

# BRIDAL GUIDE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008

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# 75

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# 75 Ways to Personalize your Wedding

Like every bride, you want  
**your wedding to be unique.**

Here, creative ideas  
from planners and  
couples to inspire you.

by Kristen Finello

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ideas from real couples at  
[bridalguide.com/realweddings](http://bridalguide.com/realweddings).



## Tip 1

Select a signature color palette and weave it throughout the event.



**1** One of the simplest ways to **personalize your wedding is to select a signature color palette and weave it throughout the event** from invitations to favors. Consider the colors that have special significance to you or that reflect some aspect of your relationship—the greens of the summer day when you picnicked after getting engaged, the shades of red at the Valentine dinner where he proposed.

**2** **Choose a wedding location that reflects the two of you.** If you met at a party at a lake, a waterfront venue would be nice. College sweethearts? Tie the knot at your alma mater.

**3** Have a graphic artist **create a custom wedding logo** that you can use on printed materials and other elements of your wedding to create a cohesive look. (If you're artistic you can do this yourself. Another option: Purchase a logo at [marrymonograms.com](http://marrymonograms.com).)

**4** **Celebrate the season.** For her November 2008 wedding, Francesca Di Meglio of Fort Lee, New Jersey, went with a Thanksgiving theme

that included invitations embossed with a cornucopia motif and centerpieces featuring fall fruits and flowers.

**5** Express a nature-friendly point of view by **hosting a green wedding.** Go to [bridalguide.com](http://bridalguide.com) for advice on everything from organic food to flowers.

**6** **Combine religious traditions.** Mark Kingsdorf, owner of The Queen of Hearts Wedding Consultants in Philadelphia, had a couple who honored their Catholic/Jewish/Muslim backgrounds with a church ceremony, a reading from the Koran and the Jewish tradition of breaking a glass.

**7** Have guests coming from other countries? **Print your invitations in their native language,** suggests Heather Sharpe, founder of Destination Weddings Northwest in Seattle.

**8** For a more intimate feel at your ceremony, **arrange your guests in a circle** around you rather than in rows, says Sharpe. This works particularly well in a rural outdoor space.

**9** Searching out **talent among friends and relatives** can open doors to

wonderful moments in your ceremony. A cousin who's a poet may want to read a work of her own or recite a Shakespearean sonnet, a musician may choose to perform a love song.

**10** **To include her husband-to-be's three nieces** in the wedding ceremony, Di Meglio asked them to escort him down the aisle.

**11** **Honor your heritage** or your groom's by wearing traditional clothing such as Irish or Scottish kilts or Indian saris.

**12** **Acknowledge the absence of a deceased loved one** by placing a flower on a seat reserved for him or her at the ceremony.

**13** Another way to honor a deceased family member: Place a small photo of the person in your bouquet, says Sharpe.

**14** **Let the language of your ceremony really speak about you.** "For a couple who loves tennis, the officiant ended the wedding ceremony by proclaiming, 'Let the match begin!'" Sharpe recalls.





### Tip 3

Create a custom wedding logo that you can use on printed materials and decor.

**15** For a one-of-a-kind touch, wear your mother's—or your grandmother's—wedding gown. Or wear an heirloom brooch or pair of earrings that you inherited.

**16** If an heirloom dress is in poor condition, snip off a piece of fabric and use it to wrap the stems of your bouquet, suggests event planner Rená Puebla of Coast Concierge Service Event and Production Company in Orange County, California.

**17** Another use for vintage fabric: Drape it on the escort card table for an elegant, custom look.

**18** Primp your ride. Kingsdorf's brides have rocked every mode of transportation from antique cars to

horse-drawn carriages to a 1957 pink Cadillac. Looking for a specific model? Contact local car clubs.

**19** Tell it to the world! Hire a skywriter to spell out "Congratulations, Kate and Michael!" during an outdoor cocktail hour.

**20** Set up flat screens during cocktails and show photo collages of you and your groom from childhood to adulthood, says Puebla. Don't hesitate to go for light, sweet moments that are likely to bring a tear to guests' eyes.

**21** Ask your camera people to set up a live feed of the bridal party's photo session for guests to enjoy over cocktails and appetizers. This way, no

one is excluded from what the stars of the day are doing.

**22** If you're planning an after-party furnished with comfortable sofas and armchairs, personalize them with monogrammed pillows in your wedding colors, suggests Bonnie Walker of Bonnie Walker Events in New York City.

**23** If you're unexcited at the thought of having a keyboardist at your cocktail hour, hire a musician who's more to your taste. One of Walker's couples, who met at Mardi Gras, hired the saxophonist they saw perform in concert there.

**24** Display wedding pictures of family members on the escort-card table or on end tables in your cocktail-hour area.

**25** Instead of using your venue's linens, purchase napkins in silk or linen or organic cotton and have them monogrammed with your initials.

**26** Dress chairs with monogrammed fabric chair covers; drape simple floral garlands over the backs of the bridal party's chairs.

**27** Upgrade plain linens by silk-screening the fabric with your wedding logo or motif; use these on your cocktail tables, says Walker.

**28** Glam up the ladies' room with pretty items from your home. Think antique silver trays to hold paper hand towels and crystal bowls to hold scented mini soaps.

**29** If you plan on having a sweetheart table (seating just for the two of you), think how to make it

### Tip 18

A horse and carriage go together like love and marriage—especially at a seaside wedding.





special. For example, this is the perfect opportunity to showcase those unusual antique chairs or ornate candelabrum passed down from your great-grandparents, says Walker.

**30** Go for that **over-the-top ice bar** and have your initials carved into it in a diamond shape, suggests Puebla. For extra punch, light the bar in your wedding colors or in a complementary hue.

**31** Try Kingsdorf's update on the sign-in book: Ask guests to write a note in a beautiful coffee-table book on a topic that reflects you and your groom. (Be sure the book has sizeable white margins.)

**32** Have a **hand-painted dance floor** created to coordinate with your reception's style and color scheme, suggests Walker. It's sure to get guests in a party mood.

**33** To branch out from ordinary floral centerpieces, Amanda Allen of Tallahassee, Florida, opted for a unique look: tall glass cylinders filled with long curly branches draped with unusual red amaranthus and crystals.



### Tip 72

A rustic wedding calls for down-home fabric like burlap used here for guest favors.

**34** Another way Allen kept her celebration one-of-a-kind: She designed her own invitations at mygatsby.com.

**35** To honor a grandmother whose name was Lily, recent bride Corinne Brennan of Irvine, California, used calla lilies in the bouquets and table arrangements.

**36** Put your stamp on water, wine or beer bottles with **personalized labels** from myownlabels.com.

**37** **Customize your menu** in a way that makes a naturally sophisticated statement. "Take advantage of what's in season, such as pomegranate in November," suggests Paul McCabe, executive chef at L'Auberge Del Mar, a popular wedding venue in Del Mar, California.

**38** **Incorporate your fave foods**—even if they don't seem wedding-worthy. For French-fry fanatics, Kingsdorf served the treat in paper cones printed with the couple's names and wedding date. Guests spiced up their

spuds with toppings like Old Bay Seasoning and parmesan cheese.

**39** **Shake up a salad station** with this clever idea from chef McCabe. Have a uniformed chef, wearing an apron printed with your names and wedding date as well as the salad selections (for example, "Classic Caesar," "Waldorf Salad"), toss the →



### Tip 32

Customizing your dance floor with a lush, romantic design sets the tone for the party.





### Tip 47

Children will have a blast at the wedding when they have fun things to keep them busy.

ingredients in a cocktail shaker and serve mini portions in martini glasses.

**40 Tint your drinks** with colored liquor or fruit juice to coordinate with your color scheme. For example, a rose champagne cocktail would go beautifully with a garden-party brunch reception.

**41 Personalize your wine selections** by choosing vintages that represent the year you were born or a region of the world that has significance for the two of you.

**42 Take a cue from your dating life.** "We served raspberry lemondrop martinis at our reception because that's the drink I ordered on our first date," says Brennan.

**43 Give guests a blast from the past** with retro-inspired stations serving up sliders (mini burgers) and mac and cheese.

**44 Substitute square or rectangular plates for round ones.** Or have the wait staff serve food under a cloche (a lid that's lifted off at the table) for a dramatic presentation, says McCabe.

**45 Dream up unique serving vessels.** McCabe has been known to serve soup and even panna cotta in slender glass tubes!

**46 Change the lighting to accompany each course** of your meal, suggests Puebla. "You might

bathe the room in red while serving a tomato bisque starter, change to green for the salad course and blue for a seafood entrée."

**47 Don't forget your youngest guests.**

Create an activity book—print coloring pages on your computer, for example—and place at each child's seat. Personalize the cover with the child's name and your names ("Tim and Ashlee's Wedding") and wedding date, says Kingsdorf.

**48 Having a beach wedding? Personalized beach towels are the perfect gift for guests.** You could adorn them with your wedding logo or motif (say, a tropical flower or a shell) or have each towel embroidered

with guests' initials.

**49 Add some "wow" entertainment.**

"I planned a wedding for a couple whose first date had been at Cirque du Soleil," says Puebla. "We arranged for a few members of the company to do a short but stunning performance at the reception."

**50 For a Cuban groom, Puebla had a pro roll cigars** at the reception. The stogies' bands were monogrammed with the couple's initials.

**51 Research family traditions.** For one Irish/Scottish wedding, Kingsdorf says, the bride's niece and a friend learned the moves for an Irish step dance. (And everyone joined in!)

**52 For her wedding, Puebla created a unique look by combining elements from her African-American heritage and her husband's Japanese background;** her décor consisted of vibrant African-style fabrics and Japanese fans, and she served sushi and soul food for dinner.

**53 Give a short speech** before dinner in which you thank your parents as well as your guests. Mom and Dad will treasure these words forever.

**54 Ask wait staff to coordinate their uniforms** with your wedding colors. For example, to go with customary black pants and white shirts, they might wear ties in one or more of your wedding hues.

**55 Instead of numbering your tables, name them.** If France is a special place for the two of you, call one table "Paris," another "Cannes," another "Provence" and so on.

**56 Custom wall adhesives, available** at [wonderfulgraffitiwedding.com](http://wonderfulgraffitiwedding.com), are made of thin, matte vinyl that looks "printed" when applied to smooth, clean surfaces. You can get virtually anything made—a romantic quote to enhance the blank wall behind your cake table, for example.

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### Tip 73

A monogrammed treat to take home will leave guests with sweet memories.





Stop browsing,  
start planning!

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everything  
you need  
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**57** These handy adhesives can also be used to **put your personal stamp on the SUV or limo carrying your bridal party**, suggests Kingsdorf.

**58** **Surprise your parents and your new in-laws** by having the band play the first songs from their weddings, suggests Sharpe.

**59** **Ask your bandleader or DJ to play** the hora, tarantella or another dance that reflects your family's culture.

**60** Corinne Brennan and her groom met while working in California, so **a play list of California-themed tunes was a must for their reception**, she says. "All of the songs were from a CD that Jon made for me when we first started dating."

**61** **Groom's cakes are back in a big way.** Select one that represents your guy's hobby, favorite sports team or hometown. (How about a cowboy boot for your country boy?)

**62** **Does one of your relatives have a cookie recipe that's known far and wide?** Ask if she'd like to serve these at your reception. (She'll probably be delighted!) Arrange the delectable sweets on a table with personalized containers that guests can fill, says Walker.

**63** **Dress up dessert plates with a pretty flourish of fruit puree or a symbol of your wedding**, like a simple flower shape for an outdoor spring fete. (Your initials are okay, too, says Puebla, but not your whole names—that looks too birthday-ish!)

**64** **For a couple who used to meet for dates at an ice cream parlor**, Walker had waitresses pass vanilla milk shakes in small old-fashioned glasses at dessert time.

**65** **Take the make-your-own-sundae concept a step further** by having your chef whip up custom ice cream concoctions on the spot. At Chef McCabe's dessert stations, guests can select ice cream flavors in liquid form, such as organic pistachio, hazelnut chocolate and passion fruit, and watch as he puts them into liquid nitrogen to make them freeze instantly. The

result—a dessert that is crunchy on the outside and soft on the inside.

**66** Tired of hearing the same old songs? **Pen your own lyrics or hire a professional songwriter to compose a special melody** that incorporates details about you and your groom, suggests Walker.

**67** Walker always makes up a number of **pretty umbrellas in a couple's wedding colors so that in case of rain**, valet attendants are prepared to shelter guests as they arrive at the reception venue.

**68** Another of Walker's thoughtful touches: **Purchase inexpensive wraps to give to chilly guests** while they're waiting for their cars at the end of the evening.

**69** At a destination wedding, **give every female guest a single flower**, say, a vibrantly colored hibiscus, to wear in her hair.

**70** **Have labels printed with your names to customize** your water bottles; place them on a table near the exit of your reception, so guests can help themselves as they're leaving.

**71** **Place blank CDs in envelopes preaddressed to you on a table** near the exit. Enclose a note with this request: "When you download your pictures, please burn us a copy—and send!" ("This is not a replacement for a professional photographer," emphasizes Kingsdorf.)

**72** **Add flair to your favors.** Have them reflect your wedding style. For her Italy-born groom, recent bride Di Meglio opted for Italian-style wedding favors that included crystal votives and Jordan almonds.

**73** **Give departing guests cookies decorated with your monogram** or a special design, like a flower or a boat or a seashell, depending on your venue, says Puebla.

**74** **Arrange for an old-fashioned popcorn truck, ice cream truck or candy cart** to park outside your reception at the end of the evening, so guests can munch while they wait for the valet to bring their car.

**75** **Tailor your getaway vehicle to your destination.** Sharpe has had couples take off from waterfront receptions in a sea plane and a horse and carriage in the city. ■