

Be Your Own Wedding Planner

Creative, Budget-Friendly Tips For The Big Day

(NAPSA)—Today, more couples are looking beyond standard wedding packages and exploring customized, do-it-yourself options. According to The Wedding Report, couples spent 10 percent less on their big day in 2009 as compared to 2008, and spending from 2007 to 2009 fell by more than 30 percent.

By choosing handcrafted wedding touches and forgoing pricey extras, creative couples are mixing and matching a surprising combination of one-of-a-kind wedding elements to create unique and personalized celebrations.

From the centerpiece display to the wedding favors, more people planning that memorable wedding are realizing personal touches that actually reflect the soon-to-be-newlyweds themselves can elevate that special day from a cookie-cutter event to an intimately beautiful affair.

Here are four fun and budget-friendly ideas to create a wedding that is anything but generic:

Snip and Style—Arrangements by professional florists can easily take a big chunk out of the budget. Instead, the wedding party can be enlisted to help create floral decor for the wedding. There are a number of free online tutorials that offer detailed how-to instructions on choosing seasonal blooms and arranging everything from elegant centerpieces to bridal bouquets. Personal touches to the floral arrangements may be added by incorporating favorite flowers or purchasing the blooms from a local farmers' market.

Pick and Choose—To spend wisely, couples are also turning



Handcrafted wedding touches can turn a cookie-cutter event into a one-of-a-kind wedding to remember.

away from one-size-fits-all wedding packages and demanding more flexibility in the types of wedding resources available. For example, an array of hotel and event site offerings through the Weddings By Doubletree website provides couples with the flexible option of selecting essential components for their wedding day without being tied to an all-inclusive plan. From mixing and matching options such as guest stays, reception celebrations and ceremony settings, couples can handpick amenities and services that fit their budget and wedding needs at more than 230 hotels and resorts worldwide.

Eat and Drink—Family and friends can also be offered an inside look at the preferences, passions and experiences enjoyed by the happy couple. Wedding favors could include a favorite chocolate or something that symbolizes the couple's life (such as local honey, jam or a unique trinket from their hometown).

For the aperitif, wine could be poured from a vineyard the couple likes to visit. For the main meal, dishes or drinks can be tailored to represent the cultural heritage of the couple (paella for the Spanish side of the family or vodka for the Russian side of the family).

Weddings provide the chance to celebrate the special values and history of the couple, through small details that personalize the event and make the setting more intimate.

Capture and Share—A professional photographer should certainly be considered for the most important portions of the wedding (ceremony, bridal party and family pictures, etc.); however, guests can help capture the rest of the special moments.

Before the big day, family and friends can be asked to bring their digital cameras to document the memories, along with a few disposable digital cameras on hand for individuals who do not own or forget their cameras.

A free online photo service prior to the wedding can provide the couple, the wedding party and guests with the link to upload, download and share their photos after the special day. Printing costs will be slashed in half and everyone can immediately and automatically have a vast selection of images to choose from for their wedding scrapbooks.

For ideas to plan an affordable and memorable wedding ceremony, reception and honeymoon, visit www.doubletree.com/weddings, contact a local travel professional or call (800) 222-TREE in the U.S. or Canada.