

For Hotel, Resort, and Casino Food & Beverage Professionals

Hotel F&B Executive



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WEDDING MAGIC

Details that Dazzle



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Fairy Tale Wedding Touches

One hundred ways to create a magical moment. BY VICKI MEADE

Even the most down-to-earth people—such as a no-nonsense client who worked for former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright—click into fairy tale mode for their weddings, says Ann Saavedra, owner of Dreamcatcher events in the San Francisco Bay area. “So many tell me they’ve been dreaming of their wedding their whole lives.”

Fairy tale touches can be as elaborate as the bride arriving in a flower-bedecked carriage with a tuxedoed coachman or as simple as training pinlights on the wedding cake. They can be as original as skydiving into the wedding or as offbeat as having the bride’s dog accompany her down the aisle. Let’s face it, with their frogs, dwarves, and talking fish, pretty much anything goes in fairy tales, and so it is with weddings. “You don’t have to follow anyone’s rule,” says Saavedra, a 20-year veteran of the wedding planning business. “Weddings today are much more creative and personalized.”

MAKE IT PERSONAL, COLORFUL

Tony Conway, president of Legendary Events in Atlanta, finds that couples are giving guests personal notes with their wedding favors, dressing bridesmaids in different colors and styles to flatter each woman, and providing the chef with family recipes to incorporate into the menu. “Men are becoming active participants in just about every stage of the planning process, from finding the venue for the ceremony and reception, to locating a caterer, getting a wedding cake, and even consulting on the table settings and seating cards,” Conway notes. Overall, people are following fewer traditions and individualizing the experience, he says.

“Everyone wants their wedding to be unique,” says Joyce Scardina Becker, president of Events of Distinction in San Francisco. They might serve cocktails that match the wedding colors—green mojitos and pink apple martinis, for example—or use unusual plate shapes such as triangles, squares, or rectangles. At an Italian-theme wedding, her company installed a large ornamental fountain and gave guests old Italian lire coins

Photo: Michelle Pattee



to toss into the water while making wishes for the newlyweds. "It was truly an emotional moment that left a lasting impression."

Couples are increasingly incorporating monograms of their initials into ice carvings and lighting displays, Becker points out. "Lighting adds so much and it doesn't have to be expensive," she says. "Pin lights, gobo lights, down lights or up lights—you've spent all that money for a beautiful decor so you should highlight it." ►



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Robert Leclerc, executive chef, Radisson Miami Downtown, Miami, says Butterball® butter makes his professional life easier and also helps him achieve the image he wants to convey.

"Butterball® butter makes my life easier. The butter comes in a tub, which is more practical," Leclerc says. "Because it keeps in the freezer, it is faster and more efficient banquet butter for my waitstaff to set up (on bread-and-butter plates) and is just soft enough when guests arrive."

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For weddings, depending on the per-person plate cost, Leclerc uses either Butterball® Butter Premium Balls® or Butterball® Butter POP-OUT® Roses. To help set the mood for a June wedding, he placed edible flowers and a basil leave in the middle of a bread-and-butter plate, adding a Butterball® Butter POP-OUT® Rose on each side.—SBH

Contact: Kelley Andrus, 616-243-0105, kelley.a@butterballfarms.com, www.butterballfarms.com



More Fairy Tale Touches

A fairy tale touch at the Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort and Spa is a personal butler in a black tuxedo attending to the couple's every need, says Anthony Milkey, the property's



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director of resort events. The butler makes the couple feel special in front of guests and handles "everything from seating to serving drinks to taking gifts to their room."

One of his suggestions for couples on a budget: ask to see the hotel's prop room and incorporate what they have, or ask the property to call in a favor from a vendor that needs to get current pictures of their products, such as a linen company, tent rental, or horse and buggy rental. "They get the pictures, you get the memory of the wonderful event." Other tips and trends from the wedding experts:

Dramatic Beginnings and Endings

- Arrive and depart by trolley, horse-drawn carriage, golf carts, light-strung yacht, horseback, or helicopter.
- Include beautifully dressed/costumed children in the bridal procession.
- Top off the evening with a brief, nice fireworks display—perhaps ending

with the couple's initials or sparklers given to guests.

- Release doves or butterflies after the ceremony.
- Open the reception with a pas de deux from the professional dance corps, troupe of salsa dancers, jazz trumpet soloist, talented vocalist or pianist—something with a performance aspect.
- Trumpeters or bagpipes
- *Superman* theme for couple's grand entrance
- Amazing classics like Vivaldi's "Four Seasons"
- Unannounced mixed choir or boys' choir

Hors d'Oeuvres

- Butler-style presentations of hot appetizers, with two or three options on each platter
- Nibbles of the world: Indian, Thai, Japanese, Chinese influences
- One-bite items guests can pop in the mouth, guaranteed not to crumble or dribble
- Silver spoons or edible spoons for presenting hors d'oeuvres
- Food on forks displayed upright as hors d'oeuvre lollipops
- Individual servings in glasses, such as "soup sips" in a footed shot glass
- Decorated serving carts with blinis and caviar

Favors

- Edibles and things guests can use
- Gifts left in guest's cars by valets
- Books of fairy tales, small gift books, or poetry books
- Beer steins
- Wine goblets

- Champagne jelly wrapped in colored cellophane
- Picture frames
- Bud vases
- Salt and pepper shakers
- Heart-shaped measuring cups
- Coffee scoops with packets of coffee
- Chocolates or unusual truffles (key lime, raspberry)
- Boxed mints
- Homemade cookies or preserves
- Ivy or other small plants, seedlings, potted herbs such as lavender or rosemary, packets of seeds
- Small music boxes or musical snowglobes
- Handwritten, personalized notes for every guest

Menus and Food Service

- Food stations that allow guests to visit different areas of the reception, sample many types of foods, and choose what's on their diet plan: carving station, sushi, pasta, stir fry, baked potato station, salad station
- Cultural accents reflecting the couple's ancestry or honeymoon destination
- Food items from the couple's first date, travels together, favorite restaurants, proposal dinner, or family recipes
- Emphasis on culinary responsibility: artisan cheeses handmade in small batches, organic vegetables, sustainable fish whose population can support their catch
- Family-style dinners with long tables and platters of food on the table to share
- Foods served in miniature mugs,

votive holders, martini glasses

- Soup as a first course
- Fusion cuisine combining foods from Japan, Cuba, Caribbean, North Africa, South America, Middle East, Southeast Asia
- Combining courses: instead of an appetizer and salad course serve duck breast, portobellos, or crab cakes on greens
- Multiple course tapas-style meals with wine pairing
- For outdoor receptions, fish and seafood grilled in front of guests
- An intermezzo course such as apple sorbet

Decorative Accents

- Fruits or vegetables in centerpieces, such as scooped out white pumpkins for vases
- Tables accented with grape vines or other greenery
- Old-fashioned dishes from flea markets, consignment stores, and yard sales
- Objects that reflect the couple's interests, such as seashells
- Creative use of fabrics, such as satin blowing in the breeze with an ocean backdrop, fabrics on walls of the reception area
- Colorful flags on tall poles around the perimeter of the event
- Fountains and waterfalls
- Nontraditional plate shapes—triangles, squares, rectangles, or curvaceous, wavy plates
- A monogram for the couple that can be used on the wedding cake, cocktail napkins, aisle runners, menu card
- Rectangle, square, and round tables

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On the table, the easiest way to create a fairy tale look is with candles, says Sharon Naylor, a wedding expert and author in Madison, New Jersey. "The trend is colorful candles, not just bridal white, pink, or cream. Deep, lush colors like eggplant purples and hunter greens are bringing depth to the table. Mirror platters reflect the flicker of candles, so unique mirror platters are ideal for the wedding table—ovals, beveled, squares." To add pizzazz to the champagne toast, she recommends dropping berries in the bottom of the glass or splashing in fruit juice. "Peach and apricot work well too, turning those elegant glasses of champagne into colorful accents that work with the theme of the room."

At a recent wedding held at the Fairmont San Jose, Saavedra put colorful lighted plastic cubes in wine glasses that were arranged on trays and filled with champagne before the waiters entered the reception area. "We turned down the lights, opened the doors, and the waiter came through carrying two trays each. The whole room went 'aaah!'"

Simple surprises like that can add fairy tale drama, as can releasing butterflies or doves during the ceremony or setting off fireworks as the couple departs. Harith Wickrema of Harith Productions in Philadelphia uses spectacular food presentations to create excitement at weddings. "You eat with your eyes," he says, "so we use colorful, creative dishes and showpiece desserts."

"Color adds a lot to weddings, and it's basically cheap," Saavedra says. "You might have a favor in a colored box, rent colored napkins, or tie the napkins with colored ribbon. At a winery wedding we tied each napkin with four ribbons in deep fall colors, burgundy and aubergine, and it might

at the reception

- Table numbers made of white chocolate, dipped stem berries, or little pears
- Interesting serving pieces of all sizes from antique stores
- Sparkling crystals sprinkled on tables to catch candle lights
- Glass canisters filled with candies that match the color scheme
- Colorful glass Japanese fishing balls
- Flowers floating in a pond or fogger creating mist
- Ice carvings, striking architectural displays of ice, an ice castle
- Candles or lanterns in hallways, at entryways, on stairs
- Specialty linens, bold colors, beading, embroidery, sheer overlays, fabrics with shine, crushed satin, tassels
- Framed photographs of the couple, projected slides or home movies from their childhoods
- Colored glass plates and glasses
- Feathers, shells, crystallized fruit, and other unique items in floral arrangements
- Items borrowed from homes of the parents such as silver candlesticks, crystal, colorful containers, baskets
- Metals, natural leather, etched and frosted glass
- Scattered rose petals, dry leaves
- Bold lighting, pin spots on tables, spotlight on the cake, votive candles around centerpieces, color changes throughout event such as dinner in red lighting and dancing in blue, gobo lights with the couple's names in a circle or heart projected

- onto walls, pink or amber floodlights
- Tiny lights in white, pink, or ice blue in trees both outside and inside
- Hand-painted murals

Desserts

- Chocolate fountain surrounded with pound cake and fruits for dipping
- Cupcakes, little cheesecakes, or petit fours arranged in a pyramid or unique display
- Individual cakes in the shape of the host state (Texas, Florida, California)
- Wedding dessert samplers—plates with smaller-sized dessert portions
- Chocolate-dipped strawberries
- Interactive desserts such as bananas foster or sautéed berries
- Adult "milk and cookies": freshly baked cookies passed with shooters of kahlua or another creamy cordial
- Dessert, coffee, and cordials in a separate area of the reception for people to relax and get away from the music

Libations

- Flavored waters or water garnished with exotic fruits such as kumquats
- Gourmet coffees
- Designer teas
- Fruit smoothies
- Virgin piña colodas
- Stations for fresh-made fruit juices and punches
- Beverage stations: coffee ground fresh, cappuccino, espresso, Cuban coffee, cordials, cognacs, hot cocoa

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have cost \$50. Color is a great way to get more punch.”

GREAT SETTING, GREAT FOOD

Tony Conway advises couples to “choose a location that naturally reflects you and your fiancé’s ideal fairy tale setting. The ocean, a beautiful open field, a home with gardens, a local park, botanical garden, mountaintop, under a canopy of trees, by the lake, in a rustic barn. The choices are infinite.”

Of course, inns and hotels in remarkable settings are a popular choice for many couples and lend themselves to the increasing interest in destination weddings, in which the couple, their families, and guests spend a weekend at a resort for the ceremony and celebration. Epitomizing that trend was Trista and Ryan’s wedding last year on ABC’s reality show *The Bachelorette*, held at the Lodge at Rancho Mirage in Palm Springs. Mountain scenery, panoramic views across the valley, lavish gardens, and a sunny climate made the wedding special even without the food flown in from 14 different countries, 1,500 pounds of chocolate, 30,000 roses, and 800 bottles of wine and champagne. The rehearsal dinner featured a luge carved from ice where guests could hold their martini glasses and watch frosty flavored vodka shoot into them.

“We have a site that lends itself to a mini vacation,” says Laurie Shields, director of catering at the 240-guestroom hotel, which has a pool and spa plus access to some of the best golf in the country. “Everyone comes in and spends the weekend partying.” Although Trista and Ryan’s

Champagne Toasts

- Glass rims dipped in colored sugar
- Raspberries or other fruit dropped in the glass
- Glowing plastic cube in each glass
- Juices such as peach, pomegranate, or apricot splashed in
- Cocktail toast in the wedding colors (cosmopolitans or green apple martinis)

Upsells and Extras

- Martini bars
- Late-night coffee and espresso
- Spa day for bride and wedding party
- Golf package
- Sunset sail
- Bridal luncheon or afternoon tea
- “Morning after” brunch
- Cigar lounge, cigar roller
- Rehearsal dinner as a Hawaiian luau, southern barbeque, Fifties party, yacht cruise, beach clambake, poolside cocktail party
- After-wedding wine and cheese party
- Dessert and champagne soiree by special invitation (for out-of-town guests, for example)
- Supervised events for kids

“Never forget that you make a friend for life when you please a couple for their wedding,” says wedding planner Joyce Scardina Becker, who supplied many of these ideas. “The happier you make this couple, the more exponential your returns for future events. If you can hand them a folder spelling out your additional specials and celebration ideas, they’ll hang on to it among their wedding keepsakes, and you may likely get a call with more business in the future. Also, take good care of their out-of-town guests. Visitors are not just passing through—they’re ambassadors of reference for future clients.”—VM

Wedding Cakes

- Theme designs
- Irregular heights of tiers and alternating designs
- Painting of floral, geometric, and free-form shapes
- Imported white and dark chocolate finishes
- Pastels, especially baby blue and blush
- Icing to match the design of the bride’s veil or gown lace
- Cascades of colorful fresh flowers
- Sculptures of castles and carriages

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Heidi Frost, on-premise marketing director for Nestlé Waters North America, says these tips help spur sales:

- At the reception, place bottled water on the table for guests to pour themselves. The bottle design of imported brands like S.Pellegrino, Perrier, and Acqua Panna complements table centerpieces.
- Along with wine service, have waitstaff offer and pour bottled water.
- Include bottled water in gratis guestroom amenity baskets for overnight guests.—SBH

Contact: Howard Staley, 443-535-9756, hstaley@perriergroup.com, www.nestle-waters.com



\$4 million wedding was well beyond the budget of most couples, it involved touches that others can adopt, such as food and wine pairings and multiple courses with small portions. "Turning the F&B into a dining experience is definitely a way to wow everyone," Shields says.

"Combination entrees are more and more popular, such as filet mignon and salmon."

David Schoeffler, director of catering at the InterContinental Hotel Cleveland, finds that wedding guests like action stations where they can watch chefs prepare the food, and they also enjoy miniature dessert buffets. "One wedding we are planning has miniature desserts planned around 'items you would get at a carnival' like miniature ice cream cones, cotton candy, mini brownies, rock candy, funnel cake, and mini fudge squares."

Wolfgang Puck Private Dining and Catering in Las Vegas tries to tie into the menu elements from the couple's courtship that are special to them, such as favorite foods or cocktails or foods reflecting their honeymoon location, says Kimberly Gora, director of catering. Richard

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Wolfgang Puck Private Dining and Catering **TRIES TO TIE INTO** the menu elements from the couple's courtship that are special to them . . .

Harrington, catering sales manager at the Fairmont San Jose, finds more couples are choosing cocktail-style receptions instead of the traditional sit down dinner. "This allows the bride and groom to visit with their guests all night," he says. Robert Miklovitch, director of catering at the Fairmont Washington, D.C., says requests are increasing for the "trio entree plate," which involves a selection of three petite entrees and side dishes arranged on a long rectangular plate. One of his recent menus included:

- Double Dijon & Herb Crusted Lamb Chop and Creamy Cambanzola Polenta
- Rice Paper Steamed Fillet of Lemon Snapper and Sesame Pearl Rice Patty
- Duck Confit in Purple Potato Basket

"This offers a tapas-style approach to a plated entree and provides a more innovative, fine-dining approach to the entree service," Miklovitch says.

Cultural touches are big, including fusion cuisine combining Asian and Latin or foods from North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, says Joyce Becker. She recently worked with a groom of German descent who requested spaetzle with parsley and brie. A bride who was part Filipino wanted lumpia, a traditional Filipino appetizer similar to eggrolls.

Sometimes, if the couple's family is from a certain culture, they may know how to cook the food best, Conway points out. "For example, a great way to incorporate Italian food into the menu is to pass a few of your grandmother's favorite recipes to the chef and have him prepare it just like grandma used to make. If the grandmother is available, set up a time for her to teach the chef how to prepare it. Your grandmother will be honored and your guests will be treated to a family favorite." You can even hand out the recipe as a favor, he suggests. It's personal, it's meaningful, it's not necessarily expensive—and it's fun for the chef, who gets to interact with the family and learn something new. 🍷

Vicki Meade is a frequent contributor to HOTEL F&B EXECUTIVE.

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