Expert wedding planning tips for every couple

Think you’ve tackled every item on your wedding checklist? Think again with these wedding planning to-dos most couples neglect before their big day.

By Tribune News Service

Planning a wedding seems pretty straightforward, but the unfortunate truth is that the biggest social gathering of your life requires so much more than ironclad vendor contracts and a set of rings. Dozens, if not hundreds, of details are required to transform your wedding dream into a well-executed reality, and all too often, crucial wedding tasks fall off the to-do lists of even the most organized to-be-weds.

Because you deserve to have your wedding day go off without a hitch, we asked top industry pros to weigh in on the tasks you won’t want to miss before saying “I do.”

**Brainstorm the Hashtag Early On**

“Think of a creative and catchy wedding hashtag well ahead of time, so you can get it printed on wedding day stationery and signage. You want to make sure it’s prominently displayed for all of your guests to use at will.” — Colleen Corcoran, owner and designer of The Handkerchief Shop

**Order Extra Invitations**

“Failing to order extra wedding invitations can be a costly and time-consuming mistake. Order 20 percent more invitations than you think you’ll need. That way, you’ll have enough invites to cover last-minute additions to the guest list. (You’ll also want a set for your photographer to photograph and a few keepsakes for you.) It’s much more cost effective to order additional invitations from the start rather than having to order a reprint.” — Kori Trotter, owner of Lily & Roe Co.

**Be Prepared for Tears**

“Weddings are full of happy-tear moments. Help your fiancé and family be ready for them with custom-made handkerchiefs that you can embroider with your own handwriting.” — Colleen Corcoran, owner and designer of The Handkerchief Shop

**Allow Extra Time for Clothing Rentals**

Most rental companies allow you to pick up the tux or suit only one day before the wedding. When the fit has to be just right, I recommend renting formal-wear from a company that can deliver the looks early. Generation Tux delivers suits and tuxedos 14 days before the event, so any fit issues are handled way before the wedding.” — Nathan Bellah, director of marketing at Generation Tux

**Set Up a Separate Inbox**

“Consider creating a separate email address specifically for your wedding. It’s much easier to keep all wedding newsletters, vendor correspondence, and follow-ups in one place—where both you and your fiancé can access it—with having emails clutter up your main inbox.” — Jenna Miller, creative director at Here Comes the Guide

**Get to Know Your Photographer**

“After the initial phone call, vendors you reach out to should be willing to meet up for coffee or an adult beverage to discuss your wedding. During these meetings, galleries can be viewed and questions can be answered in real time. The reality is that your photographer spends as much time with you as your wedding party goes, if not more. That level of comfort comes from these conversations, both virtually and in-person. (If location is a factor, don’t be afraid to ask for a call via Skype or Facetime.)” — Collin Pierson, Collin Pierson Photography

**Extra Flowers Are Key**

“Order special blooms that can be set aside and used in detailed photos of the rings, invitations, and any other details you’d like to capture. Flowers make every detail shot that much better, and you wouldn’t want to take away flowers from your arrangements in order to style those photos.” — Euri Wong, lead designer at Bloominous

**Bring Your Rings and Marriage License**

“Many couples forget one (or both) of these items on the day of. Sure, your wedding is going to be a fun party, but the main point of it is to actually get married. So, don’t forget to bring your rings and marriage license to the ceremony, along with a pen for signing.” — Jenna Miller, creative director at Here Comes the Guide

**Min Your Officiant**

“Before the start of your ceremony, kindly ask your officiant to get out of the frame during your first kiss. Unless they’re a seasoned pro, they might hang out awkwardly in the center of the shot and overcrowd your photos.” — Jenna Miller, creative director at Here Comes the Guide

**Set Up Activities for Kids**

“If you’re inviting families, don’t forget to make special arrangements for kids. Stock kids’ tables with child-friendly table settings and coloring books, and seat children over the age of seven away from their parents. (If kids feel like there’s a proper place for them at the wedding, they’re much more likely to behave.)” — Andaleeb Firdosy, founder of Azure Invitations and co-founder of Love On Paper

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Some millennials are cutting the cake — out of the wedding

By Tribune News Service

Millennials laid waste to paper napkins, put the final nails in golf’s coffin. And now, it appears, they’re in the process of killing wedding cake.

Three towering tiers of joy, rosettes clustered in filigreed buttercream bouquets. Like the marriage itself, it should stand the test of time, be sweet and tender, and everyone in attendance should sigh in the sheer rightness of it all. With rituals like the inexpert two-armed slicing and the face smash, wedding cake is a sacrosanct capper to it all. With rituals like the inexpert two-armed slicing and the face smash, wedding cake is a sacrosanct capper to it all. With rituals like the inexpert two-armed slicing and the face smash, wedding cake is a sacrosanct capper to it all.

Unless it’s not.

Cakes, according to caterers and wedding experts, are out. Nearly a third of would-be newlyweds are opting for other sweet endings, according to experts like Los Angeles power-caterer Lulu Powers, who does weddings around the country. Cutting the cake puts a pause on the reception. The buzzwords these days are “interactional,” “grazing” and “fun.”

“arx want the party to keep going and that means roving desserts, often no fork needed.”

In cake’s stead? Cobbler carts and cookie bars with big apothecary jars of toppings. Macaron displays, fruit pies or a waffle station. Tiny desserts with little bourbon pairings. Individual sweet treats served on the dance floor. In large measure, this trend is not cost-driven.

Fueled by reality shows like Food Network’s “Ace of Cakes” and TLC’s “Cake Boss,” the increasing complexity and elaborate design of wedding and specialty cakes was well documented in the first decade of this century, but according to Powers and other caterers, young couples are turning toward less ceremonious — but often no less expensive — nuptial sweets.

Key Lime cookies are shown at a dessert table at a recent wedding.

Richard Markel, the founder of the Association for Wedding Professionals International, says that a good rule is that while wedding catering generally accounts for about half of a total wedding budget, cakes represent a real range, from about $8 per slice for a fully decorated cake up to Manhattan cake bakers who charge as much as $35 per slice.

All desserts are made from similar building blocks of flour, sugar, butter and eggs — relatively cheap ingredients — so it’s the expertise and workmanship that ratchets up the price. And new trends in wedding sweets, from doughnut walls to Mason jar parfaits, are disseminated at lightning speed through Pinterest boards and Instagram feeds.

The tradition of the wedding cake dates to ancient Roman times, when a hard barley cake was broken over brides’ heads to invoke the fertility powers of Jupiter.

In the Middle Ages, if couples could kiss over a mound of cakes or biscuits without upsetting the stack, it was believed they were likely to have many children. It was a French chef in the 17th century who first hit upon the idea of celebrating nuptials with a sweet, multitiered fantasy covered in sugared lard (proto-icing).

Sugared lard, as great as that sounds, is on the wane, making way for sweets that are more personal, more portable and more present-day. Hayley Richards, 27, will wed Cristin Barth, 32, on Nantucket on June 22, with Powers as their caterer.

“Something important for us is just doing things a little differently,” Richards said. “We knew music was going to play a big role. We’re having East Coast Soul, an amazing seven-piece band. The last thing we wanted to do is stop the party to have people watch us cut a cake.”

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Barth explained their thought process about dessert: “We felt really strongly that after dinner we wanted to have everyone start the party, with a sweet that is super mobile.”

The answer was cake pops in different flavors, served in a yet-to-be-determined dramatic but fun way. “We got pushback from our families about keeping some traditions, but cake wasn’t one of them,” said Barth. “For a lot of our family and friends this is their first same-sex wedding. I want people to come away from it saying ‘What a great wedding,’ not ‘What a great gay wedding.’”

Matt Toigo and his bride-to-be Katie Hanley wanted something nontraditional for their wedding at Khimaira Farm, a converted goat farm in Luray, Virginia, something that would go with barbecued brisket and mac ‘n’ cheese.

“It takes a lot of work to make a cake, and a lot of pressure,” Toigo explained. “We didn’t want one big thing, but rather something more fluid and fun for our guests that would be a better fit for a farm wedding.”

They’d been to Key West and eaten their share of Key lime pie, and talk of Key lime pie begot visions of a profusion of pies: strawberry rhubarb and apple, strawberry cream and winterberry, arrayed casually on a serve-yourself table.

“The baker made one fancier, more ornate pie for us to cut,” Toigo said. “People ate a lot more dessert because they wanted to try different pies.”

Toigo says pie might have represented a cost savings. “We paid $13 per pie and had 16 pies for a 100-person wedding. This came to $208 total and assuming eight slices per pie, this was only $1.63 per slice, so it came in cheaper than a cake.”

Tiffany MacIsaac, pastry chef/owner of Buttercream Bakeshop, a go-to wedding cake baker in Washington, said she personally hasn’t observed a significant decline in wedding cakes, but she says many people are opting to add croquembouche (stacked cream puffs) and cookie towers to traditional tiered cakes. They are getting smaller cakes, sized to feed only half the guests, supplementing with other tiny, stunning desserts (she cites Key lime pies and cookies.)

Buttercream’s tiered wedding cakes start at $5.75 per slice and go up based on the intricacy of the design. For dessert tables, Buttercream suggests cake for 40% to 50% of guests and 1.5 to 2 pieces of mini desserts per person (most of which are between $1.95-$3.50 each.) So, for a wedding of 100 people, that’s $285.50 for cake and another $700 in mini dessert — so this strategy can cause the price to balloon. MacIsaac says croquembouche can range from $4.50 to $7 per person, but cupcakes, at $3 to $3.50 each (customization is additional), can represent a budget-friendly option.

“The pivot usually has to do with a couple having a special experience that they want to convey through the dessert,” MacIsaac said. “Towers are lovely as well because they function as finger foods. The pieces are easy to eat with a cocktail in hand or while tearing up the dance floor.”

This fits precisely with the other big wedding catering trends: reflective of a more personal, autobiographical narrative; accommodating of dietary restrictions and individual food choices; less tradition-bound; and a whole lot more portable and interactive.

Art Smith, once personal chef to Oprah Winfrey, says weddings are no less formal than they once were, but that wedding reception details have evolved.

“What has happened is not that weddings have become casual — since Vera (Wang) made the wedding dress this icon, the dresses and flowers have become more outrageous — but there’s a high/low split. Tuxedos and tacos. The food has come to be simpler, more comforting.”

There’s something arch and subversive about embracing the lowbrow when you’re all fancied up. But the biggest driver of new wedding catering trends, according to Smith, can be summed up in one word: choice.

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The wedding trends to keep and ditch

We asked some of the country’s top planners to predict the future of trends

From Brides.com

With the new year comes new engagements, new brides-to-be (welcome, ladies!), and new wedding trends. And while we’re still excited about the trends and creative ideas we saw in 2018—think games for guests, statement bridal hats, and basically anything Harry and Meghan did—we, like you, have been fascinated by the world of weddings in 2019.

Which is why we called on some of the industry’s top wedding planners to see exactly what they’re predicting for the future. You’ll have to keep scrolling to see exactly what they said below, but one thing is certain: The rules are all out. Think mismatched bridesmaids dresses, coeds on each side of the aisle, and more. Also out? Wedding welcome bags and expensive favors (don’t worry, we’ll get to that later). In terms of what’s in, the experts say we’re all still obsessed with the world’s hottest power couple (hi, Harry and Meghan!) so feel free to continue copying the royal wedding’s statement church entrance, meaningful ceremony touches, and unexpected reception details.

They’re also excited to see couples experiment with fresh color palettes and put unexpected twists on the traditional wedding in the year come to.

Keep reading for all the exciting, modern, and on-trend ideas, broken down by the pros who came up with them. Oh, and we also asked the experts to share which trends to avoid and their best pieces of tried-and-true advice for the newly engaged ladies like you... So, basically, read on because we’ve got you covered as you dive into wedding planning in the new year!

Jesse Tombs of Alison Events

The year’s biggest trend: “2019 is all about embracing color and new color combinations that have never been done before,” Jesse says. “We see the trend veering away from soft classic colors and heading in a more fun, pumped up...”

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New wedding color patterns have emerged in 2019.
direction.” Case in point: “Living Coral,” the Pantone Color of the Year. “We see 2019 clients leaning more towards younger, fresher palettes with pops of bright and bold color that is fun, youthful and often somewhat daring,” he adds.

Trend to do away with: “Welcome bags! Time and time again, we see many of the expensive, well thought-out items get left behind in hotel rooms,” he says. “Instead, consider giving a nice bottle of wine and a handwritten note, or making a donation to your favorite local charity in the guests names honor.”

Excited for next year: “We have a couple who is focused on supporting underserved communities and working with female owned and operated local businesses for their wedding day,” he says. “This is an exciting prospect for us and a first for Alison Events to have a client that is so locally, globally and environmentally minded when planning their special day. We can’t wait to see how it all comes together!”

Can’t wait to see a couple do: “A food and wine-focused wedding,” he says. “We love when clients embrace food and beverage as an integral part of the wedding celebration!”

Best planning advice: “Get personal! Hire vendors you connect with on a personal level, not just ones that suit your aesthetic or budget,” he says. “Get to know a vendor over coffee or a glass of wine to make sure they are a good personality fit for your project and are someone you would want to spend a year of your life with planning such a big and important day in your life.”

Sunna Yassin of Bash Please

The year’s biggest trend: “Non traditional bridesmaid dresses in an eclectic mix in a color palette,” she says.

Trend to do away with: The ladies at Bash Please had two words on this subject: “Photo booths!”

Can’t wait to see a couple do: “We love the idea of a bride and groom walking down the aisle together or having your guests stand during the ceremony to make it feel inclusive,” Sunna says. “These moments can truly set the tone for the rest of the wedding.”

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Photo booths are a trend that one wedding planner would like to see go out of style.

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Best planning advice: “Before jumping on Instagram or Pinterest, talk to a few friends or relatives who recently got married,” she recommends. “It’s always helpful to hear from people you trust about what they ended up enjoying the most about their own celebration!”

Virginia Edelson of Bluebird Productions

The year’s biggest trend: “2019 has been the year of mixed and untraditional wedding parties—gone are the days of six bridesmaids and six groomsmen,” she says. “Instead, we see a mix of genders standing on both sides of the aisle. Or even no one at all!”

Trend to do away with: “We’re ready to see the days of showing off for the sake of showing off go away,” Virginia says. “Let’s make weddings return to something that feels a bit more personal and heartfelt. They should be authentic expressions of love and a gift to your guests to celebrate this new commitment.”

Decor trend of the year: “Our 2019 clients are very interested in creating ‘installations’ and incorporating art into their weddings,” she says. “Personally, as an art history major and lover of art, this is very very exciting for me!”

Excited for next year: “We want to see couples experiment more in their fashion choices with different colors, textures, silhouettes, and eye catching accessories,” she says. And finally: “Get rid of Pinterest!”

Tara Guérard of Tara Guérard Soirée

The year’s biggest trend: “Bars with more specialty and special cocktails custom made with fresh ingredients,” she says.

Trend to do away with: “After parties,” she says.

Excited for in the new year: “Brides wanting to be a little different, creating a day that is memorable for everybody,” she says.

Can’t wait to see a couple do: “Have a day wedding!,” Tara says. “I imagine lunch in the garden, with the bride in a tea length dress and an orchestra playing.”

Best planning advice: “Wait to go on your honeymoon a week after the wedding so you can go home, rest, and repack,” she advises. “That way, no days are wasted just sleeping and being exhausted on your most romantic trip!”

Non-traditional bridesmaid dresses in a variety of colors has been on of the year’s biggest wedding trends.

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