pays for his tuxedo and the maid of honor pays for her gown. The maid of honor and best man are each also responsible for arranging for a gift from the other attendants. Each one contacts the bridesmaids or groomsmen and arranges for a special, joint wedding gift from that group. It is the duty of the best man and maid of honor to collect the money from the attendants and choose a gift they know their friends will love." More of Montero's wedding tips can be read at www.foreverwed1.com

Sara L. Ambarian wrote a guide for the best man and maid or matron of honor. The following responsibilities have traditionally been what has been expected of the second in command to the bride and groom and are what Ambarian suggests.

THE MAID OF HONOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:

- * Attending all fittings and appointments for their clothing.
- * Attending pre-wedding par-

ties/showers if at all possible (out of town maids-of-honor are exempt)

- * Hosting a shower for the bride (usually).

- * Helping to address invitations.

- * Helping the bride shop for the bridal gown and/or maid's gowns and accessories.

- * Helping with decorations and other pre-wedding preparations.

- * Attending the rehearsal.

- * Fielding messages for her at home/ceremony site so she isn't interrupted for every little thing.

- * Protecting her privacy/quiet time, pre-ceremony if the bride values it.

- * Taking messages/gifts to the groom so the bride and groom will not see each other.

- * Helping the bride transport her gown and attire to the ceremony site.

- * Helping the bride's dress on her wedding day.

- * Helping distribute bouquets and boutonnieres or any other task to make things run smoother on the day of the wedding.

- * Standing with the bride at the altar.

- * Holding the groom's ring during the ceremony.

- * Greeting guests in the receiving line.

- * Making a toast, before or after, the best man at the reception.

- * Dancing with the best man at the reception.

THE BEST MAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES ARE:

- * Arranging a bachelor party or other party for the groom (or perhaps a party for the couple.)

- * Helping transport the groom's clothes and luggage to the ceremony/reception.

- * Helping the groom dress and prepare for the ceremony.

- * Signing the license as a witness.

- * Presenting the minister with the fees before the ceremony starts.

- * Escorting the maid/matron out of the church during the recessional.

- * Assisting the groom during the pre-wedding rituals, ceremony and reception.

- * Helping pack and preparing the get-away car and protecting it from tampering.

- * Returning the tuxedos to the rental outlet.

- * Transporting the wedding gifts to the couple's home.

- * Proposing a toast to the couple at the reception.

- * Dancing with the maid/matron



of honor at the reception.

If there is a dollar dance at the reception, the best man and maid or matron of honor are required to get it started by dancing with the bride and groom, respectively. One of them will arrange for someone to collect the money and give the bounty to the couple when the dance is over.

Decorating the car and driving around town, with horns blaring, is also the best man's responsibility. The maid or matron of honor can

help.

Above all else, the best man and maid or matron of honor should enjoy themselves and make sure they ensure the Bride and Groom enjoy their special day.

Once the day is over, and the couple embarks upon their married life together, the best man and maid or matron of honor can relax and revel in the fact that they did their part in the bride and groom beginning a beautiful life together.

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Choosing a Restaurant for the Rehearsal Dinner

BY AMY KELLY

While some people question the value of holding a rehearsal dinner, most couples choose to honor the tradition since it provides a perfect setting for the bride and groom's families and friends to get to know each other a little better.

Rehearsal dinners usually take place after a run-through of the wedding ceremony. It is preferable to schedule the rehearsal and dinner a couple of days prior to the actual ceremony so everyone can be well rested for the wedding, but if you will have several guests and members of the wedding party arriving from out of town that may not be possible.

Make reservations for the rehearsal dinner as far in advance as possible, particularly if you have chosen an eatery that is on the small side or very much in demand. If your guest list is a large one, look into restaurants that close for private

parties on specified evenings, or choose a spot that has a banquet room large enough to accommodate your guests. It makes sense to choose a restaurant near the ceremony site, but if transportation is readily available for all the guests, there is no reason you can't have the dinner at an eatery across town.

Talk to the restaurant manager about special deals they may offer for large parties. Many have banquet menus with a choice of two or three entrees at a fixed price. Typically this includes a beef, chicken or vegetarian entrée plus an appetizer, a couple of sides or salad, plus coffee and dessert. For drinks you may choose to have an open bar where guests order drinks individually or you can arrange for a specified number of bottles of wine or champagne to be brought to the table.

Traditionally the groom's parents host the rehearsal dinner for the wedding party, immediate family, and close friends, but

it is also acceptable for other relatives or friends of the bride and groom to plan and host the dinner. You may want to include out of town guests who are flying in for the wedding if the budget will allow it.

Popular sites for wedding rehearsal dinners include upscale restaurants, country clubs, dinner cruises, and hotels. If your wedding is informal, you may want to choose a more casual eatery for the rehearsal dinner or have a catered dinner at a relative's home. You can make the evening more memorable by choosing a venue that offers a theme or entertainment as part of the dinner package.


Try to pick an atmosphere and cuisine that will be different from your wedding reception. If the wedding reception will have a formal sit-down dinner with continental cuisine, choose a spot for the rehearsal dinner that is more casual such as an Italian bistro or Mexican cantina.

Pick an eatery with attentive service, a relaxing atmosphere and quality food. The idea is for your friends and family to let down their hair and have a good time before the wedding. If you choose a restaurant with snooty waiters and a pretentious menu, your guests may fill uncomfortable.

Invite guests to the dinner by mail and include a detailed map with directions on how to get to the location. If the dinner will be immediately after the wedding rehearsal, you may want to provide transportation to the restaurant by setting up vans, carpools, limos, etc.

Keep the guest list for the rehearsal dinner to a small size. The parents of the bride and groom should be there as well as the best man, maid of honor, bridesmaids and groomsmen. It is respectful to invite the person who will be officiating at the ceremony.

Continued on Next Page



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emony. Beyond that, you may choose to invite your grandparents, other immediate family members, or close friends and family who have traveled a great distance to attend the wedding. Just don't allow the guest list to grow too large or you will have to book a banquet hall rather than a restaurant.

At some point during the dinner the bride and groom should thank all their guests and single out those who have been particularly helpful in planning the ceremony and reception. The parents of the couple may offer toasts, and other guests around the table are free to toast or offer anecdotes about their own weddings. Some couples give small gifts to the bridesmaids and groomsmen after the dinner as a token of appreciation.

Depending on the size of the group, you may want to make a seating chart and provide place cards. Avoid seating everyone from the bride's family at one table and the groom's at another. The purpose of the dinner is to allow people to converse and get to know each other, so arrange the tables in a manner that is conducive to mingling.

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Rules for Proper Introductions

BY JOE THOMAS

On this most important day of your life, you are surrounded by people that love you. The closest friends and family of both you and your spouse are all together to help celebrate your new life together. Your wedding brings together many people who do not know one another. On this day that is filled with joy you risk offending your closest loved ones by "muffing" the introductions.

When making introductions remember: You present the "lesser" ranking person to the senior person. Here are the rules for determining status.

An older person outranks a younger person.

Someone senior at work outranks someone junior at work.

An out-of-town guest outranks a local guest of equal status.

A person serving a religious ministry outranks a layperson.

A woman outranks a man of equal status (of course, you already knew that)

Your in-laws outrank your friends and family.

The way you present the person is fairly simple: you say the name of the senior person first and introduce the lesser ranking person. Then introduce the higher ranking person to the lesser ranking person. An example would be "Uncle Joe, may I present my husband, John Doe. John, this is my uncle, Mr. Joe Brown." Your

husband, John would refer to your uncle as Mr. Brown until he gives him permission to call him "Uncle Joe."

When introducing people of equal status it really doesn't matter who is presented first. If you are introducing a long time friend to a co-worker it might go something like this: "Julie, I would like you to meet Tom Smith, my teammate on our varsity basketball team. Tom, this is Julie Johnson, the Sales Manager at Willie's Widgets, the place we both work.

When introducing your in-laws be careful not to refer to them as Mom and Dad until they have given you permission to call them that. Introduce them as Mr. & Mrs. Brown. If they want you to refer to them in a more intimate way (Mom & Dad or using their first names) they will let you know.

It is a good idea to give a little information about the people when introducing them as in the example of Julie Johnson as sales manager of Willie's Widgets. This can work as a good conversation starter. Be careful not to give too much information though. Don't introduce Sally as the ex-wife of Jeff Smith until she left him because he drank too much. That would be too much information. More than any of us want to know.

Choosing the Caterer

BY AMY KENNEDY

Caterers can be a valuable resource for planning your wedding reception. They can provide some obvious ideas for the food but can also provide ideas from other weddings they have experienced for decorations, music, special events, hall rental and best resources for some of the vendors you will have to work with. The right caterer can be one of your most valuable resources to assist you in planning your wedding reception.

While a good caterer can be valuable, hiring the wrong caterer can be a disaster. Be sure you clearly identify all the details so they can be prepared to host your reception. It is best to plan your reception with the caterer and identify the details in a contract. This should be completed 6 to 8 months prior to the wedding date. Following are some tips in choosing the right caterer for your wedding reception.

Have you catered a wedding reception this size before? This is important if you have a large guest list. A caterer who has only done small wedding receptions may not have the equipment or staff it takes to serve a large group.

Do you have a recommended main dish to serve a group this size? Some caterers have a specialty they do best. They may have had positive comments from a previous wedding reception that guests raved about.

What is your best value for a group this size? Don't plan on serving prime rib and shrimp on a chicken breast budget. Find out the cost early in your planning to save disappointment later.

What is the standard number of courses you recommend? Are you planning on dessert or serving the wedding cake after dinner? You may be able to save the cost of dessert if your cake is large enough.

What can we serve as a special dish? Ask for something out of the ordinary that your guests will enjoy and talk about as a fond memory of your wedding reception. Ask the caterer to be creative.

Will you serve plate dinners or will it be buffet style? This will

make a difference in the number of people needed as wait staff. Serving plate dinners require twice the wait staff. Generally, good wait staff should handle two tables of 8 to 10 people. If they are stretched more than that some guests will be waiting for their food while others are completing their meal.

Do you provide plates, silverware and napkins? Most banquet halls will provide these things. If they don't be sure to ask the caterer. It would be embarrassing to have the food and nothing to eat it with.

Can you accommodate special orders? Many people are on special diets that require low fat, low cholesterol, no salt, no wheat products or they are vegetarian. Can your caterer accommodate these people or should they eat before they arrive? You need to find out. You don't want to serve someone meatballs and potato chips that has heart disease.

Who will be the on-site supervisor the day of the wedding? Probably the owner won't be there. You should spend a little time with the supervisor of the day of your wedding. Let them know your expectations and who to see if a problem arises. You should introduce the catering supervisor to the reception host/hostess so they can recognize them at the reception.

Have you worked with this rental hall before? The caterer has probably worked with the operators of the reception hall before but if they haven't you will need to get the contact names for them to make arrangements for set up and to see the facilities.

How much time do you need to set up before the event? If you provide the caterer with the contact name of the reception hall you should be fine but you need to make sure they have access to the hall to set up. Make sure they contact the operator of the hall and have access to set up.

Will the caterer prepare the food on site or off site? The reception hall may have an additional charge for using their kitchen for food preparation.

How is the alcohol served? If your reception hall is serving the drinks you need to ask them



this question. Will the wait staff be taking orders and serving or will it be an open bar where guests get their own drinks. You may find less consumption with the wait staff serving. This should also cost less (if you are paying for the drinks). You may want to offer a cash bar with free soft drinks and one wine or champagne bottle at each table.

How will the wait staff be dressed? You might assume that the staff would be dressed appropriately but just to be safe, ask.

What is the charge for overtime? If your reception lasts longer than planned is there an

option to extend the hours? How much will this cost? Identify these charges and include them in the contract.

Can you provide me with a copy of your liability insurance policy? Ask to see the document. You should keep this with the catering contract in case someone becomes ill as a result of the meal. When food sits out you run the risk of it becoming tainted.

What are the terms of payment? Be sure the amounts are clearly defined for both the deposit and the balance and when payment is due.

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Cut, Color and Clarity: How to choose a diamond

BY AMY KENNEDY

Diamonds are traditionally used to mark engagements. These gems are highly regarded for their brilliance and beauty but can be intimidating to purchase due to the high cost of a good quality diamond. Your local jeweler can be a valuable source in helping select this gem that represents a lifetime commitment. However, the choice is yours and it is important to learn about the unique qualities of a diamond in order to make the best choice in selecting a diamond. Following are some tips to remember when making that important choice.

How much can I expect to spend on a Diamond?

Prices vary across North America but they will run in the ranges below depending upon the quality of the gem.

- 1/4 carat or less — \$125 to \$500
- 1/2 carat — \$900 to \$3,200
- 3/4 carat — \$2,200 to \$4,800
- 1 carat — \$3,000 to \$10,000 and up

How to Determine the Quality of a Diamond

Diamonds are graded and priced according to the “four C’s”:

Cut: The cut is considered the most important factor in the value. It describes the proportions of the diamond. Shapes may vary but a well cut diamond has perfect symmetry. The cuts are aligned with each other. The high quality cut diamond shows great brilliance and is the result of skilled craftsmanship.

Color: (or lack of it) helps determine the value of a diamond. Color interferes with the way a diamond reflects light. Generally, the less color in a diamond, the more valuable it is. Diamonds are graded in color according to a scale from the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) color-grading system, which rates diamonds on a scale from D (colorless) to Z (yellow). Grades D, E or F are considered colorless and are the most rare (and most expensive). Grades G, H often tend to be good value. They show very little color, allow good brilliance and are much less expensive than the higher grades. Grades K to M have a yellow or brown tint and are at the lower end of the scale of most dia-

monds you will find at a jewelry store. These are usually the diamonds you will find in promotional bargains. Discount stores may offer grades below M in promotional jewelry. They don’t allow the diamond to sparkle like the higher grades. Grade Z is much like dirt. You can probably find this in your backyard.

Clarity: All (almost all) diamonds have flaws. The size, position and number of flaws determine the clarity of the diamond. Surface flaws are called blemishes. A scratch or a chip on the surface would be examples of blemishes. Internal flaws are called inclusions. These will include tiny cracks, dark carbon spots or light specks within the stone. An inclusion that obvious when looking at the top of the diamond greatly reduces the value. Diamonds are graded in clarity according to a scale from the Gemological Institute of America. “FL” is flawless. No blemishes or inclusions. There are hardly any of these flawless gems. “IF” is internally flawless. There may be minor blemishes. These are in very short supply. You probably won’t find

these in your local jewelry store. “VVS1” and “VVS2” have very, very slight inclusions that are difficult to see, even for a qualified person. “VS1” and “VS2” have very slight inclusions that can only be seen under the magnifying glass of a jeweler. These are high quality diamonds you will find at most jewelry stores. “I1, I2 and I3” have inclusions that are fairly obvious to the consumer. These are diamonds available at many discounters and are lower in value. These are good for show but not investment value.

Carat: This is the traditional way to measure a diamond’s size and weight. A 1/2 carat diamond weighs 1/10 of a gram. A jeweler may call that a 50 point stone. Since larger diamonds are rarer the value of a diamond will be proportionally more with a 1 carat diamond than a 1/2 carat diamond.

The best way to select a diamond is to talk to a trusted jeweler that can offer good advice and guidance in making your choice. The information provided in this article will help you understand what to look for in making the selection.

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