

Many brides are now emulating the elegant lace gown worn by Catherine Middleton, now the Duchess of Cambridge

Brides taking cues from the royal wedding

(ARA) Although the latest Brides American Wedding Study shows the average cost of a wedding in 2010 was \$26,501, a decrease of 5 percent from 2009, weddings continue to be big business. But many couples are opting to cut the guest list instead of big ticket items like wedding gowns.

In fact, the average wedding gown cost \$1,289 in 2010, a 20 percent increase over 2009, according to the study. This is no surprise to the millions who were glued to their television sets this past April during the most talked about wedding since the 1981 royal wedding of Lady Diana to Prince Charles. Many brides are now emulating the elegant lace gown worn by Catherine Middleton, now the Duchess of Cambridge.

In addition to beautiful lace, the newest trends in wedding gowns include color, soft sleeves, short hemlines and eco-friendly materials.

Whether it is Chantilly, Alencon, duchesse, guipure, or ribbon, lace has become one of the hottest trends this year. "Designers at all price points have debuted collections featuring full frothy skirts, wildflowers and lace used in both traditional and modern ways," says Kate Campbell, department chair of Fashion & Retail Management at The Art Institute of Tampa, a branch of Miami International University of Art & Design. "This particular trend parallels the more feminine, elegant trends we see in fashion everywhere - including more fitted and ladylike styles

Tips for trying on gowns

Many brides-to-be look forward to the day when they visit a bridal salon and are able to try on gowns for the first time. There are certain tips that can make the day go much more smoothly and potentially reduce the amount of time it may take to find the perfect gown.

- Wear a supportive, well constructed strapless bra or corset in your correct size. If you will be wearing a petticoat, also have the right size available.
- Go without face makeup when trying on gowns so they remain clean.
- Try to wear your hair similar to the style you have in mind for your wedding.
- Note that the size of the wedding gown you will wear is typically one to two sizes larger than your day-to-day clothes. Proper measurements can be matched to designers' size charts.
- It's best to limit the number of people with whom you shop to 1 or 2 trusted friends or family members. An entourage can be confusing.
- It's always better to order a slightly larger gown and leave room for alterations if you are between sizes.

reminiscent of Grace Kelly and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy." While not for everyone, the use of color in wedding gowns has been growing in popularity. Rich and vibrant, or more subdued, color in bridal wear is everywhere. Some brides choose soft pastel colors, such as blush, rose or skin-tone. Others opt to wear vibrant hues of lavender, green and deep pink. Less bold brides are more likely to use hints of accent color on sashes, bows, embroidery, hems, necklines or beading. "The bride who chooses to add color to

her dress is fashion forward and confident - it's not for the faint of heart," says Amber Chatelain, lead faculty for the Fashion & Retail Management program at The Art Institute of Tennessee - Nashville, a branch of The Art Institute of Atlanta. Another interesting new trend in bridal wear is short gowns, especially for brides choosing destination and beach weddings. While they may be short in length, these dresses are not short on style. Some offer sophisticated laces, chic feathers or multilayered organza mini-skirts. Soft sleeves are enjoying a comeback. Designers have debuted soft, romantic sleeves, including traditional cap sleeves in florals and tulle, mod-

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Multi-million dollar weddings

Though it's difficult to call it official, the 2004 wedding of Vanisha Mittal, daughter of steel tycoon Lakshmi Mittal, is considered the most expensive wedding in history. With a final tab of \$60 million, the wedding included invitations mailed in silver boxes, rooms at a five-star Paris hotel and performances by pop singer Kylie Minogue. Americans might recall a more recent and extravagant wedding, that of former first daughter Chelsea Clinton, whose 2010 wedding reportedly cost between \$3 to 5 million. A similar price tag was given to Beatles legend Paul McCartney in 2002 when he married former model Heather Mills. Unfortunately, that cost did not guarantee marital bliss, as the couple separated in 2006, eventually divorcing in 2008.

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Choosing a gown that flatters bridesmaids is a significant responsibility for prospective brides planning their big day.



Bridesmaids' gowns can be flattering for all your friends

Bridesmaids are an important part of the wedding party, and most brides opt to have a handful of close friends and family members play a special role in the wedding. Choosing a gown and a color that will flatter all of the bridesmaids typically takes a little work.

An overwhelming majority of couples choose to have a formal wedding. The average number of bridesmaids for these formal weddings is four. Considering around two million weddings take place in North America every year, that's a lot of bridesmaids for whom gowns and other attire must be planned.

Many bridesmaids worry about the gowns they will wear come the big day. Horrible bridesmaid dresses have been the butt of jokes for years, and many people have their own stories of garish gowns they've been asked to don for a wedding. Some have said that brides intentionally choose ugly gowns for their bridesmaids to ensure they're not outshined come the wedding day. Although this may be the case for some, most brides aspire to select gowns that will be flattering

for all. And color scheme is integral in the choice of gown.

Every well-planned wedding carries a color scheme throughout. This includes the color a bride selects for her bridesmaids to wear. But not every color accentuates everyone's features. Therefore, some experimentation might be necessary to find a color that is flattering to all and fits with the color scheme.

Depending on hair color and skin shade, there are many flattering hues available for gowns. When making this decision, consider bridesmaids' ethnicity and skin tone.

African-American:

Asian and olive-skinned women: Those with a slight yellow tone to their skin will look good in many colors, including red, navy, peach, and fuchsia. However, avoid colors in light yellow, aqua, gray, taupe, or mint, which may make the bridesmaid look washed out.

Fair skin:

Once a color is chosen, brides also need to consider the season. Certain colors may look out of place

depending on the season. For example, an evergreen or deep blue may seem wintry during a summer wedding. Similarly, russet or brown may work for the autumn but not for a spring wedding. Many brides gravitate toward mid-level blues, greens, pinks and purples for their weddings, simply because those colors transcend the seasons.

After colors are worked out, the style of the gown deserves consideration. Because not every bridesmaid has the same physical attributes, many brides are now open to selecting a color and length and allowing the bridesmaid herself to choose the exact style. This way someone who is busty won't feel uncomfortable in strapless, and someone who is thin won't be overwhelmed by a lot of ruffles. The intent is to have bridesmaids feel beautiful and comfortable, and different styles can help achieve this.

Making the effort to choose a gown color and style that is flattering to all in the bridal party will help the ladies feel they are truly a special part of the wedding.

Wedding theme adds some whimsy to your special day

Every couple wants their wedding to be memorable. The goal of planning a wedding is to create an experience that everyone will remember for years to come. For some couples, a theme wedding is the best way to accomplish just that.

When it comes time to select a theme, the day the wedding takes place may dictate the theme. For example, if the wedding takes place on Halloween, the ideas for the theme are easy. Many other couples choose a theme that highlights a specific interest or hobby or something that is dear to them. Here are some popular wedding themes.

- **Holiday:** The Christmas season lends itself well to wedding planning. The colors (red, green, gold) are already established, and most churches and buildings are already decked out in holiday finery, cutting down on the amount of flowers and embellishments couples need. Because the holiday season is so busy and a popular time for socializing, couples who want to tie the



A masquerade theme might be an entertaining theme for a couple's nuptials.

knot during this time of year should send save-the-date cards well in advance. Another option is to have a "Christmas in July" wedding, featuring the same holiday themes but without the hectic nature of the holiday season.

- **Vegas:** Couples who want to tie the knot in Las Vegas but want to ensure all their loved ones can attend can recreate the magic of Vegas wherever they may be. Casino-inspired games and big buffet meals can make guests feel like they have stepped into a casino on the famed Vegas strip. In addition, an Elvis

impersonator is essential to a Vegas wedding.

- **TV show:** Some couples elevate certain television shows to cult status. Whether it's "Friends" or "Star Trek," popular television shows have been transformed into festive wedding themes. Whether the idea is to go daring and exchange vows in costume or simply name reception tables according to characters or show locations, couples can include a little television fun into the event.

- **Fairytale:** Many men and women envision a fairytale wedding complete with horse-drawn carriage

and the "happily ever after." This is what makes Disney properties as well as the various castles around the world popular backdrops for wedding events. Those planning a fairytale wedding need only look to favorite stories or movies for their inspiration.

- **Interest or passion:** Love to climb mountains? Avid about scuba diving? Couples who share a particular interest can include elements of this sport or hobby into their wedding. Invitations and decor can hint at the theme, and then special activities can further enhance it. Fish bowls as centerpieces may call to mind underwater adventures, while surfboard-shaped invites may set the scene for a beachside party.

Theme weddings can add an extra spice to the festivities and incorporate couples' interests into the event — making it even more special.

Belmont offering couples a chance to say 'I do' Feb. 14

Many brides already know about the great value of having their wedding at the historic and elegant Belmont Mansion. In an effort to reach out to a whole new group of couples, Belmont Mansion's Director of Weddings & Rentals, Rev. Brandon Rich, is opening up the mansion for a day of walk-in weddings on Valentine's Day 2012. Normally, the mansion only allows traditional weddings and other rental events to be hosted on the weekends after 4 p.m. when the mansion's daily museum tours conclude. For only the second year in its history, Belmont Mansion will host

elopement wedding ceremonies for couples all day, even during regular tour hours, on Valentine's Day, without appointment. In addition to wedding ceremonies, the mansion will also host vow renewals for married couples who want to celebrate their successful marriages. The first Valentine's event was a great success with a total of eight couples getting married at the mansion.

Rich will provide standard wedding ceremony vows for both religious and non-religious wedding and vow renewal ceremonies. Couples will have the option to have their ceremony in the bay window

of the mansion's Grand Salon or, weather permitting, outside in one of the mansion's lovely gazebos. The Grand Salon will be set with candelabras, candles and plant stands. Couples should arrive dressed for their ceremony. The grand piano in the Grand Salon will be available for ceremonies that take place before or after museum tours, but not during the hours of 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Couples are free to arrive without a reservation and get married or renew their vows between the hours of 7 a.m. and midnight.

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ROYAL

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ern silhouettes using vintage elements, sequin fringe and flutter sleeves, and romantic off-the-shoulder versions. "The softness and elegance of the sleeves in bridal wear mirrors today's general fashion trends, where designers are highlighting the elegance and beauty of the female form in very soft ways," says Charlene Parsons, who heads the fashion programs at Miami International University of Art & Design.

Eco-friendly options have also increased in popularity. "There are now numerous eco-friendly designers whose sole business is to create wedding dresses made with earth-friendly fabrics and materials, using techniques that are in harmony with the earth," says Crystal Shamblee, department chair of Fashion Design for The Art Institute of Philadelphia. Secondhand and vintage wedding dresses are another eco-friendly choice.

Whatever fashion trends a bride chooses,

one that will never go out of style is a gown that fits well, is figure flattering and makes the bride feel like she's the most beautiful woman in the world on her big day.

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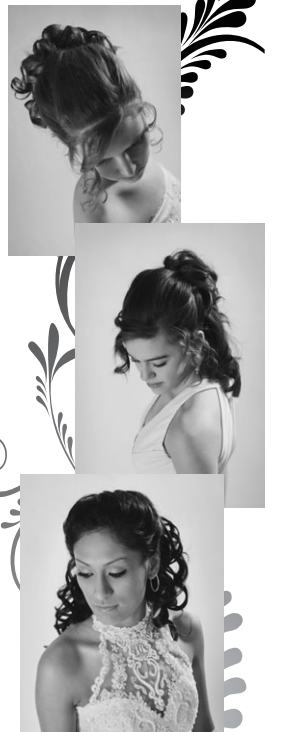
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Put your best face forward

Get engagement photos you'll cherish forever

Newly engaged couples choose to capture the occasion in photos that they can cherish. Often, one of these photos is used as an announcement to family and friends and might even be published in the newspaper.

Engagement photos may be part of a package negotiated with the photographer who will be covering the wedding day. Some couples enlist the help of a friend or a budding photographer to capture an engagement shot. The average cost of engagement photos can range from \$200 to \$500. Some couples opt to use a photographer who might specialize in other areas (i.e. fashion models) but may want to break into the wedding biz because of how lucrative it can be. Costs may be negotiated as a result.

When shopping around for a photographer, there are certain things couples should keep in mind. The first and most important is select-



Engagement photos don't have to be posed portraits. Experiment with looks that fit your personalities for memorable photos.

ing a photographer you can relate to. If you don't feel a connection with the photographer, he or she

will have trouble coaxing the shots that will produce the best results. He or she should also be a professional and have some experience working with posing couples. This way the photos don't look stiff or contrived. Here are some other tips that can lead to great photos.

- Find a photographer who fits your style. If you're a quirky couple, go with a quirky photographer. If you're reserved and a follow-the-book type of couple, then select a more traditional photographer. Some photographers out there forget that this is your moment and want to impart their idea of what you want. Make sure he or she takes your ideas into consideration.

- Select one who is open to different shoot locations and brainstorming. Some of the best photos occur in natural settings, where things aren't entirely planned. If a photographer simply works out of

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the hours of 4 p.m. and midnight, with the last ceremony available to start at 11:30 p.m. Rev. Rich will provide his basic ceremony options and officiating services for these ceremonies. Couples do not need a reservation for this ceremony option, but are welcome to contact Rev. Rich in advance if they want to reserve a preferred time or if they want to personalize their vows. Photography options are available on-site from Ladak Productions and are charged in addition to the mansion fee.

For more information on these or other wedding options provided by Rich Events at Belmont Mansion or in other venues, please visit www.RichEvents.org or contact Rev. Brandon Rich at (615) 460-6589.

Read to know!

Cut costs by doing it yourself

Those thinking about tying the knot in the months to come may be discouraged by how expensive weddings can be. But with a little ingenuity and a hands-on approach, couples can have a wedding that is inexpensive and memorable at the same time.

According to CostofWedding.com, on average, U.S. couples spend \$26,542 for their weddings. Wedding-bells magazine states that the average cost for a wedding in Canada is \$23,330, up from \$20,129 in 2010. These amounts do not include the cost for an engagement ring or wedding bands. With such a high price tag, some couples may wonder if they can afford their dream wedding or if there are ways to cut costs. Having a backyard, DIY wedding can be the answer.

Although some may envision a backyard wedding with picnic benches and Dad at the grill, it can be a much classier affair than that. Smart couples are realizing that the money they would normally spend on a big wedding at an outside venue can be put to better use, either through buying a new home or fixing up one they may already own. Furthermore, for couples who are picky about details, having a DIY event ensures that they can control the details and have them as personal as they would like.

Getting Started

A DIY wedding is one that will take much more work than simply hiring vendors and leaving the details to them. But the money saved with sweat equity can be substantial. A well-planned wedding is the best start.

Grab a notebook and start making lists of all the things you will need:

- location
- tables and chairs
- linens
- food
- silverware and glassware
- invitations
- photography
- music
- officiant
- music
- centerpieces and other decor
- cake or dessert
- lighting
- attire
- flowers

Work in Advance

Many items necessary for a wedding can be bought in advance. Some couples find that purchasing low-cost items at discount stores turns out to be less expensive than renting. For example, inexpensive glasses and silverware can be bought at dollar stores or chains like Ikea. Later on these items can be kept, sold or even donated to shelters.

Tablecloths don't have to be the traditional kind. It may be less expensive to purchase pieces of fabric from a fabric store and dressing them up oneself. Candles can be stockpiled relatively easy and provide a very affordable means of ambient light. Plan out centerpiece ideas and figure out which com-

Get creative with your invitations

Cost-conscious couples today seek different ways they can reduce expenses on their weddings. Do-it-yourself weddings have grown in popularity, and creating personalized wedding invitations is one way to save money and dream up something special.

Wedding invitations can range in prices depending on the service used. Many brick-and-mortar printing companies have gone by the wayside, and online printing sources have replaced them. The reduced overhead means that many online retailers can produce wedding invitations at a lower cost than in years past. That doesn't mean they are cheap, however. Couples can expect to pay anywhere from \$150 to \$500 on invitations depending on style and quantity, according to estimates from many printing company Web sites. Expect to pay around \$90 (U.S.) for postage if mailing 100 standard invitations that do not require extra postage and include stamped response cards.

In order to avoid overpaying for wedding invitations, or simply to create a personalized invitation, many couples are opting to go the do-it-yourself route. DIY invitations are even more common thanks to the popularity of scrapbooking and papercrafting. Although people may have different standards in terms of quality for their invitations, it's important to realize the invitation is the first thing guests often see concerning the wedding, and they will help set the tone of the upcoming

nuptials.

Today there are many options when it comes to making invitations oneself. Couples can be as hands-on or hands-off as they like. Here are some choices to consider.

- Design it yourself, but hire a printer. Couples can visit websites that enable them to choose paper type, ink color, a certain template, wording, color scheme, embellishments, dye-cutting and many other different options. Then the couple sits back and waits for the invites to come in the mail where they are put together before being sent out. These may be the most expensive of the DIY invites because a printer is still doing much of the work.

- Use wedding invitation kits. Many stationery shops, craft stores and office supply retailers offer all-in-one kits that can be purchased. These feature a standard design with the accoutrements of that particular design. Most will come with envelopes and small response cards. The couple simply uses the template provided to create text on a personal computer and then the invite can be run through a home printer.

- Mix and match components. Couples who want to be a little more hands-on can purchase card stock and envelopes separately and design their own invitations according to color scheme. Clip art included with some word processing or design software can embellish invites that are then printed on

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ponents can be bought and stored. Then items can be assembled at leisure. Wedding stationery is one thing that will have to be bought well in advance so there will be time enough to printout save-the-dates, invitations and response cards, as well as mail them.

An informal wedding may mean couples can get simple attire. Buying off the rack may mean a smaller price tag for gowns. Gentleman may be able to fare with sportcoats and slacks. Purchase wardrobe essentials several months in advance to be sure there will be time for alterations, if necessary.

Enlist the help of family and friends to get many of the tasks completed. Upon asking, many couples find there are members of the family who have skills in certain areas, which can be tapped for the wedding. There may be a gourmet chef, a disc jockey, a photographer or even someone who can officiate the vows. Having these people on board means a great reduction in costs.

Readying the Venue

Because couples will be doing the work themselves, it's best to start several days in advance of the wedding (weather permitting). Be sure the grounds are well groomed and landscaped. Ensure there are no tripping hazards and that there is a sturdy surface for placing tables or creating a dance floor.

It may pay to ask an electrician or someone who dabbles in electric work to help string some lights to better illuminate the area, especially for when the sun goes

down.

Set up the tables and chairs to finalize placement the day before. Figure out where the ceremony will take place. A small arbor can mark the area and make a nice photo backdrop. Dress the tables with linens and settings the morning of the wedding.

One splurge couples may want to make is hiring a waitstaff to help set up food service areas, serve as bartenders and clear away dishes and other messes. This way the bride and groom can mingle with guests.

Other Tips and Tricks

Here are some other ways to save money on DIY weddings.

Fruit is less expensive than flowers for centerpieces.

Include postcard response

cards in wedding invites. The postage is less, and you don't have to spend money on an extra envelope.

Be sure to check with your town if you need a permit or variance for having so many cars parked by the house in the event of a backyard wedding. Otherwise you could be facing a fine.

Many different foods can be cooked in advance and frozen instead of hiring a catering service.

Consider favors that also double as table centerpieces.

Bouquets can easily be made with store-bought flowers, some floral tape and decorative ribbon.

Restrict the bar to wine and beer, and you'll save money on expensive liquors.

A DIY wedding can be a fun, memorable event that costs a couple a fraction of what it would be to have it held at an expensive location.

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Couples who have stayed married for decades often put each other first and share a mutual respect.

Secrets to a long and happy marriage

Some might say a long celebrity marriage is one that endures the duration of the newly betrothed's trip down the aisle. We've seen Britney Spears dissolve a marriage after 55 hours and Kim Kardashian call it quits after 72 days. It seems even money can't buy matrimonial happiness.

But some couples have been together for 50, 60 years and say they're still as much in love as they were the day they spoke their "I dos." What do they know that others do not?

According to clinical psychologist and relationship guru Dr. Phil McGraw, "We all need to be flexible and to compromise in marriage, but you've got to be true to your core traits and characteristics, what I call your authentic self." Some couples enter a relationship projecting a persona they believe the other person wants — one that really isn't what they're all about. This could be a woman trying to fill the role of her husband's nurturing mom or a guy playing the protector to his wife. In reality, marriage is more of a partnership, and truth and trust are often at the basis of good marriages.

There are many other "secrets" that marriage experts will offer to couples seeking the magic formula. Whether you're

pondering marriage or have already tied the knot, consider the following advice to make a marriage endure for the long haul.

- There's no such thing as the perfect marriage. Some couples create an image of what they think marriage is supposed to be, and that image that often goes "poof" once reality sets in. Even soulmates are bound to frustrate or irritate one another from time to time.

- Couples should express their frustrations. Bottling up frustrations can eat at a person and eventually destroy a marriage. Talking about the things that are bothering you with your partner opens up a discussion and can help you work through things.

- Divorce should not be seen as a viable option. Couples who want to bail on the marriage at every turn could be directing their energy toward divorce as the only solution instead of discovering ways to remove the cause of strife. Divorce can sometimes be the easy way out when you think about the work that goes into keeping a marriage working. Experts say that there are a few issues, like adultery, abuse and drug/alcohol addiction, that may be reasonable catalysts for divorce if personal safety and sanity is being compromised.
- Make time for

romance. It's easily said but not so easily done. Too often married couples forget what it was like to date when all of their attention was spent on each other instead of the house, kids, work, etc. Today there seems to be even more distractions, from e-mails to texts to pressure and obligations at the office. Happy couples find the time to spend quality time with their spouses — even if that's only 10 minutes of alone time a day.

- Put "we" first. Many people operate on a "me" mentality. When you're part of a couple, give more to your spouse than you take. If he or she is doing the same, you're working collectively for the benefit of the marriage instead of yourselves.

- Respect each other. Often couples having troubles realize they treat strangers better than they treat each other. Would you use the insults or unflattering terms that you sometimes throw at your spouse with a complete stranger? Probably not. Good marriages are based on a foundation of respect and love. It's easy to lose feelings of love if the respect is gone.

Couples can realize that there are some thorns that come with the roses of marriage, and staying happy together does take work for it to all be worth it.

PHOTOS

• Continued from 3C

a studio, you may want to select one who has more free reign with different locales.

- Choose your location wisely. Certain locations will stand out in your minds because they are visually stunning or are special places where you have spent moments as a couple. By choosing a place that offers a personal connection, there's a good chance you'll appreciate the photos in the long run. Also, be open to the fact that unplanned stops may offer a great background for the image. Be open to the unexpected.

- Try random poses and some candid shots.

Although you might have a vision of the perfect photo in your mind, experimenting with different ideas can sometimes lead to a great photo you really love. Expect to take your share of kissing, nose-touching and portrait shots. But some fun poses, such as running or jumping (or rolling around on a beach full of waves) can produce candid shots that are truly masterpieces. Remember, sometimes photographers will pose you in positions that seem a bit awkward, but this is to get the best lines of the body and flattering images.

- Choose clothing that fits the mood. If time and budget allows, have several different wardrobe changes so that you can

see which outfits work and which ones don't. A formal outfit, comfortable street clothes, something beachy or clothing that fits with your interests (such as polo or baseball) can make for interesting engagement photos. Avoid clothing that is too trendy or busy, which may take away from the actual images in the long run. Plus, you don't want to look back at these photos in the future and say, "What was I thinking?"

Avoid matchy-matchy, though. If you are dressed alike, you may appear to be trying too hard. It's the individual personalities you want to shine through.

CREATIVE

• Continued from 3C

a home printer. Ribbon can be added by punching holes into the invite and threading the ribbon through.

- Do it all yourself. The truly crafty couple can make their invitations from scratch. This involves drawing out a template, cutting the card stock to fit, selecting envelopes, creating and executing response cards, and decorating the invitations as they see fit. This will require some tools, including scrapbooking or papercrafting supplies. A

paper trimmer will help ensure straight cuts, and decorative-edged scissors can help hide any small mistakes in the edges. While this may be a cheaper option if couples get good prices on all the paper components, it also entails the most work and the greatest margin of error.

Saving money on wedding components has become essential for many couples in this economy. Choosing to take on some aspects of invitation creation can help reduce costs and personalize the event even more.

Tempt tastebuds with edible wedding favors

Do you have a shelf or cabinet that's filled to the brim with wedding favors such as engraved ice cream scoopers, cake servers, cheese spreaders or tea light candle holders? If you do, you're not alone. As couples pore over guest favor options, many select trinkets or knickknacks that, while thoughtful, end up collecting dust in someone's home. Edible gifts also can be thoughtful — and flavorful!

Guests may look forward to an edible favor because it's a memento of the special occasion and it won't become a permanent fixture in their homes. There are many edible favors from which to choose. They can also be customized according to the theme of the wedding.

Chocolate

It's difficult to find an edible favor more universally beloved than chocolate. Rich and inviting, chocolate has long been given as a symbol of love and devotion. Chocolate candies and baked goods can work well for wedding favors, provided the favors are refrigerated to avoid melting.

Ideas for chocolate favors include individually packaged truffles, gourmet brownie bites, candy-covered chocolates with an inscription, chocolate covered apples, chocolate coins, and other similar creations. Chocolate molded designs (much like those chocolate Easter bunnies) are another idea.

Cookies

Sweet cookies also make good edible favors. Butter cookies are a favorite because they are sturdy enough to cut into different shapes. Professionally iced, these cookies can be a masterpiece to behold. Some couples opt for customized fortune cookies that express personalized sentiments to guests.

Make-your-own

Sometimes it's less expensive to give guests kits that they can take home to create their own edible treasures. Options abound and can include everything from personalized packets of hot chocolate to tea bags. Other couples choose among mixes for making cookies or cakes.

Candies

It has become popular to have a self-serve candy bar at many weddings. Guests are invited to step up to the display and serve themselves from a series of dif-



Edible wedding favors may include decorative cookie baskets featuring gourmet cookies from a favorite bakery.

ferent confections. Autumn weddings could have Halloween-inspired candies or those in fall hues. It's easy to follow a color theme when you have a bevy of different candies at your disposal. Many discount stores sell inexpensive jars and candy dishes to house the candy. Designer Chinese takeout-

type containers are available from craft stores and can be the perfect way for guests to make that candy portable.

Other edibles From cupcakes to maple syrup to personalized bottles of barbecue sauce, couples have so many options for guest favors at their disposal.

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