

Making Your Wedding Your Own

BY LINDA HOWARD

I've been helping couples create their dream weddings for 16 years and the most important thing I've learned is that even if I produce a wedding that is elegant, sophisticated, tasteful and flawless...who will remember it if it isn't perfectly tailored to the couple sharing one of the most important days of their lives with their friends and family?



PHOTO: BRIAN KRAMER



Your wedding day needs to be uniquely yours and it's so important to take the time to really think carefully about all of the things you love and what makes you and your relationship stand out from the crowd in order to make that happen. A major part of my job is to delicately pull that information out of couples and find wonderful ways to incorporate

what they love and what they envision. Starting with how they met, and getting to know their likes and dislikes, helps me intertwine their personalities into their wedding day to make this celebration unlike any other.

Your personal touches will not only set your wedding apart, but they will reflect your style and will help to create a warm and wonderful connection with your guests. I call these touches "Talk Abouts." When your guests leave your wedding, these are the little things they will always remember and talk about!

Our "getting to know you" meetings are the perfect way for me to truly get to know my Bride and Groom. I always want to know how you met and how and where you got engaged; but other personal questions allow me to start personalizing your actual event.

From your favorite colors, flowers, candy, dessert, ice cream flavor, drinks, songs, restaurants, vacation spots, exercise, weekend activities, movies, plays, and books....I am able to zero in on who you both are as people; and then my creative juices can start flowing.

One of my Bride and Groom's favorite color was purple, and they wanted a candy station as the guests were leaving the wedding. We took her favorite color and created a spectacular "Willy Wonka-like" candy station overflowing in all purple candy. With purple and white swirly lollipops, purple gummy bears and m&m's, grape lico-rice, purple taffy, jelly beans and purple jordan almonds... everyone was blown away! We had purple candy bags with a cartoon picture of them in a taxi cab saying "Come visit us in NYC"! (They were moving to New York.)



The Groom's Grandmother was a baker in another state and it was always her dream to bake her Grandson's wedding cake. The wedding was taking place at The Beverly Hills Hotel in Los Angeles. On one of her visits to California, she lovingly baked the six layers, decorated them and froze them. On the night of the wedding, Mark's Garden took the layers and placed beautiful purple flowers between each layer creating a spectacular wedding cake baked for a queen. We placed the cake at the entrance of the ballroom so that everyone could admire the cake throughout the evening.

Personal cameras were going off all night and knowing that their Grandmother had her dream come true was that "something special" they will never forget.

It is fun to incorporate a Bride or Groom's career or hobby into making their wedding day come alive. One of my brides was a musical comedy actor

and I thought it would be great fun to create their wedding program to look like a Playbill from the theatre. A Groom who was a comedy television writer created a "surprise" sitcom using look-a-like actors to present to his Bride after dinner was served.

A Bride who was in high school Madrigals, surprised her Groom with a song that she prepared for him. A Groom who played the guitar in college prepared a surprise serenade for his Bride. A father of the Bride who played the drums got on stage with his son-in-law who played the guitar to surprise and entertain the Bride. All of these moments became "Talk Abouts!"



For chocolate lovers, we created an amazing, edible menu made out of chocolate with a photo of the bride and groom. We placed it in a beautiful satin sleeve and placed it on the charger. Another couple loved eating jelly bellies every night. When he proposed to her, he placed her engagement ring in their dish full of jelly bellies for her to find. At the wedding, they showed a video re-enacting their engagement. On the tables, we placed candy dishes with jelly bellies in them, with a blinking "diamond" ring sticking out.

I LIKE TO THINK OF A WEDDING IN FOUR PARTS:

The Ceremony: A meaningful, spiritual, romantic and emotional part of the wedding; the time where you are sharing your vows in front of everyone you chose to witness your commitment to one another.

The Cocktail Hour: A time for your guests to mingle and start the celebration. Music is playing, champagne is flowing and everyone is chatting and getting ready to celebrate.

The Dinner and Dancing Reception: The Bride and Groom are announced as "Mr. and Mrs." and everyone in the room is feeling the excitement, the happiness and the love! They are ready and waiting to dance and celebrate!

The After Party: The toasts have been given, the cake has been cut, and some of the guests are saying 'Goodnight.' The guests who are nearest and dearest are not ready to call it a night. This is the time where the music turns into the top 40's, the late-night snacks might be served, the shoes come off and the atmosphere changes. Some people think this is the BEST part of the wedding!

One of my couples met in New York at a coffee restaurant. We re-created the restaurant and that is where we served the coffee at the dessert presentation. Also, we took digital pho-



tos at the church wedding ceremony, developed the photos and placed one on the cover of a magazine. As the guests left the wedding, we set up a newsstand and they took the magazine home with them along with donuts, cupcakes and cookies served from a "bakery." Too much fun!

Remember that your wedding day should truly be YOUR wedding day! Take the time to create your "Talk Abouts," and you and your guests will NEVER forget your special day. **EL**

