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Bridal

GUIDE

2023



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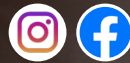
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Incorporating Holidays

Fall holidays are great times to plan a celebration, and that includes a wedding.

Some fall holidays you can consider working into your big day are Halloween and Thanksgiving, but you should probably be aware that a date around a holiday may mean that some people may opt not to show. Let's look at the pros and cons of fall holiday weddings.

BENEFITS

A long weekend could mean that more friends and family would be available to attend your ceremony, especially if it's a destination wedding. You may also be able to score hotel deals for that weekend, but be aware that travel and traffic might be a nightmare.

All that said, look to the holidays for inspiration for your wedding. You can pick out cozy cocktails, color palettes and a menu that all pay homage to your holiday of choice.

DIFFICULTIES

Holiday weddings mean that, of course, some people will have other plans. When you set your date, talk to those most important to you and make sure



you choose a date where they will be able to attend. Some vendors may also be unavailable for your big day because they've already planned to take off themselves or give their staff a day off. Some travel may also be more expensive, making attending prohibitive for out-of-town friends and family.

WEATHER

When we think of fall weather, we typically think of cool,

crisp mornings with falling leaves. But the reality is that in some parts of the country, fall can also mean winter weather and storms. Along the east and Gulf coasts, early fall is still hurricane season, so weddings in that part of the country should have backup plans in case of foul weather.

Your wedding planner or other professionals can tell you about insurance plans that will cover you in case you have to

call it off altogether. Otherwise, make sure that your venue, caterer, florists and other vendors have an act of God or force majeure clause in their contract. This part of the contract will explain what you're responsible for should an unforeseeable circumstance such as poor weather prevent that vendor from fulfilling their responsibilities or if the ceremony has to be canceled.



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The Latest in Cakes

The cake is a small, but critical, part of any wedding reception.

Towering confections, bite-sized cupcakes, doughnuts, all have had their day. These are the top wedding cake trends for 2023.

MAXIMALIST DELIGHTS

Big cakes are still all the way in 2023.

“Maximalism is still having a moment and I think we’ll see this expressed through grand wedding cakes with intricate details and impressive heights,” cake artist Kelly Gray told Brides. “I think this is a beautiful way for couples to create a celebratory moment with their wedding guests and to incorporate details from their décor or theme.”

ICING IKEBANA

These tilted, bending cakes bring a whimsical flair to your wedding day. These cakes feature longer-stemmed blooms atop the cake that seem as if they are growing naturally out of the sponge. These cakes are perfectly imperfect, are a little wild and are very much en vogue.



PRESSED FLOWERS FINERY

These pressed blooms add color, texture and a touch of nature to the cake. Your baker can even choose edible

blooms that go with your wedding’s palette. Ask them to pair it with fresh fruit for an explosion of natural flavor. Fall fruits to consider are pears, apples, pomegranates

and figs. In later fall, citrus comes into play, too, and dried or candied fruits can add to the windowpane effect of the flowers.

CUSTOM FLAVORS

While the confection gets most of the attention, the cake still has to taste good. Many bakers are going beyond the traditional wedding cake flavor and tailoring their cakes to the theme, décor, palette and even venue of the wedding.

CAKES GO REMOTE

Think you can’t get a cake from a baker thousands of miles away? Think again. The pandemic taught us the ways. Couples planning destination weddings or those who just want a particular artist can have tasting cakes shipped overnight and hold online design meetings.

“Not only does it allow couples to sample their cake at home and mull things over, but oftentimes they’re able to create an inclusive tasting experience for family and friends to get involved in the process,” says cake artist Gray in Brides.

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Honoring Friends & Family

Sometimes, we have friends and family who won't make it to the ceremony because they've passed on.

However, you can still pay homage to them and make sure they're there in spirit, if not in person.

DISPLAYING PHOTOS

Include favorite photos to remember your friends and family. Talk with your venue or wedding planner about arranging the photos artfully in a place where you can see them and honor the memories of your loved ones during your ceremony.



A MOMENT OF SILENCE OR A SPECIAL SONG

During your reception, have the emcee or the maid of honor or another special guest call for a moment of silence for your loved ones. People can choose that time to hold up pictures, read a list of names, or even a quote from a religious book or other special passage. If silence doesn't feel right, you can play a special song and have the band or DJ announce that it is in honor of your loved ones.

MEMORY TABLES

Have special places at your reception or ceremony where you fill tables with special photos of friends and family, along with mementos and a sign to explain. You can also include a memory book for your guests to share their favorite memories.

PROVIDE SPECIAL FAVORS

If your loved ones had special food, flowers or other

favorite items, make it part of your favors. Include a sign to explain or have someone explain during the reception.

MAKE A DONATION

Instead of favors, make a donation to a charity that was close to the heart of your loved one. Have a sign that announces the donation and invites your guests to do the same. You can also invite your guests to donate instead of giving you gifts, especially if you're com-

binning two fully functional households and already have more than you can handle.

DEDICATE AN EMPTY CHAIR

Have an empty chair in a conspicuous spot, such as in the front row, that is dedicated to the loved ones that can't be with you in person. You can mark that chair with a candle, flowers or another special marker.



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Registry Ideas

Registries have come a long way since the days of the stand mixer and towels, though that's still acceptable.

Here are some registry trends that go past the pots and pans.

TRAVEL

Several services offer registries that allow couples to ask friends and families to help pay for their honeymoon or other travel. WithJoy.com, for instance, is a registry that allows couples to register for travel and doesn't take a fee on cash gifts and honeymoon funds. Honeyfund says it's helped couples raise more than \$1 billion and says it can also help fund other adventures, such as babies and anniversaries.

FIRST HOME

Some couples may choose to ask guests for money but instead of a trip, they want a down payment on their first home together. Zola is one registry that allows you to ask for a home fund as a registry item. Zola allows group gifting, where a group of coworkers, friends or family members can go in together on a gift. It can even



group gifts together from unrelated friends and family.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

A charity registration is a great solution for the couple that already has many of the standard newlywed items.

"We simply believe starting your marriage off with the ritual of generosity is a good thing," Beth Helmstetter, founder of The Good Beginning, a charity registry platform, told Brides magazine. "It's also a great way

to make a bigger impact than the couple could do on their own by pooling the resources of their guests ... (and) a great resource to consider if the couple feels they already have all they need but know their guests will still want to give a gift in some way."

PET REGISTRIES

Pet owners are making sure their furry friends are taken care of, too, and including pet gifts and related items on their wed-

ding registries. The Knot says some popular gifts are automatic pet feeders and everyday essentials, such as pet food.

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

More consumers these days are concerned with purchasing items and supporting brands that are committed to sustainability. They're stacking up registries with brands that give to charities, work to reduce their carbon footprint or work with underserved communities.

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Reception Ideas

With its cozy vibes and warm flavors, fall inspires a variety of moods. There's a lot of inspiration for your wedding reception out there. We weed through it and pluck out some of the best ideas just for you.

COLOR PALETTES

This year, look for classic fall oranges and browns paired with warm cream, dusty blues and deep pinks. Bold jewel red and deep greens are also popular choices, and navy and orange are lovely combinations that are proving popular for fall 2023.

CENTERPIECES

Fall has plenty of fodder for your centerpieces, too. Incorporate pumpkins, pinecones, seasonal flowers, branches and other natural material to provide a seasonal touch to your arrangements. Your florist can advise you on what is available in your area and on your budget.

FOOD

Get ready for a warm, cozy menu. There's plenty of inspiration for fall menus. Work with your food vendors to choose seasonal fruits, veggies and flavors. Take cues from nearby holidays. You can work fall flavors such as apples and pumpkins into not just your entrees, but also into cocktails and desserts.



PHOTOS

Fall's got some gorgeous natural color, so work with that. Ask your photographer to suggest places where you can take in the colors of fall. Look for pumpkin stands, farm stands and seasonal vistas.

FAVORS

Look to the flavors of fall for creative wedding favors that your guests will love. Mason jars filled with locally made treats in fall colors and fla-

vors, tiny jars of sweet fall honey, apple cider, and, of course, anything pumpkin will fit the bill.

FLOWERS

There are plenty of flowers with blooms that match this fall's hottest hues. And despite what you might think, many of them are also in season (read: cheaper), too. Pansies and chrysanthemums are at their peak in fall, and you can also find plenty of greenery that

fits the season. Talk with your florist about what posies are best for your area and your budget.

BLANKET BANK

For outside receptions, consider offering baskets of cozy blankets so your guests can snuggle up. This will help take the chill off (literally) any cool temps and give your party a cozy vibe that can't be beat.

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Having Kids at Your Wedding

There are many factors that go into the decision whether to include children in the invites for your wedding.

Sometimes, the venue, time and theme is more appropriate for an adults-only gathering (think in a bar, after 5 p.m., etc.). Or you may have chosen to celebrate in a place such as museum or other setting that's not exactly kid friendly.

However, you may have friends and family with children, children of your own or it may be important to you that those guests with children come to your ceremony. Here are some ways to keep those little hands busy and out of mischief.

OFFER CHILD CARE

The easiest way to keep kids busy during your wedding is to offer on-site alternative arrangements. This may be especially nice at destination weddings or at ceremonies in a museum, bar or other venue where there are areas that would be off-limits. In this scenario, you would have guests RSVP for the number and ages of their children, then provide babysitters, activities and



kid-friendly meals for those guests. The parents could then cut loose and party without the worry of having their children underfoot the whole time.

PUT THEM IN THE CEREMONY

Give those little hands a job! There are the traditional roles of flower girl and ring bearer, but they can also help pass out ceremony programs, hold the veil or dress train, carry signs, hand out favors and more.

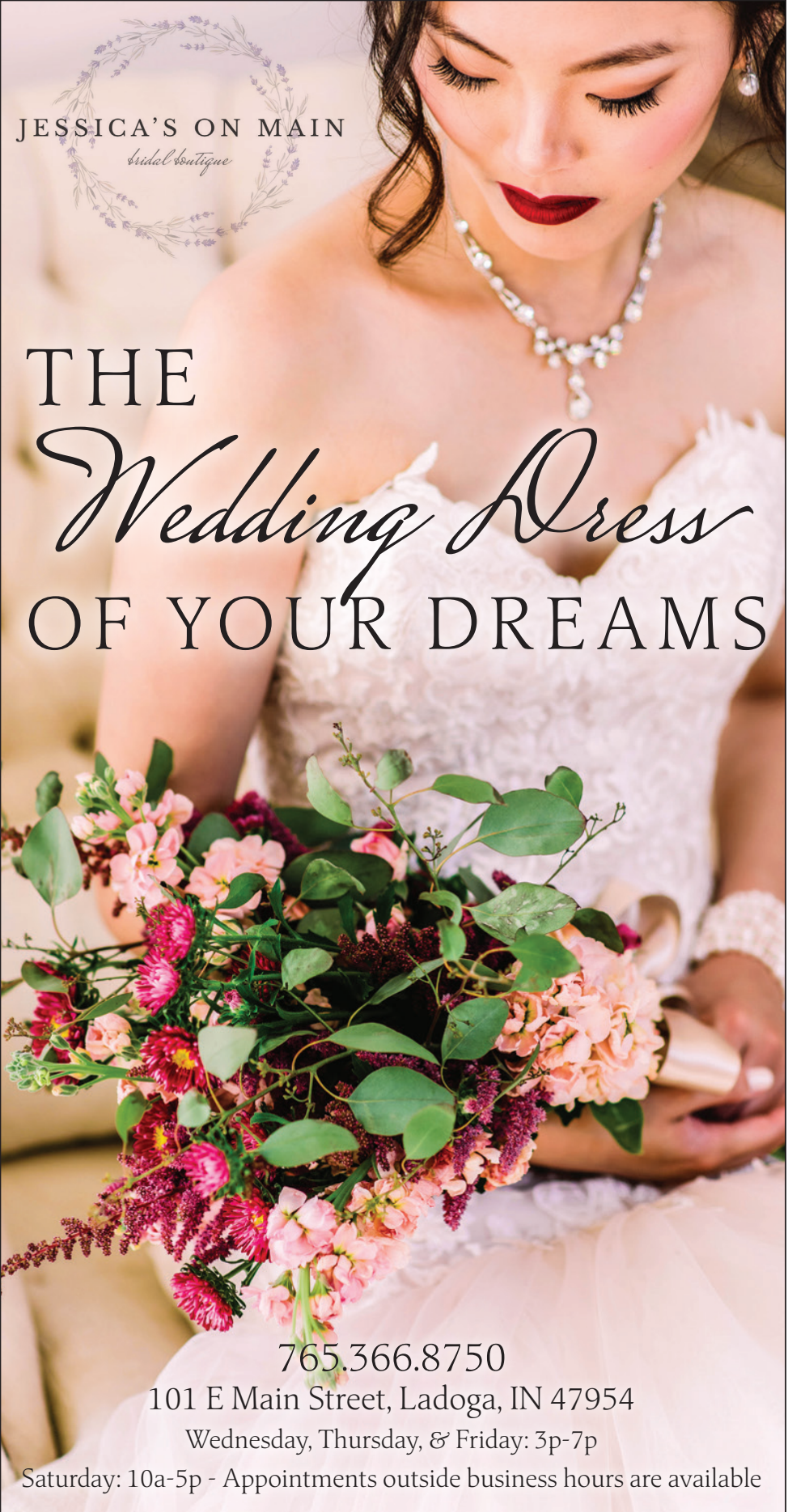
Invite the children who will participate before the ceremony, just like you do the wedding party, and it is acceptable, but not necessary, to prepare a small gift for them as well. Make sure the children are of the appropriate age and maturity level to independently handle the tasks at hand.

GIVE THEM THEIR OWN MEALS

Kids usually don't have sophisticated palettes and may

not appreciate your prime rib au jus or other sophisticated food. Make sure your menu includes some traditionally child-friendly options such as mac 'n' cheese, sliders, sandwiches or wraps. And don't be surprised to see some adults reaching for them, too.

You can ask your venue and caterer to set a kids' table that gets their food before the adults to help keep them occupied and keep them from getting too cranky.



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Venue Ideas

A venue is one of the first wedding items you should check off your list.

And because it sets the tone for so much of the ceremony or reception, it's an important one. Here are some venues you may not have considered for your big day.

LOCAL PARKS

City, state and national parks often offer some stunning backdrops for your wedding, your reception or both. Visit the park several times before your big day, if you can, and make note of how busy the park is and the position of the sun. You don't want your guests squinting to see you in the afternoon glare, nor do you want them peering into the gloom of a forest glade.

Also make notes about the park's facilities. Is there plenty of parking? Bathroom access? Does it also have sports fields or other activities that may be in use the day of your wedding?

Once you have a few potential spots picked out, reach out to the city, state or federal department responsible for that park. Make sure they allow weddings, fill out any necessary paperwork, pay the fees



and make sure you get a copy of the rules (there are going to be rules).

Look for any restrictions on the number of guests, chairs, toilets, cleanup and more.

WINERIES AND BREWERIES

These venues may have an event space that they are happy to let you use for your ceremony, your reception or both. For a fee, of course, but you may also get plenty of booze to use, too. Either location lends itself to plenty of décor ideas, menus and, of

course, cocktails. Also ask if the grounds will be available to you for photo shoots before your big day. Vineyards, in particular, have a striking natural backdrop that your photographer will be happy to make use of.

Just like with any other venue, ensure you know the local rules for holding a wedding at the winery or brewery; the event planner at the venue should be able to help you. Also talk to your vendors about the setup at the location and, if possible, meet them there beforehand.

GARDENS

Botanical gardens, arboretums and other natural settings make stunning venues, even in the fall. The key to pulling off these weddings is to let the natural landscape carry most the weight of décor and florals. Talk to your florist about more subtle arrangements to make the most of your setting. Because many of these spaces are exclusively outdoors, you should have a Plan B should the weather go south. Ask the venue what they suggest; they may have a pavilion or other space that can give you shelter.

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