



Wedding Guide



Tuesday, January 8, 2019
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Get the most out of bridal shows and wedding events

Recently engaged couples may be excited to get a jump on wedding planning. Bridal shows can be a great way to get that head start. It's a chance for couples to meet and familiarize themselves with local wedding professionals, all the while introducing themselves to the terminology of wedding planning.

Don't miss these two Wedding Shows in Augusta in January:

- The 3rd Annual Augusta Maine Bridal Show by New England Premier Events will be held from noon to 3 p.m., **Jan. 13** at the Augusta Civic Center
- The Maine Wedding Association will be having its annual show from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Jan. 20** at the Augusta Armory.

Though they're a great source of information, contacts and samples, bridal shows also can be a bit overwhelming. Learning how to maximize time spent at shows can help couples plan their weddings as efficiently as possible.

START SMALL. If the idea of large crowds is unappealing, attend the more intimate, boutique shows that are often held at local reception halls and restaurants instead of the larger installations at convention centers and hotels.

SCOUT OUT VENDORS. Check the bridal show's website for lists of exhibitors and see if your desired vendors are on

the list. But even if they're not, keep an open mind and use the show as a chance to compare offerings. If an event map is available, marking off must-visit booths can help save time.

PRE-REGISTER. Pre-registering for bridal events saves time at check-in, and doing so may make you eligible for discounted tickets.

COME PREPARED. Chances are each vendor is going to ask couples for information so that they can follow up with a phone call or email with more detailed offerings and estimates. Couples attending the show can expedite the process by coming equipped with labels that feature their names, contact information and wedding date. They can then stick the labels on sign-in sheets or use them like business cards.

DRESS COMFORTABLY. Bridal expos involve a lot of walking and roaming around. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Consider a backpack or hands-free bag so you are not weighed down when collecting the swag and other handouts throughout the day.

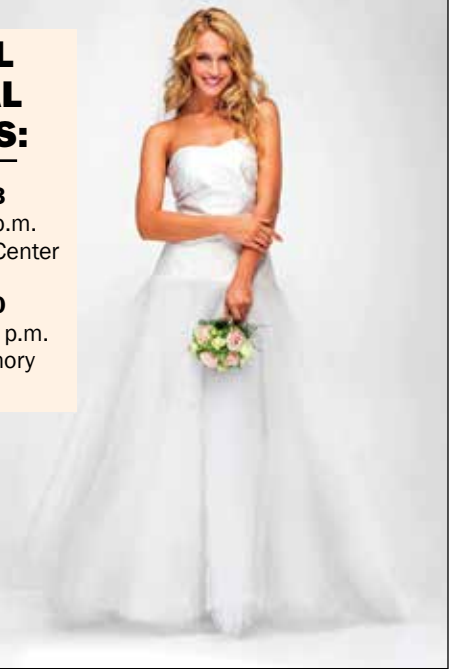
ASK QUESTIONS. When face-to-face with vendors, rely on their expertise but don't hesitate to ask questions concerning themes, colors, recommendations for honeymoon locations, invitation paper suggestions, and much more.

STAY FOR THE FASHION SHOW. Many shows will offer

LOCAL BRIDAL SHOWS:

• **Jan. 13**
Noon to 3 p.m.
Augusta Civic Center

• **Jan. 20**
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Augusta Armory



Metro Creative Services

a runway experience to present the latest gown and tuxedo offerings. This can be an entertaining way for couples to formulate their wedding styles.

Wedding shows introduce couples to vendors and set them on the path to making decisions regarding the planning of their weddings.



Sunday, January 13 12:00 - 3:00 p.m.
 

Augusta Civic Center - Augusta, Maine





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The sky's the limit when it comes to wedding cake designs

Even camouflage has joined the growing list

BY WANDA CURTIS
Correspondent

Wedding cake designs are changing. Cake artist Mike Hunt, a co-owner of The Bankery in Skowhegan, said recently that wedding cake designs took a dramatic turn about five years ago. He said that he began to see brides, "breaking away from convention and opulence" and leaning toward more rustic and natural looking cakes. He said that the application of frosting no longer needed to be "fussy" and "pristine." Instead, "visible crumb and spatula artifacts became the desired look."

According to Hunt, the very first wedding cake he remembers decorating, in 1994, was a three-tiered cake with mauve, burgundy and peach frosting tones. He said that each tier was separated with 7-inch crystal pillars. He said the entire display was "absurd," but was "an accurate study of the late 80s garishness." By the early 2000s, Hunt said the Internet "really began turning wedding designs and marketing on its head." He said that "current trends favor minimalism, with a more naturalistic approach."

When planning their wedding cake, Hunt advises couples to first consider how many people will attend the reception.

"This dictates the sizes and/or piece counts," he said. The second factor they should consider, Hunt said, is design and whether the cake will incorporate any wedding colors or seasonal motifs. He said that some couples now include an edible sculpture representing a poignant theme or interest of the groom.

Another important factor to consider when making decisions about a wedding cake is the couple's budget. Hunt said that a tall, tiered wedding cake is impressive, but that cupcakes are more convenient and budget friendly.

"A popular compromise is a small, tiered cake (for cutting purposes and to serve the head table) coupled with an assortment of cupcakes on a tiered stand," he said.

Wedding cake designers should be contacted six months ahead.

Although many of today's wedding cakes aren't as elaborate, it's still important to allow plenty of time for planning. Linda Noddin, the owner of Mainely Wedding Cakes recommends booking a wedding cake designer at least six months prior to the wedding. She said that although some brides now design their own cakes, most rely on cake artists to design the perfect wedding cake to fit their style and wedding theme. She said that it's important for the wedding cake to fit with the particular style of wedding planned.

Noddin, who designs wedding cakes in her Lisbon Falls bakery, recommends a Tasting & Design Consultation, which she said gives brides-to-be the opportunity to get to know the baker and sample their products. She said that offers an



Contributed photo

The owner of Heavenly Delights said that many couples now request dessert displays for their wedding.

excellent opportunity "to collaborate with the baker and fully understand the range of their abilities."

According to Noddin, many couples are not just asking for wedding cakes anymore. She said that some are now asking for assorted dessert tables, cake shooters, donut walls, s'more bars or cookies.

"With my business, I had to adapt to these changes and now offer a large assortment of desserts from pastries to Panama Cotta," Noddin said.

In regards to cake flavors, Noddin said that she can make just about any flavor requested by couples. She said that Italian Meringue Butter Cream and Swiss Meringue Butter Cream are her most popular frostings.

"We make our own signature Fondant as well," Noddin said. "We also offer an endless number of custom-made fillings."

Birch Bark wedding cakes are very popular.



Contributed photo

Birch Bark Wedding Cakes are a hot item for Mainers and couples who travel to Maine for destination weddings or just like the outdoors. This one was created at The Bankery.

Some of Noddin's most popular wedding cake designs, she said, are Birch Bark Cakes, which range from rustic Birch Bark Cakes to more elegant ones with edible sugar lace. She said that the color black, marble and geometric shapes are predicted to be the trend for next year.

Noddin said that she's been collaborating in recent years with other Maine wedding vendors to promote destination weddings in Maine. She said that she's serviced couples from Guam, London, Africa and Alaska who located her business online. She said that the Guam couple was excited about the Birch Bark Cake design. The bride requested that Noddin try to replicate one of the bride's grandmother's recipes for the cake, which Noddin said she was willing to accommodate.

Noddin said that destination weddings have been a great boost to Maine's economy. She said that many barns in Maine have been renovated in response to the requests for destination weddings.

While wedding cake layers will last up to one year in the freezer if wrapped correctly, Mainely Wedding Cakes offers a complimentary anniversary cake for all of their wedding cake customers who request one. Two weeks' notice is required for anniversary cakes.

Heavenly Delights Bakery also gets many requests for Birch Bark Cakes.

Deb Golden, owner of Heavenly Delights Bakery, agreed that it's important for a couple to select a baker who matches the couple's vision for their cake and who has the skill set to design the type of cake they really want. She said that many couples come into her Vassalboro bakery with sketches of what they'd like and then pull from some cakes in her port-

Cake

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

folio, combining different elements to make one cake unique to them.

Like other local cake artists, Golden has found that Birch Bark Cakes are very popular in Maine. She said that cupcake displays and dessert buffets have also been popular among her customers.

In regards to colors, Golden stressed that the wedding cake doesn't have to be just white anymore.

"The more color and personality that can be put into a wedding cake, the more it will stand out and be the talk of the wedding for years to come," she said.

When it comes to flavors for the wedding cake, Golden currently offers 51 different cake flavors. Golden said that the cake flavors range from the basic chocolate, vanilla and strawberry to hazel- blueberry, white chocolate raspberry, chocolate chip, "and the

"A popular compromise is a small, tiered cake (for cutting purposes and to serve the head table) coupled with an assortment of cupcakes on a tiered stand."

MIKE HUNT, A CO-OWNER OF THE BANKERY IN SKOWHEGAN

list just keep going."

Golden recommends that couples not try to appeal to every guest's taste. Instead, she advises couples to first select the flavor they like best for the wedding cake. She said then some variety for the guests can be added by serving other refreshments made with different flavors.

Golden also offers a gift certificate for a free anniversary cake to all her wedding cake customers who request one.

Wedding Cakes are even ordered in camouflage colors.

Larry Hillman has been designing wedding cakes at Hillman's Bakery in Fairfield for more than 40 years.

Hillman said that for flavor requests, he

still makes more traditional white cakes with white frosting than any other flavor. However, he agreed that the styles of wedding cakes that couples request continue to change.

"It used to be a white cake with white trim with flowers that matched the wedding colors ... that was the first 20 to 25 years that I did cakes," Hillman said. "It's a lot of different styles now. It used to be they chose from the two or three books that we had and then picked their colors.

"Now they can send us a design they've found and ask us to do it.

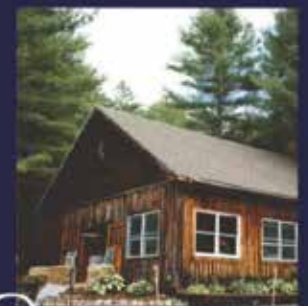
"Camouflage Cakes, for example. It's so completely different than what we used to see."



Contributed photo

The owner of Mainly Weddings, Linda Noddin, works with couples to accommodate their special requests.

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Couples seek alternatives to engagement rings

An engagement ring symbolizes the start of a lifelong commitment, and may even set the tone for a couple's wedding day.

Jewelry styles are personal, and grooms-to-be should carefully research their significant others' preferences in terms of precious metals, colors and gemstones. Even though tradition holds that a diamond gemstone is classic for engagement rings, these precious stones are not the only options.

In fact, before World War II, just 10 percent of proposals involved diamond engagement rings. That number jumped to 80 percent by 1990. However, many modern couples now lean toward other offerings, not only for the uniqueness they provide, but also for the potential cost savings.

Couples seeking something unique can embrace these engagement ring options.

• AMETHYST:

This vibrant, lavender-hued stone can be breathtaking when cut the correct way. Purple shades

have long been associated with royalty, making an amethyst fitting for an occasion as special as an engagement. Because amethysts, which are less expensive than diamonds, are a seven on the Mohs scale for gemstone hardness, they can be very durable.

• **KNOT RINGS:** These rings do not have a center stone. Rather, they're designed to be a tied knot or infinity symbol. These rings can be particularly sentimental as they represent true, unbroken love.

• **OPAL:** Gemstones, like flowers, have been assigned certain meanings. Tying the engagement ring to one of them can infuse more symbolism into the relationship. Opal, for example, represents love, passion, creativity, spontaneity and inspiration. Those traits seem tailor-made for surprise proposals.



• **SAPPHIRE:** While sapphire stones often are blue, they also can be yellow, green, pink and white. Sapphires are the third hardest mineral. A white sapphire can be the perfect diamond replacement.

• **GARNET OR RUBY:** Red is the definitive color of love. A Valentine's Day proposal can be made even more special by presenting an engagement ring with a red gemstone.

• **MOISSANITE:** The jewelry source Brilliant Earth says this is a gemstone first discovered in 1893 by Henri Moissan in a meteorite that fell to earth. It is remarkably like a diamond in appearance and strength. Moissanite also has heightened brilliance, with a refractive index higher than that of a diamond.

Couples have many beautiful alternatives to diamonds that they can explore when shopping for engagement rings. For local shopping choices stop by a Day's Jewelry store in Waterville and Augusta or Russakoff Jewelers in Skowhegan.

How to pop the question

Tips for a successful marriage proposal

People ready to "pop the question" may wonder about the right way to initiate an engagement proposal.

Because a marriage proposal is such a memorable moment in a couples' lives together, those doing the proposing often go to great lengths to ensure things go smoothly. While there is no proposal playbook, these guidelines can assist those ready to take the leap.

ADD A PERSONAL TOUCH. It's easy to get caught up in making a marriage proposal a spectacle or something worthy of a social media post. But taking a sweetheart back to a special place that recalls a significant moment can set the backdrop for a memorable proposal. Incorporating the place you first met or a special song into the proposal can make it that much more personal and meaningful.

EMBRACE THE OLD FASHIONED. It may be romantic to step back in time and followed the traditions of yesteryear. Show respect to future in-laws by speaking to them about intentions to propose and ask for their blessings. Get down on bended knee when asking for a sweetheart's hand. Such gestures add up to meaningful expressions of love.

CONSIDER TIMING. A person may



Getting down on bended knee when asking for a sweetheart's hand in marriage remains an enduring tradition

be so excited to propose that he or she fails to consider how the other person in the relationship is feeling. If that person is overwhelmed by work projects or stressed about upcoming events, consider waiting to propose at a more relaxed time.

ENLIST HELP FROM OTHERS. It can be a challenge to keep your excitement hidden while collecting information about a future spouse's likes and dislikes. Ask friends and close family members to be your accomplices so that information can

be gathered without generating suspicion. This can be especially helpful when finding the perfect ring.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. The more complex a proposal, the more opportunities for things to go wrong. Simplicity, even if it means keeping the proposal to yourself until the question has been popped, can make for an extra special moment.

Marriage proposals happen every day. With humor, confidence and a heart full of love, popping the question can be a success.

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Bride's Name: _____

Groom's Name: _____

Engaged On: _____

Wedding Date: _____

Ceremony Location: _____

Reception Location: _____

Comments/Notes: _____

A wedding checklist is a very simple tool that is very easy to use, but it does a lot for you. The main goal of the wedding checklist is to make sure that you get everything that you need for your wedding. These wedding planning tools can give you the piece of mind that you need to really enjoy your wedding to the fullest.

Use the wedding planner checklist on the next two pages to guarantee you've covered all the necessary details to ensure that you have the perfect wedding. And check out the advertisers in this section for all your wedding needs.



WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

12-16 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Choose Wedding Date
- Discuss and Choose Style/Formality of Wedding
- Select and Reserve Wedding Location
- Select and Reserve Reception Site
- Decide on Budget for Wedding
- Place Engagement Announcement in newspaper
- Hire a Wedding Consultant
- Begin Shopping for the Dress and a seamstress

8-10 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Select Bridal Party
- Hire Reception Caterer
- Secure Wedding Officiant
- Decide on Bridesmaid Dresses
- Start Compiling Guest List
- Contract Photographer
- Contract Videographer
- Hire Band or DJ
- Sign Up for Gift Registry
- Send out Save the Date notices

5-7 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Finalize Guest List
- Arrange Accommodations for Guests
- Select Wedding Cake
- Begin Honeymoon Preparations
- Shop for Wedding Stationery
- Review insurance needs - Auto - Home - Life

4 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Book Florist
- Visit Your Doctor
- Shop for Wedding Bands
- Fitting for Wedding Dress

3 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Select Tuxedos
- Send Out Invitations
- Finalize Menu Options and Costs With Caterer
- Arrange for Rental of Items
- Arrange Transportation/Limo Service
- Order Wedding Favors
- Begin Counseling Sessions With Wedding Officiant
- Shop for Bridal Party Gifts

2 MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Select Wedding Music
- Confirm With Formal Wear Shop
- Schedule Alterations
- Select a Location for Rehearsal Dinner
- Schedule Fittings for Wedding Dress, Bridesmaids and Flower Girl
- Address Labels With Couple's New Names and Address for Thank You Cards
- Confirm Order With Florist Order
- Second fitting for Wedding Dress

1 MONTH BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Apply for Marriage License
- Design Wedding Programs
- Have Final Gown Fitting
- Choose All Wedding Accessories
- Visit Hair Stylist
- Visit Make-Up Artist
- Get Hair and Makeup Done
- Have Formal Bridal Portraits Taken
- Finalize Details with Wedding Service Providers
- Final Wedding Dress Fitting

2 WEEKS BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Call any Non-RSVP Guests
- Give Caterer Final Head Count
- Give Band or DJ List of Songs
- Confirm Rehearsal Plans
- Pick Up Marriage License
- Complete Floor and Seating Plan
- Confirm All Rental and Floral Delivery Dates and Times
- Confirm Arrival Time for All Attendants
- Check Parking Arrangements
- Obtain any Legal Information

1 WEEK BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Confirm Honeymoon Reservations
- Adjust Seating Arrangements/Adjustments
- Organize Wedding Day Attire

- Confirm Reservations for Out-of-Town Guests
- Pack for Honeymoon
- Pick Up Passports
- Gather All Necessary Travel Documents
- Confirm Rehearsal Plans With Attendants
- Confirm Reservations for Rehearsal Dinner
- Pick Up Formal Wear

1 DAY BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Get Manicure and Pedicure
- Pack Wedding Day Emergency Kit
- Double Check List of Things to Do
- Put Wedding Attire and Accessories Together
- Pamper Yourself
- Give Rings to Best Man
- Go To Bed Early

WEDDING DAY

- Get Hair and Makeup Done
- Be Sure to Eat Breakfast/Lunch
- Have Someone Check Reception Site
- Dress for Wedding
- Have Candid Photos Taken With Family

AFTER THE HONEYMOON

- Have Your Wedding Gown Preserved
- Write Thank-You Notes
- Change Name



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12 wedding tricks

Add ease to planning and fun

Brides and grooms understandably feel a little stress when planning their weddings.

Adding to the pressure is the fact that, according to a

WeddingWire.com report, the average couple in their 30s spends \$32,000 on their wedding. That is a lot of money riding on one day.

But planning a wedding can be even more fun than it is stressful, especially for those couples who employ a few tricks of the wedding planning trade.

1. Fake the cake.

Save some money by asking the bakery cake artist to decorate a foam-tiered "mock" cake for pictures and display, and serve guests from an inexpensive sheet cake in the kitchen.

2. Use labels.

Once the guest list is finalized, create a database of guests' addresses. Print out two sets of labels: One for addressing the invitations and the other to address the thank-you cards.

3. RSVP tricks.

Number the back of RSVP cards and correspond the numbers to the guest list. If one or more responses is illegible, refer to the number to figure it out.

4. Embrace inexpensive decor.

Dollar stores and craft stores are great places to find inexpensive decorative items. Empty wine bottles can be painted or glazed to serve as vases. Candle lanterns can be picked up at low cost at many retailers.

5. Create an email address.

To have all of the wedding-related details in one place, create a separate email address exclusively for wedding correspondence.

6. Use veil weights.

These weights can be sewn into veils to prevent fly-aways during outdoor ceremonies or photoshoots.



7. Keep bugs at bay.

Spray chair and reception table legs with insect repellent. Dryer sheets also can be tucked into inconspicuous spots to keep bugs away.

8. Save money on favors.

Unless the favor is something to eat or something especially practical, you may consider skipping the favors altogether, as many guests tend to forget to take them home anyway.

9. Use page markers for seating.

Use multicolored, self-sticking page markers to create easy seating arrangements. Each color can represent a category: His, Hers, Friends, Work.

10. Make a photo clothesline.

A clever and inexpensive idea is to pin photos of the couple to a string, cataloguing how they met and their time together leading up to the wedding.

11. Use loose flower centerpieces.

Loose flowers in a vase are easier to sort and transport home for guests who want a memento. Make precut butcher's paper or cellophane available to make bouquets.

12. Stock up on string lights.

Lights can be wrapped around trees outdoors, strung indoors around windows or draped along buffet tables to create a romantic ambiance.

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How to create a wedding day schedule

Working backwards sometimes helps

Wedding days can be hectic. In fact, many couples note after tying the knot that their wedding days were so busy that the ceremonies and receptions were over before they knew it.

Creating a wedding day schedule can seem like a daunting task. Couples tend to have a lot of things to do before saying "I do," and organizing everything so ceremonies begin on time can seem as puzzling as a brain teaser. But certain scheduling strategies can help couples ensure they look their best and make it to the altar on time.

- **START WITH THE CEREMONY.** Couples can establish a framework for their wedding day schedule by working back from the ceremony. Once the ceremony time is set, couples who plan to take photos before their ceremonies can then work with their photographers to determine how much time they will need for photos and where they want to take the photos. Bridal parties may need transportation to the photo session, so determining when and where to take photos before the ceremony gives couples an idea of when to arrange for pickup.

- **CONFIRM WHEN THE WEDDING** venue is open to the wedding party. Before booking hair and makeup appointments, couples should confirm when they will be able to access their wedding venue. Brides may want to get their hair and makeup done at the ceremony location, but that may only be possible if the venue opens early for the wedding party. If it does not, then brides must account for transportation time to the ceremony site when making their wedding day schedules.

- **DETERMINE HOW MUCH TIME IS NEEDED FOR HAIR AND MAKEUP.** Weddings that feature large bridal parties will require more time for hair and makeup than ceremonies with small bridal parties. Grooms and groomsmen often take care of their own hair, though some grooms might want to schedule hot shaves for themselves and their groomsmen. Grooms should ask groomsmen if they want a hot shave and then work with their barbers to determine how much time it will take to tend to all participants. Brides with large bridal parties may need to book more than two hair and makeup artists so everyone can get done on time. Wedding hair and makeup sessions can last several hours for large bridal parties, so brides should schedule their sessions early if their parties are big.

- **MAKE LUNCH ARRANGEMENTS.** Some couples choose to tie the knot and host their receptions at the same venue. In such instances, if brides are getting their hair and makeup done at the venue, ask the venue representative if lunch can be provided to the bridal party. Some venues may include small lunch buffets in their reception costs, while others might charge extra. Confirm the availability and costs, and if it's unavailable or too expensive, then arrange for lunch to be delivered. Either way, couples should not skip lunch, as it may be their only chance to eat until after the ceremony.

- **DISTRIBUTE YOUR SCHEDULE TO ONE ANOTHER AND THE BRIDAL PARTY.** Once the wedding day schedule has been devised, couples should share it with each other and their wedding parties. Grooms' wedding day to-do lists might not be as extensive as brides', but grooms should still be kept in the loop regarding the schedule, so they can help if anyone has questions or if something goes awry. Sharing the



schedule with the wedding party decreases the chances of someone being late or missing an appointment.

Couples can solve the riddle of scheduling their wedding days by working backwards and asking their vendors to cooperate in laying out the day's events.

Barn Weddings for 2020

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Make plans for the gift list

Building a wedding registry is a task unlike any other that couples may encounter during their lifetimes. Wedding registries are invaluable resources that provide engaged couples' loved ones with gift suggestions.

Building a wedding registry can feel like walking a tightrope. Couples likely won't want to ask for too much or for gifts that are too expensive, but a poorly-built registry can be a major inconvenience for guests. The following tips can help couples build adequate registries that benefit them, without asking too much of their guests.

Register with more than one store. It's important to register with more than one store. Doing so makes things as convenient as possible for guests and increases the chances they will be able to shop at stores they are familiar with. Unless your guest list is predominantly local, try to register with at least one national chain so guests who live in different regions can shop for gifts in-person if they prefer to do so.

Make a large list. Some couples are hesitant to make large wedding registries, feeling that doing so gives the impression that they're asking for too much. But large registries simply give guests more options to choose from. Many industry insiders advise registering for two to three gifts per guest. That might seem like a lot, but guests will appreciate having all those options.

Don't hesitate to include expensive items on your registry. Couples also may be hesitant to include especially expensive items on their wedding registries. However, the couples' parents and other close relatives may be honored to purchase more expensive items, so couples should not feel embarrassed to include them on their lists. It's also important to note that many retailers, after couples' wedding days have come and gone, discount registry items that weren't purchased. So even if no one purchases the more expensive items, including them on a registry may significantly reduce their cost for couples who want to buy such items themselves after tying the knot.

Vary the prices of items on the list. In addition to including more expensive items on the registry, make sure to include moderately priced and inexpensive items. This gives guests more options and ensures guests who might be spending a lot to travel to and from the wedding can still purchase gifts without digging too much deeper into their pockets.

Periodically update the registries. Periodically update your registries to remove items you have already received and to add items if many of the less expensive ones have already been purchased. This also makes things more convenient for guests.

Building a wedding registry is a unique task that couples can embrace as their wedding day draws near.



Wedding dress fitting guide

How to tailor a perfect ensemble

Because fashion preferences were once ornate and dependent on precise fits, ready-to-wear clothing really did not become widely available until the early 20th century. Such attire is now available in just about any retail store.

Because ready-to-wear clothing is so readily available, the average person may be unfamiliar with custom-made or tailored items. In fact, a couples' wedding may be the only instance in their lives when they require the services of a seamstress or tailor.

Fittings are a part of wedding planning, and here's how brides-to-be can navigate the process of finding and being fitted for a dress.

TRY ON SAMPLE GOWNS. The first step is to make your rounds to various gown shops and try on the samples they have available. Most sample sizes will not be the size you wear every day, so expect them to be ill-fitting.

DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED. Once a gown is chosen, the dress shop will take your measurements and order the gown according to the manufacturer's sizing guide. Again, this can be shocking, since the size will likely be larger than what you wear in street clothes. Some shops also will order a little larger to allow for adequate tailoring.

SCHEDULE THE FIRST FITTING. The first fitting should be anywhere from eight to 12 weeks before the wedding date, according to experts at WeddingWire, an online wedding information provider. This is the time it takes to complete most standard alterations. Complex customizations can take even longer. Brides also should budget a minimum of \$500 for alterations, which may or may not be included in the price of the dress.

BRING SHOES AND UNDERGARMENTS. Remember to bring along the exact shoes and undergarments you will wear with your gown. A change in shoes or bra/corset can result in the altered garment fitting poorly the next time. Bring these items along to all subsequent fittings.

SPEAK UP. Martha Stewart Weddings suggests speaking up at fittings if anything is uncomfortable or needs tweaking. Seamstresses are masters at their crafts, but only if they understand the desires of the bride.

CHECK THE DETAILS. The second fitting is designed to check that all issues from the first fitting have been addressed, that the gown is comfortable and that you can move freely. At the last fitting, ask the maid of honor to come along so that she understands how to bustle or help you handle complicated straps or closures.

Open communication with a seamstress and bridal shop can ensure brides-to-be get a dress that fits like a glove.



Expect fittings to start anywhere from eight to 12 weeks before the wedding date.

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Flowers showcase the wedding event

Cut blooms that last the longest

Flowers may look beautiful in gardens and even when snipped and brought inside to brighten up a mantel or dining table. Unfortunately, cut flowers have a finite shelf life. While cut blooms can't live forever, certain varieties will outlast others. Choosing flowers wisely for wedding centerpieces or keepsakes can help couples enjoy selected flowers longer.

• **PEONIES:** Peonies can last for about a week or two when brought indoors. HGTV says to snip the stems when the buds are tight, wrap them in newspaper and store them in the refrigerator until you're ready to arrange.

• **ZINNIAS:** These bright blooms can last for three to four weeks and are best harvested in summer. Related to the sunflower, zinnias are available in a wide range of colors.

• **CHRYSANTHEMUMS:** Widely referred to as "mums," these midsummer to late-fall flowers can last between three and four weeks after being cut. Mums can be used to fill out floral displays because they tend to be inexpensive, yet durable flowers.

• **CONEFLOWER:** The purple coneflower is popular, but coneflowers are available in many colors besides purple. Coneflowers attract butterflies and are beautiful in cut displays.

• **RANUNCULUS:** Ranunculus mimic the look of roses and display layer after layer of silky, crepe-like petals. These blooms can last a week or more in vases if they're put in water right after being cut.

• **CARNATIONS:** Another budget-friendly flower, carnations are popular from early spring until late summer. Available in many hues, they can be used in conjunction with other

blooms to create well-rounded floral displays that may last between two and three weeks.

• **LILIES:** Lilies are traditional flowers that are beautiful to behold. Lilies are available in various sizes and colors and can be bought fresh year-round. Lilies often last longer than a week after being cut. Look for lilies with tight buds, as such flowers tend to last the longest.

• **GLADIOLI:** The lovely flowers of the vertical-growing gladiolus, which is sometimes referred to as the "sword lily," are available in yellow, peach, pink, white, and other hues. These bulb-based plants can last up to two weeks after being cut and add variety and texture to floral displays.

Although advice varies on how to keep cut flowers fresh the longest, veteran florist Nic Faitos, senior partner at Starbright Floral Design in New York, who has provided his floral expertise for Reader's Digest, says the best approach is to keep vase water clean.

In addition, ProFlowers suggests keeping cut blooms in a cool room away from direct sunlight and heat.



TYING THE KNOT

How to choose an officiant

Many people play a role in a wedding. The bride and groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, ring bearers and flower girls are front and center on the day a couple ties the knot.

Another central, and very important, figure on a couple's wedding day is the officiant. Officiants perform the wedding ceremony and are the first to introduce the newlyweds to their guests as an officially married couple.

Various types of officiants can officiate a wedding and understanding each type can help couples find the right one for them.

Religious officiant

Couples who want traditional religious ceremonies often choose a religious officiant, such as a parish priest or rabbi, with whom they're familiar. For example, couples who grew up attending a particular church might choose the priest who's been preaching to them since they were children, while others might choose the priest at their current place of worship.

Religious officiants may be governed by certain rules that restrict them to performing ceremonies in a house of worship, which might rule them



Officiants play a significant role during a wedding. Couples can choose one who best fits their personalities and preferences.

out for couples who want outdoor or destination weddings. Couples should inquire about such restrictions as early as possible in the planning process, so they aren't caught off guard.

Civil officiant

Civil officiants are officers of the court, such as a judge or justice of the peace. Many couples who are planning destination weddings abroad still choose to have a civil officiant perform a wedding ceremony at home. This is because some

overseas officiants may not be authorized to marry couples in their home countries, meaning their marriages won't be recognized once they return home. Civil officiants make sure marriages are legal, and they also make great options for couples who just want to get hitched without a grand ceremony.

Professional officiant

Professional officiants are not affiliated with a particular religious organization. That makes them great choices for couples who aren't religious,

as well as for those who come from different religious backgrounds and won't be converting to the same faith. Professional officiants typically meet with a couple once or twice to get to know them before writing the speech they will give during the ceremony. Many will share the speech with the couple in advance of the big day, and some even allow couples to write the speech.

Loved ones

Many couples ask a friend or family member to officiate their weddings, which can add a fun and very personal component to the ceremony. Couples who want to take this route should research local laws to determine the steps loved ones must take to become ordained ministers who will be recognized by the state or country where the ceremony will take place.

Officiants play a significant role during a wedding, and couples can choose one who best fits their personalities and ceremony preferences.

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MODERN ENGAGEMENTS: FACTS & FIGURES

72 percent still seek parents' blessings

Getting engaged has, and always will be, a big deal. While marriage proposals are often steeped in tradition, some facts and figures about modern day engagements, courtesy of the 2018 Newlywed Report from WeddingWire, show just how much this special moment and all that surrounds it is changing.

- The pressure to make marriage proposals extraordinary appears to be on the rise, at least for Millennials. Of the nearly 18,000 respondents who shared their stories via WeddingWire's 2017 Newlywed Survey, 72 percent of Millennials said they feel pressured to make their proposals highly unique, while only 45 percent of Gen X respondents indicated feeling such pressure.

- Proposals might be changing, but getting down on one knee appears to be an enduring tradition that Millennials plan to keep in style. Eighty-two percent of Millennials indicated they got down on one knee to propose. In addition, the tradition of asking for parents' blessing also remains popular among Millennials, 72 percent of whom sought such blessings before proposing marriage.

- The average cost of an engagement ring was \$5,000.

- The pressure to pick out the right engagement ring appears to be subsiding. That's because 50 percent of survey respondents indicated they picked out the ring together.

- Married-couples-to-be also appear to like comparison shopping in regard to engagement rings. Most purchasers looked at between two and seven rings before making a purchase.

- While online shopping has changed consumer behavior in myriad ways, couples still

prefer brick-and-mortar stores when buying engagement rings. Thirty-one percent of purchasers bought rings online, but 63 percent made their purchases in-person at stores.

- Christmas Day is the most popular day to pop the question, followed by Valentine's Day. Christmas Eve, New Year's Day and New Year's Eve round out the top five.

- How to spread the news of an engagement is perhaps the biggest change surrounding engagements. Engagement parties were once the go-to way to spread the good news, but just one in four couples now have engagement parties. Nowadays, 86 percent of couples spread the news via social media. In fact, 10 percent of parents find out about their children's engagements via social media.

- The days of a short engagement seem to be a thing of the past. The average engagement now lasts 13 months, and 28 percent of couples are engaged for 16 months or longer.

Wedding insurance can add peace of mind

Couples spend thousands of dollars on their wedding ceremony and celebrations. The cost of a wedding varies depending on geographic location, but according to the business and financial resource Business Insider and The Knot 2017 Real Weddings Study, the average wedding in the United States costs \$31,391.

Insurance policies can help couples protect their wedding investment. Special event insurance provides coverage for various scenarios, including extreme weather, damaged gifts, lost jewelry, vendor cancellations or no-shows, venues closing before the wedding, and canceled weddings, according to national insurance. Insurance also may cover other unforeseen scenarios, such as unexpected expenses from injuries during the wedding, or spoiled food.

Policies will pay directly for any damage or injuries that occur, or reimburse the couple if the wedding is postponed or canceled.

If weddings occur at home, some people's home insurance

or umbrella policies may cover certain wedding liabilities. Most wedding venues carry their own liability insurance, so couples may not have to overlap there. However, for those who desire extra protection for vendor mishaps, it is wise to speak with an insurance professional about special wedding coverage.

Prices for wedding insurance policies can start at around \$100 to \$200 for minimum coverage and reach \$1,000 for more expensive ceremonies, according to the financial advice website NerdWallet.

Speak with an insurance agent and read policies carefully before purchasing one. Non-covered issues typically include theft or loss of an engagement ring; rainy days that do not classify as extreme weather; switching vendors after a deposit is made and risky entertainment, such as fireworks or live animals.

Protecting wedding expenditures with insurance policies can provide couples with added peace of mind on their big days.

Learning wedding lingo helps improve the special day

Wedding planning can seem overwhelming and a tad confusing at times, but a crash course in wedding terminology can help couples make more informed choices along the way.

- **Blusher:** A short, single-layer veil that covers the bride's face before the ceremony.

- **Boutonniere:** A single flower bud worn by the men in the bridal party.

- **Canapés:** Bite-sized appetizers served during the cocktail hour of a reception.

- **Civil ceremony:** A marriage ceremony conducted by a council official or justice of the peace at a municipal location rather than in a house of worship.

- **Cocktail hour:** Typically an hour-long interlude between

the wedding ceremony and the main dinner of the reception. Guests have time to arrive and mingle before being seated.

- **Corkage fee:** A fee some establishments charge to allow guests to bring their own wine.

- **Dais:** A podium or platform raised from the floor where the bride and groom are seated.

- **Deposit:** A percentage of the total cost of service given to a vendor to secure a date for their services.

- **Dragées:** Round, small edible balls of sugar that appear on wedding cakes.

- **Escort (seating) cards:** Printed cards that direct reception guests to their seats.

- **Fondant:** A sweet, pliable product used to decoratively cover layered cakes. It can be used in lieu of straight buttercream.

- **Handle wrap:** Ribbon or fabric that wraps around the stems of a bouquet the bride and wedding party carries.

- **Maid/matron of honor:** The title given to the woman who assists the bride and stands closest to her at the altar. "Maids" are those who are unmarried, while "matrons" are women who are.

- **Master of ceremonies:** An individual who will work with the DJ or band to announce the various components of the

wedding reception.

- **Nosegay:** A small bouquet or flower arrangement typically given to the mothers of the bride and groom before the ceremony.

- **Processional/Recessional:** Musical pieces that mark the entrance and exit from the wedding ceremony.

- **Receiving line:** A line of the key people in the wedding who welcome and greet guests.

- **Stationery:** All of the paper products used at the wedding, including invitations, programs and enclosures.

- **Tablescape:** A word that describes the multiple components of centerpiece designs.

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Secrets to a successful at-home ceremony

Many couples preparing for their trip down the aisle follow the familiar sentiments expressed by Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz." Such couples feel "there's no place like home" when hosting a wedding ceremony or reception.

There are many benefits to hosting a wedding at home. Homes often hold a couples' most cherished memories. Also, hosting a backyard celebration or an intimate indoor ceremony at your own home or the abode of a loved one can be a cost-effective way to have a good time.

Here are some tips to help couples navigate hosting an at-home wedding.

ASSESS THE SPACE

The average home is not equipped to handle hundreds of guests, wait staff, caterers and parked cars. Concessions in regard to comfort and safety will have to be made when drawing up the guest list. The wedding resource, The Knot, advises the general rule is six- to-10-square-feet of floor space per guest for row seating. You'll probably need even more space for buffet tables, seating and a dance floor.

You will likely need to temporarily move furniture to comfortably fit everyone indoors

— or rent a large enough tent for a backyard wedding.

HIRE A CLEANING SERVICE

It's important to present a clean, inviting space when hosting a wedding. A cleaning service will conduct a thorough cleaning before and after the festivities, freeing up your time for last-minute tasks or to embark on your honeymoon.

BOOK AN OFFICIANT EARLY

Confirm with an officiant that they can oversee the wedding proceedings at your home. Some religious officiants are not able to perform ceremonies outside of a place of worship.

LEARN IF IT'S LEGAL

Certain municipalities may require permits for parking on street, noise past a certain hour, closing of streets, and much more. Do your research.

CONSULT INSURANCE CARRIER

Inquire if having such a large party at home is covered by your homeowner's insurance policy, particularly if your home is damaged or someone gets injured during the festivities. Supplemental liability insurance or an umbrella policy may offer greater protection.

Don't let rain ruin your wedding



How to handle showers on your special day

Many brides and grooms fear the prospects of rainy wedding days. But even couples who have contended with everything from a few drops to an all-out deluge on their wedding days look back fondly on the ceremonies and receptions. In fact, how couples handle any precipitation can affect how happy the festivities may be.

Have a rainy day game plan. Rain affects outdoor weddings more than any other type of ceremony or reception. If the goal is to exchange vows outdoors, work with the venue to make this possible with a tent or gazebo. However, if the weather is especially foul and windy, move it indoors.

Invest in golf umbrellas. Couples who live in notoriously damp climates can purchase golf umbrellas, which tend to be

larger than the average umbrella, and keep them stationed in decorated stands to ease transitions between wedding sites, and keep everyone as dry as possible.

Wear waterproof cosmetics. Women in the bridal party, including the bride, can ask their makeup artists to use durable, waterproof products. This can help salvage beautifully composed looks should some drops begin to fall.

Know vendors' rain policies. Some live musicians will not play in damp weather. Florists may need to make accommodations for arrangements blowing in the wind. Couples need to understand what they're responsible for and what may be covered if a weather event occurs. Wedding insurance may help cover the costs of nonrefundable cancellations.

Move past it quickly. It is okay to get upset if the weather turns for the worse. But don't dwell on it. Guests will sense negative energy, and couples should set the tone of sticking it through despite a little adversity — which can be a good lesson for the marriage as well.

Embrace the rain. While a couple probably won't wish for rain, there are some benefits to overcast skies, say the wedding professionals at Brides magazine. Flowers are less likely to wilt in rainy conditions. In the absence of bright sunlight, outdoor photographs can really pop. Rain is romantic and may compel couples and their guests to cuddle close.

Don't let rain on a wedding day become a drag. With preparation and perspective, couples can handle rainy wedding days.

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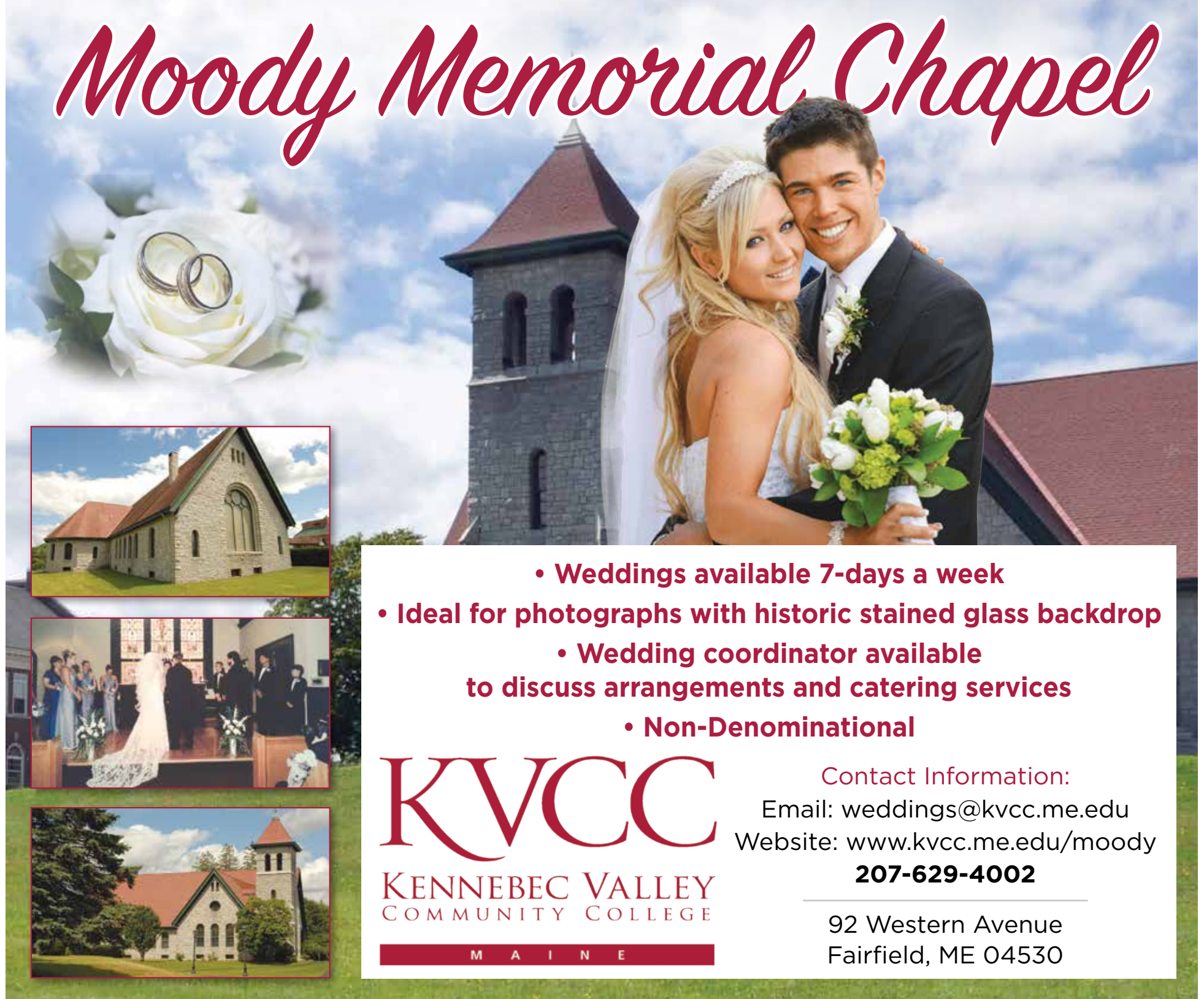
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