

The

FALL/WINTER 2020

*Your guide to
planning
a beautiful
Lancaster County
wedding*

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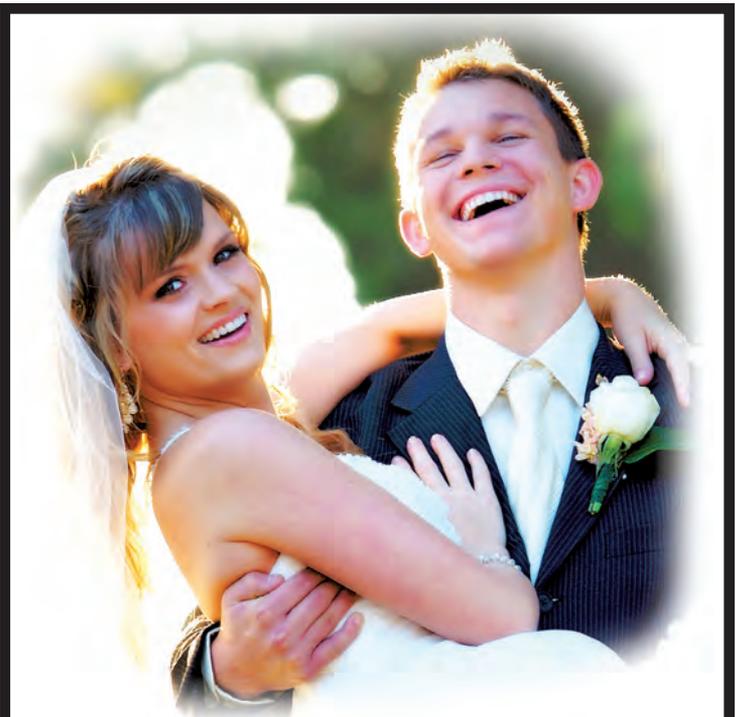
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COVID

CONCESSIONS

Pandemic keeps couples rolling with the changes now — and possibly into the future

KIMBERLY MARSELAS FOR LNP | LANCASTERONLINE

When Melissa Ramos and boyfriend Thomas Mattaini got engaged after Christmas Mass in 2018, they thought 18 months would be plenty of time to plan a wedding.

Though they've ironed out most of the details, the COVID-19 pandemic has given them another year to get everything just perfect.

In March, the Lancaster couple postponed their wedding from June 5 to July 3, but with the disease still rampant, they later re-booked St. Mary's Catholic Church and the expansive Drumore Estate in Martic Township for a July 2021 date.

Ramos, 24, and Mattaini, 25, are expecting about 160 guests and hope that all of them will be able to travel here safely by the time the celebration happens.

"The idea that a lot of the most important people in our lives couldn't have been here, that wasn't worth the risk," says Ramos, a preschool teacher. "Everyone has their vision for their wedding, and it was really hard for me to accept (postponing) at first. ... But it was actually a lot smoother than I thought it would have been."

Timing is just one of many concessions would-be brides and grooms are having to make as they prepare for marriage in a time of phased reopenings, masks and constant risk evaluation.

A survey conducted by wedding planning website The Knot found 93% of engaged couples are not canceling their weddings, but rather postponing them. Only about 6% planned to reduce their guest counts, while just 5% expected to cut their budgets.



Thomas Mattaini and Melissa Ramos, shown here in an engagement photo, planned to be married by now but delayed their ceremony to ensure more guests can attend.

COURTESY OF CROSS PHOTOGRAPHY

OUT

- ✗ ELABORATE BUFFETS
- ✗ HANDSHAKES
- ✗ SEATING ASSIGNMENTS
- ✗ PACKED CHURCH PEWS
- ✗ SELFIES WITH THE BRIDE
- ✗ DESTINATION WEDDINGS

IN

- INDIVIDUALLY BOXED ITEMS
- HAND SANITIZER
- FAMILY GROUPINGS
- STANDING ROOM
- LIVE STREAMS FOR LOVED ONES
- MINIMONIES

As with everything during the time of COVID, those May findings could be outdated as restrictions are re-enacted in coronavirus hotspots. Rules may prohibit some venue openings, limit gathering sizes and, in some places, dictate mask policies for months to come.

Both couples and guests should expect changes this fall bridal season and for the long-term.

Event planner Gillian McSherry, of Lititz-based Events by Gillian, agreed to assist with 26 weddings this year, and about half were affected by COVID-19. All of the April, May and June events were postponed to later this year or early 2021. Because they now must compete with weddings that were originally scheduled for 2021, don't be surprised to see more invites for weekday or Sunday weddings as most wedding venues have already booked all of their Saturdays.

Kadia and Matt Schroeder of Lancaster exchange vows during a June "minimony," where the guest count was limited by the size of the bride's parents' backyard.

COURTESY OF CHRIS TELESCO PHOTOGRAPHY



Check out more local COVID-19 wedding stories on pages 10, 16 & 20

And weddings taking place in August, September and October will likely still need to take social distancing and infection control precautions, McSherry says. Hand sanitizer will be everywhere, from goodie bags to new cleanup stations supplied by the event sites — and some couples may try to tie such necessities into their theme through color or decoration.

McSherry predicts the outdoor wedding season will likely run longer with the help of tents and portable heaters; some seating may be blocked off or spread out in small groups instead of formal rows; and reception tables may be limited to eight people or guests from the same family.

Other changes will reflect each couple's comfort level and the needs of their vendors. For instance, show-stopping charcuterie boards were in high demand during many cocktail hours last year. Now that weddings are resuming, McSherry knows of at least one caterer offering such "boards" in a clear-topped, individual-sized box.

Other caterers are serving plated meals for the same price as buffets to limit how many people are around the food as it is served.

Although they'd originally planned a wedding for 200, Kadia and Matt Schroeder kept their original date and got married before about 50 guests in a backyard ceremony at the bride's parents' Washington Boro house in June.

They expected to have a full reception Aug. 2 at Historic Shady Lane in York County. The couple always wanted a relaxed vibe, and had planned a taco bar, yard games and dancing.

Though they were able to secure all of their vendors for a new date except for a DJ, the couple found themselves with more bills from two events. They chose to forgo the full taco spread and instead offered guests appetizers and desserts, which they could pick up while wearing masks the couple provided.

They also had a somewhat smaller guest list than originally planned and accepted if some friends and family were uncomfortable gathering. It was a lesson learned from their wedding in June. Kadia's grandfather officiated, while Matt's grandparents stayed home out of concerns for their health.

Kadia, 22, says all of her planning became secondary once COVID-19 forced her to adjust.

"I learned a lot of lessons through all of this, from when I first wanted to have that Pinterest-y wedding," she says.

Instead, Matt, 23, says, they realized they should focus on their marriage and the commitment they were making.

Ramos and Mattaini, too, are looking on the bright side. They'll have been together for 10 years by the time they take their vows — and they'll get to do the bachelorette and bachelor parties they would have had to give up if they kept their original date.

McSherry says perspective and careful planning will be essential for brides as they face the prospect of unexpected changes. Though every vendor she has worked with has negotiated postponements or rolled deposits forward if possible, she suggests couples look carefully at all contracts or add COVID-19 cancellation protections if needed.

And if you're thinking of a 2021 date, it's best to get moving.

"Just keep moving forward," she says. "The next year or two is going to be big and packed. My advice is don't hesitate."

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to-do list

Make sure you've got all the major
wedding day elements covered with
our at-a-glance checklists



Bride

NINE MONTHS BEFORE

- Set a date
- Prepare a budget
- Determine the time and place of the wedding and reception
- Draw up a guest list
- Choose members of the wedding party
- Buy a wedding gown
- Shop for bridesmaids' dresses
- Interview photographers, videographers, florists, musicians, caterers and bakers

SIX TO NINE MONTHS BEFORE

- Shop for wedding invitations
- Decide on attire for groom and groomsmen
- Start planning honeymoon
- Decide on florist, caterer, bakery, photographer, videographer and entertainment

FOUR TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE

- Register with a bridal gift registry
- Reserve rehearsal dinner location
- Arrange accommodations for out-of-town attendants and book a block of rooms for other out-of-town guests
- Select a wedding ring for the groom

THREE MONTHS BEFORE

- Address invitations
- Meet with caterer
- Firm up honeymoon plans
- Shop for attendants' gifts
- Make appointment with a hairstylist

TWO MONTHS BEFORE

- Mail wedding invitations
- Meet with musicians
- Get together documents for marriage license

TWO TO FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- Set time for wedding rehearsal
- Get marriage license
- Have a final gown fitting
- Keep track of invitation responses
- Give caterer solid estimate of number of guests
- Draw up a seating arrangement for rehearsal dinner and reception and make place cards
- Make name and address changes on bank accounts, credit cards, driver's license, etc.

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Make final checks with officiant, florist, caterer, photographer, videographer, bakery, musicians, etc.

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

- Pamper yourself
- Rehearse ceremony with wedding party
- Get a good night's sleep

Groom

NINE MONTHS BEFORE

- Set wedding date
- Draw up a guest list

SIX TO NINE MONTHS BEFORE

- Ask family/friends to be in the wedding
- Decide on wedding attire
- Start planning the honeymoon

FOUR TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE

- Select wedding ring for the bride
- Reserve site for rehearsal dinner
- Arrange accommodations for attendants
- Help bride with bridal registry selections
- Shop for attendants' gifts
- Apply for passports if needed for honeymoon

TWO TO THREE MONTHS BEFORE

- Firm up honeymoon plans, final payments

FOUR TO SIX WEEKS BEFORE

- Be sure to have all blood tests & paperwork needed for obtaining marriage license
- Make necessary changes to insurance

TWO TO FOUR WEEKS BEFORE

- Apply for marriage license
- Give wedding party, close friends & family all information regarding rehearsal/rehearsal dinner

ONE WEEK BEFORE

- Give restaurant or caterer firm number for rehearsal dinner attendees
- Double check honeymoon plans
- Begin packing for honeymoon
- Attend your bachelor's dinner

THE DAY BEFORE

- Rehearse your ceremony with bridal party & enjoy rehearsal dinner

THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

- Bring the marriage license to be signed
- Give your best man the officiant's check to handle
- Remember to bring your bride's ring
- Arrive an hour before the ceremony
- Have fun & congratulations



Caroline Spangler and Thomas Newell

JUNE 24, 2020

Magisterial district justice in Lancaster

PHOTOS BY LESLIE ANN PHOTOGRAPHY

Caroline and Thomas originally planned to marry June 6, 2020, at Spring Valley Farms in Dover. Although they have rescheduled their official ceremony and reception at that same location for June 12, 2021, they decided to legally marry before a district magistrate close to their home in Lancaster on June 24. They celebrated afterward with a cookout at their home for close family members who attended the ceremony and a few others who stopped by to congratulate them.

“**W**hen rescheduling the wedding, the original date seemed to be at a good time where most of York would be in the green ... so things were opening back up. We could have stuck with the original date, but we got to thinking about all the family and friends that we wanted to celebrate that special day with. A lot of the groom’s family and a few of our friends live in faraway states. The groom’s brother lives in California and other families in states such as Florida and Arizona. Some of the elderly and other guests may think it is too soon and not want to come due to the pandemic still being present and being in such a large crowd.

So, for the sake of being able to celebrate with everyone we chose to reschedule. I am happy that I chose to do so since Lancaster was still only beginning to be in the green. If we would have chosen to reschedule any later than when I did, I would have had to wait even longer to get a date that all my vendors could do. I also wanted to





pick a time that I could almost guarantee to be safer due to the pandemic.

The hardest part was coordinating my vendors on a date that would work. I emailed all vendors to see what they had available this summer, but I still thought that was too soon to reschedule and I didn't want to find myself rescheduling again due to the pandemic if I did August or even July. So, I went for a year out and they all seemed to have a date in common at the earliest, June 12, 2021. Once I had that date confirmed that it worked for the caterer, the photographer, the photobooth company, the florist, the venue, and my hair and makeup artist I went for it.

I was a little disappointed that it is a year away, but at least this way I can celebrate the way it was meant to be and not settle for who can come and who cannot and be disappointed in the day. It also lets off a lot of stress from having to get things ready in the middle of a pandemic. I did get lucky in that everything's the same. All the vendors are the same cost. I just had to transfer to another day a year from now.

The day that I was supposed to get married (June 6) was my grandfather's 75th birthday, so (we) went to my parents for a birthday cookout to celebrate him and relaxed in the pool at their home. It turned out to be a very relaxing and fun day either way, just more low-key."

— CAROLINE NEWELL



Who pays

These days,
anything goes

for what?

LIS KING FOR LNP | LANCASTERONLINE

Everything about weddings has changed since the days when Steve Martin comically portrayed George Banks, the angst-ridden, cost-cutting dad in “Father of the Bride.” Brides are often a bit older, and many are career women. Some couples live together before tying the knot. Weddings may turn into three-day events. Destination weddings send couples to pretty beaches and lush meadows. And the bill for the wedding is no longer the sole responsibility of the bride’s parents.

“Of course, there are still traditionalists, who insist that all bills be sent to the father of the bride,” says David Wood, president of the Association of Bridal Consultants.

“But there are more contemporary ways to approach wedding expenses, such as both sets of parents sharing the bill, and even other family members pitching in. And, of course, the bridal couple can contribute or, indeed, pay for the entire wedding themselves. All options are in play. And I have to say that with a pandemic going on, priorities and what couples and their families are able and willing to spend are evolving on an almost daily basis.”

Meg Wood of Bee Mine Events in Lancaster agrees completely. “Now the burden of paying for the wedding is often distributed among multiple people,” she says. “For example, the bride’s parents may pay for the catering while the groom’s parents may pick up the tab for the photographer. A lot of couples I’ve worked with have used their own money as well as

monetary gifts from many family members. Some couples have friends with a special skill, such as baking a cake or acting as a DJ, welcome gifts that lighten the financial burden.”

Where to start

Planners are well aware that visions of a dream wedding dance in every bride’s head and they have seen, firsthand, reality sink in once she’s presented with the costs of the elements she wants for her big day.

“But we’re there precisely to help create a beautiful wedding that’s within a couple’s budget,” says David Snook, owner of Mix2Event Design of Elizabethtown. “Finding out what the wedding budget is comes first. Then we ask the couple to list the elements they want for their wedding,



be it a DJ, a string quartet for the ceremony or fireworks at the end of the evening. We tell them what each item is likely to cost, right down to the favors for the guests. This enables them to prioritize and even think out of the box. Perhaps a family member's garden holds great memories and could become a lovely venue.

Perhaps they know of an ice cream truck, which could pull up as guests are leaving, so cool treats can be enjoyed on the way home."

Snook says it's not uncommon for other family members or older generations, such as grandparents, uncles, aunts and godparents, to contribute to a wedding. Anything goes.

"Sometimes such family members contribute to one of the wedding's experiences rather than simply offering up a lump sum. It could be a surprise performer, the wedding cake, a photo booth or the dress," he says. "This is so nice, I think, when different parties share the costs, thus alleviating the financial burden on one person, family or the couple."

The typical Lancaster-area wedding costs around \$25,000 to \$30,000, Snook says, considerably less than it would cost in a larger metropolitan area, such as New York. Add Lancaster County's scenic landscapes and vast variety of venues and it's not surprising it has become a popular wedding destination.

"But occasionally we do have a \$100,000 wedding to get off the ground," Snook says.

What makes a wedding worth \$100,000?

"Oh, lots of guests, of course, and a high-end menu, such as surf and turf" he says. "A live band. A cigar concierge. Special florals."



“

We went the budget route and planned something laid back. We decided to have the wedding at the camp where my husband worked throughout high school and college.

ALYSSA HANNIGAN, OWNER OF
ALYSSA CHRISTINE PHOTOGRAPHY

Divvying up the budget

David Wood acknowledges that it can be difficult to maneuver among family members when the discussion is about money.

"Couples need to be sensitive," he warns. "Perhaps one set of parents isn't as well off as the other. Don't allow them to be embarrassed and whatever you do, don't make this a competition. This is love we're celebrating here, so take it easy on everybody. Be appreciative. One good thing is that many couples are marrying later and already have careers and money saved. That means they can chip in a lot or perhaps even pay for the whole thing themselves. Keep in mind that if the couple is older, then their parents are also older and may be facing retirement age and reduced circumstances."

Wood says he likes it when the wedding couple has "some skin in the game."

"It shows a sense of responsibility," he says, "plus respect for the parents' financial circumstances. Do consider any contributions from parents as a gift rather than a responsibility. Weddings are expensive. Acknowledging that is a good thing."

Snook reminds couples that whoever pays the tab is considered the wedding host. So the invitations have to reflect your particular situation. Perhaps you word it, "The families of..." or "The parents of..." to make it clear that there is more than one host on the big day.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JULIE HAGENBUCH OF CANISTER PHOTOGRAPHY

Alyssa Hannigan, owner of Alyssa Christine Photography in Lancaster, and her husband, Matt, were one of those modern couples expecting to pay for their wedding themselves, but in the end it became a true family event.

“We went the budget route and planned something laid back,” Hannigan says. “We decided to have the wedding at the camp where my husband worked throughout high school and college. Then we had conversations with both sets of parents to see if they were interested in contributing toward the wedding, and if so, how much would they cover and what aspects would they be interested in paying toward. We paid for the rest of the wedding ourselves, which included a videographer, DJ, string quartet, and a hair and makeup artist. My grandfather is a pastor and officiated our ceremony.

“The things we spent the most money on was photography and videography because these aspects last well beyond the wedding day, and florals to make the pavilion where the reception was held more magical. We were a bit untraditional because we used a lot of friends and connections as our vendors. So many shared in putting this wedding together and I think that was why it ended up such a special, highly personal event.”

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I DO Featured Wedding

Elizabeth Weller and Christian Del Rocini

JUNE 6, 2020

CEREMONY AND RECEPTION:

A family friend's property in Leola

PHOTOS BY EMILY AVILA PHOTOGRAPHY

“**O**ur original ceremony/reception location was going to be Pheasant Run Farm near Willow Street. When COVID first came into the picture we, like many other people, thought that it would leave shortly after it came. We kept planning our wedding as normal through March, but once April came and the virus was still dictating our lives we knew we would probably have to make changes and that we weren't going to be able to have our wedding as planned.

We started to see posts all over social media about people postponing their weddings until later this year or even until next year, but for us personally that wasn't ever really an option on the table. We wanted to get married on June 6 regardless, as much of our wedding preparation was spent on our marriage and ensuring our preparedness for our life together, not necessarily on the ceremony and the wedding day in particular. We were 100% ready to get married, so we didn't want to wait months or even a year for our marriage to begin.







So we were faced with making the decision of what exactly the wedding day would look like, and we decided to have a very small ceremony with only our immediate families and our wedding parties, which totaled about 25 people. We canceled all of our vendors except our caterer, and luckily our deposit alone was able to cover food for all of our guests. Thankfully, a family friend allowed us to use their beautiful property to have our ceremony. Our photographer, Emily Avila, was able to book us last minute and was so flexible with changes that were made even in the weeks leading up to the wedding.

Our biggest challenge in this whole process was trying to navigate how to effectively communicate with our guests. The uncertainty surrounding everything made it very difficult to keep everyone in the loop, because most of the time we ourselves had no idea what the plan was or what direction to go next. Everything was constantly changing, and it felt like a full-time job just trying to keep up. We were forced to be flexible and to 'go with the flow.'

“We grew much closer because of this experience and were able to make our bond stronger by going through such a stressful time together.”

— ELIZABETH DELROCINI





Ultimately, though, I wouldn't have changed anything. Without all of the extra 'fluff' that comes with a traditional wedding, Christian and I were able to focus on the significance behind our upcoming union and put much more energy into making sure we were prepared to spend the rest of our lives together than we probably would have if we were still trying to organize the wedding we had originally planned for. We grew much closer because of this experience and were able to make our bond stronger by going through such a stressful time together.

But I can say that our day turned out to be perfect. After checking the weather all week and seeing a forecast of storms and rain for our big day, we were blessed with blue skies and not a drop of rain. There were no significant mishaps, and everything ran smoothly.

It's funny the way life works, but at the end of the day Christian and I learned a lot about ourselves and each other through this whole process, and now we have a fun story to tell our kids one day!"

— ELIZABETH DELROCINI

I DO Featured Wedding

Emily Schleicher and James Worritow

MAY 9, 2020

Private property on Strasburg Pike, Lancaster

PHOTOS BY MELANIA MARTA PHOTOGRAPHY

“Jim proposed to me at Longwood Gardens after the cutest scavenger hunt. I had to find certain places, and at each place I would get letters. At the end of the scavenger hunt the letters spelled out, ‘Will you marry me?’ Within a day after getting engaged we picked our wedding date to be May 9, 2020. I always wanted to get married in May (because of the weather – not too hot, not too cold). And we both love spring, the season of life and growth. May 9 quickly became ‘our day’. We both have huge families, so our guest list was over 260 people. We always pictured our wedding to be a huge party with lots of dancing! The invites and RSVPs went out in February of 2020, little did we know what was about to hit in March.

When COVID-19 hit America, there were so many unknowns. In the beginning people thought we would only be shut down for two weeks, so May would still be OK, right? But

as the weeks went on we quickly realized the reality of the situation; there was no way we could have our big wedding on May 9. Luckily our vendors were incredibly understanding and allowed people to move wedding dates. We quickly moved our date to July 12, one of the only summer dates available at our venue. But a week or so after moving to July, it just didn’t sit right with us. Will everything be OK in July? Will I have to send out invites again just to tell people we’re canceling again? What about our rings that have May 9 engraved in them?

What REALLY matters? Us! We matter! Our love for one another. We went back and forth a few times about what to do, but as time went on we unfortunately found out that some of our wedding guests already could not make the July 12 wedding due to COVID-19 restrictions. So we decided that we were going to take our day back. May 9, our day. We also decided to



“We had a short, intimate, emotional ceremony. It was really beautiful, and something that will stick with me for the rest of my life.”

— EMILY SCHLEICHER



only tell our immediate family, and let it be a fun surprise for all of our other friends and family.

First, we had to get our marriage license. Luckily our county was willing to give us our license, over Zoom! Next, we reached out to the pastor, who has known me since I was little. He was incredibly accommodating and insisted that he would do anything to help us still get married on May 9.

Finally, we reached out to Melania, our photographer, who immediately said yes!

Next, where to do it?

We wanted to do it at a state park, but during the pandemic 'events' are not allowed and, yes, they consider this four-person 10-minute shindig an event. Finally, we remembered one of our professors from our early years in college lived on a beautiful property in Lancaster, about 30 minutes from our home. Again, he was incredibly welcoming and allowed us to get married anywhere on his property. We were so thankful for how accommodating everyone was to us during this crazy, unprecedented time. We threw everything together in about two weeks.

The night before the wedding I made my bouquet, and I was so happy with how it turned out! The day of the wedding was super unique. I didn't have a 'team' of people helping me get ready. It was just me in my bathroom, doing my own hair and makeup.



We had a short, intimate, emotional ceremony. It was really beautiful, and something that will stick with me for the rest of my life.

We heated up chicken wings from our favorite local wing place (Penn Hotel in Hershey). Yes, I ate chicken wings in my wedding dress – sweet Thai chili and Carolina gold wings to be exact! Then, our immediate family came over for a social-distanced cake. We set up flowers and cake on our back porch. Our parents, siblings and nine nieces/nephews stood around outside as we cut the cake and, of course, smashed it in each other’s faces. Oh, and did I mention – it snowed! On May 9, in Pennsylvania, it actually snowed. What a crazy day. But at the end of the day, it was literally the best day of our lives.”

(EXCERPTED FROM EMILY’S BLOG POST AT MELANIAMPHOTOGRAPHY.COM)



Dressed in white and thinking green

How to plan an
environmentally friendly,
locally sourced wedding

STOCK PHOTO COURTESY OF GETTY IMAGES

A Backyard Wedding in our Backyard!

CATHY MOLITORIS FOR LNP | LANCASTERONLINE

To do your part to help the environment, consider going “green” at your wedding.

It’s easy to do, says Melissa Martin, owner and lead event planner at Stylish Occasions Wedding & Event Planning in Lancaster, and it also offers you the opportunity to shop local for your wedding.

“We have seen some of our couples go a little green with their wedding,” she says. “Sadly, most of our 2020 weddings have been postponed, but some for 2021 and also in previous years have done this. Helping the environment is the biggest appeal of a green wedding.”

Marty Hulse, owner of Building Character and Madcap & Co. in Lancaster, says green weddings also make it easy to focus on local vendors.

“It’s easy to shop off the registry at a big-box store and that’s why everyone does it,” he says. “But why not be a little extra and seek out one-of-a-kind gifts that can be only found at independent retailers?”

And, Hulse says, “What’s great about shopping local is you’re more likely to find amazing handmade creations from recycled, repurposed and salvaged materials.”

You can kick off your green wedding by forgoing traditional paper invitations in favor of electronic ones, Martin says, or you can stick with paper but cut back on how much you use.

“Many of our couples that do still opt for the printed invitations now limit the inserts and skip things such as direction cards,” she says.

Going green can be as easy as making an earth-friendly choice of paper products, Martin says, noting, “We have had couples use biodegradable items such as cups, plates and utensils. That seems to be somewhat of a trend as of late.”

And when it comes to favors, there are lots of options for going green, she says.

“While many of our couples skip wedding favors, we have had some give out seeds so that guests can plant them,” she says. “Some give out succulents which can then be kept at home.”

And, she says, while it may not be traditionally thought of as green, many couples give out food as favors.

“I would consider this green because there is no waste left from them if you use a biodegradable bag or container for the edible favors,” she says.

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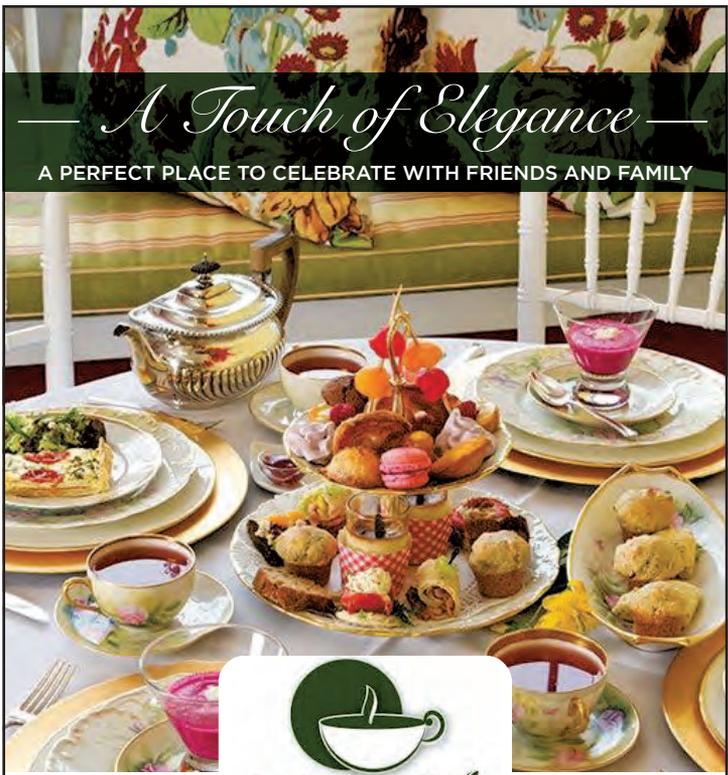
-continued from page 25

Thinking of going green for your wedding? Consider these tips:

Invitations

Check out sites such as evite.com or Paperless Post for electronic invites or get creative and do a video invite for your guests, Martin says.

If you want to do paper, take a look at recycled paper choices. "Your local stationery store is sure to have recycled paper," Martin says. For a fun twist, try seed-embedded paper, she suggests, which can be planted by your guests.



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Gifts

Look to local businesses for gift ideas, Hulse says. “Sure, Target sells cutting boards, glassware and toasters. But when you shop local, you’ll find that special something for that special couple.”

Or, in lieu of a bridal registry, ask guests to make a donation to your favorite local charity, Martin says.

Centerpieces

“You could use a twig basket and fill it with fruit in your wedding colors,” Martin says. “The guests can then take the fruit home and eat it.” Other green centerpiece ideas include flowers that can be planted after the wedding, or containers made with recycled glass.

Flowers

Flowers are one of the easiest ways to go green — and go local — Martin says. Making your own bouquets from your local farmers market, using a vendor who specializes in local flowers or reusing the ceremony flowers at the reception are just some ideas. After the wedding, consider donating your flowers to a local hospital or nursing home, she says.

Wedding rings

Consider buying a vintage ring from a local store, or look for rings made from fair trade or recycled gold, Martin says.

Wedding dresses

You can even go green with your dress, Martin says, by purchasing a previously worn one. Or, rent your dress or consider a new dress made with earth-friendly fabrics such as hemp.

Photographer

It’s tempting to put disposable cameras on every table, but Martin cautions against that, noting, “This may seem like a fun idea, but many of the pictures do not come out and they go to waste.” Instead, she says, use a digital-only professional photographer and if you want to make a wedding album, choose a photographer who prints on recycled paper

Food

Choosing locally grown food can help you stay green, Martin says, noting that you can ask your caterer to shop at your local farmers market. “And do not over cater,” she says. “So much food tends to get wasted at wedding receptions. Calculate the food needs carefully. If there are any leftovers, ask the caterer to package and freeze the leftovers. If the caterer cannot do this due to safety and hygiene issues, ask them to compost as much of the food as possible.”

Transportation

To cut down on unnecessary driving, hold your ceremony and reception at the same place, Martin says, or encourage your group to carpool to the reception. Look for local fun ideas to transport a group.

“While many of our couples skip wedding favors, we have had some give out seeds so that guests can plant them. Some give out succulents which can then be kept at home.”

Melissa Martin, owner and lead event planner at Stylish Occasions Wedding & Event Planning in Lancaster



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The Perfect Playlist

The right music can make or break a reception

CATHY MOLITORIS FOR LNP | LANCASTERONLINE

If you want your wedding reception to be an unforgettable night, don't overlook the importance of a perfect playlist.

"A good playlist is critical to a dance," says Matt Cleveland, owner and DJ with Occasions Disc Jockeys, a mobile DJ service based in Lancaster County. "No one wants to dance to music they don't like or are not familiar with. We suggest to our couples to think about who they want dancing and what music would get those people dancing. Hopefully, their answer is, 'Everyone!' and their request list includes music that everyone can enjoy."

Jason Williams, owner of Complete Weddings and Events in Lancaster, agrees, adding, "A good playlist sets the mood for the evening and creates the environment the bride and groom will want to remember."

Cleveland says if a couple has chosen the right DJ, they won't have to think too much about a

playlist other than making a few requests.

"The most important thing to remember about a playlist is that you can't plan on what makes a party fun," he says. "To some degree, setting a playlist is like deciding that when you go to your favorite restaurant next Friday, you're going to order a certain meal. How many times have you walked into a restaurant thinking you have a taste for one thing and at the moment something else is more appealing? We certainly encourage our couples to tell us their favorite songs and music they want to hear at their wedding, but a good DJ can read the crowd and respond to the types of music that are working on the crowd at the moment."

Cleveland recommends that couples list out songs they immediately think of when they think about dancing with friends and family at a party.

"I suggest that they don't stress out over it or try to come up with a certain number of requests," he says. "A good DJ will look at the songs they requested — for the dance, for the introductions,

cake cutting, even dinner music and cocktail hour, etc. — to get an idea of what the couple likes. Then, he or she will be able to get a feel for what other music would fit the vibe already created."

Cleveland says it doesn't take long to fill up an entire evening with music, so couples should keep that in mind when requesting songs from their DJ before the event.

"A typical dance at a wedding is anywhere from two to three hours, so there will be 34 to 51 songs total played," he says. "A lengthy playlist will prevent the DJ you hired from making a great party by reacting to the moment and focusing on what is working. To go back to the restaurant analogy, the crowd may be in the mood for seafood, but five weeks ago, you made a list full of steak."

Cleveland also suggests that couples rely on a professional DJ for their reception music, because a DJ has experience with the subject.

"As with most elements of planning a wedding, the couple typically has not planned an event like this before," he says. "That is why the right

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professional team is so important from the florist, to the caterer, to the photographer and the DJ. My job as a DJ is to help the client realize the wedding they dreamed of while avoiding the pitfalls they might overlook not having the experience I do planning weddings. I feel each couple should have the music and the mood they would create if they could DJ their own wedding.”

For example, he says, a couple may enjoy country music, but Cleveland would point out that it’s often hard to dance to. Instead, he would suggest playing country music during dinner. The same goes for couples who like club music. Cleveland might steer the couple toward playing those songs later in the evening when grandparents or others who may not enjoy the music have left the reception.

The DJ can really make or break the reception, Williams says.

“A good DJ will sit down with the bride and groom and find out their vision of the day and make it happen,” he says. “After all, it is their memory. We give the bride and groom the option of choosing all of their music if they wish, or giving us specific genres they wish to hear, and wish not to hear. I recommend taking requests ... however, the bride and groom have final say on whether they want their DJ to take requests.”

Cleveland says a good DJ will try to help the couple set a playlist for the whole night.

“From the time they arrive for the ceremony, through the recessional, introduction of the wedding party, the cocktail hour and dinner, and the cake cutting, the music we play is creating an atmosphere and a theme,” he says. “It lets the guests know what kind of night we are having.”

And, ultimately, a good DJ will work with the couple.

“With a little flexibility in the playlist from the couple, I can work with just about any musical taste the client has,” Cleveland says. “We try to get the couple to see the drawbacks to their plans in advance. If they still want to proceed because that is what they value in a wedding, we fully bring their plan to life. As long as we’ve pointed out the possible consequences, we will provide the party they want, not the party we think will work better.”

TOP TUNES

Looking to create the ultimate playlist? Check out these no-fail suggestions from Cleveland and Williams:

“Uptown Funk” BY BRUNO MARS

“Shake it Off” BY TAYLOR SWIFT

“Can’t Stop the Feeling” BY JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE

“Wannabe” BY THE SPICE GIRLS

“Yeah!” BY USHER

“Twist and Shout” BY THE BEATLES

“September” BY EARTH, WIND & FIRE

“Dancing Queen” BY ABBA

“Don’t Stop ’Til You Get Enough” BY MICHAEL JACKSON

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- 1| **Brent L. Miller Jewelers & Goldsmiths**
1610 Manheim Pike, Lancaster
brentlmiller.com
- 2| **Parkhill Jewelry**
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parkhilljewelry.com
- 3| **Classic Estate Jewelry**
1818 Columbia Ave., Lancaster
"Classic Estate Jewelry" on Facebook

DJ

- 1| **30 West Entertainment**
30westentertainment.com
 - 2| **Bill Coder Entertainment**
"Bill Coder Entertainment" on Facebook
 - 3| **Chuck Colson Entertainment**
"Chuck Colson Entertainment" on Facebook
- 3| **DJ Mast**
djmast.com

DRESS ALTERATIONS

- 1| **Country Threads by Gail**
194 Doe Run Road, Manheim
"Country Threads by Gail" on Facebook
- 2| **In White**
18 N. Queen St., Lancaster
inwhite.com
- 3| **POSH Bridal Shop**
117 S. West End Ave, Lancaster
poshbridal.com

DRESS PRESERVATION

- 1| **In White**
18 N. Queen St., Lancaster
inwhite.com
- 2| **Yorgey's and Filling's Fine Cleaning**
1921 Lincoln Highway East
yorgeys.com

ENGAGEMENT RING

- 1| **Brent L Miller Jewelers & Goldsmiths**
1610 Manheim Pike, Lancaster
brentlmiller.com
- 2| **Koser Jewelers**
811 E. Main St., Mount Joy
koserjewelers.com
- 3| **Finch Jewelers**
1575 Fruitville Pike, No. 1, Lancaster
finchjewelers.com

ENTERTAINMENT

- 1| **30 West Entertainment**
30westentertainment.com
- 2| **Party of 5**
"Party of 5" on Facebook
- 3| **Pocketful O' Soul**
pocketfulsoul.com

FLORIST

- 1| **Floral Designs of Mount Joy**
1599 W. Main St., Mount Joy
floraldesignsofmountjoy.com
- 2| **Royer's Flowers & Gifts**
Various locations
royers.com
- 3| **Petals With Style**
117 S. West End Ave., Lancaster
petalswithstyle.com

GROOMSMEN GIFTS

- 1| **Brent L. Miller Jewelers & Goldsmiths**
1610 Manheim Pike, Lancaster
brentlmiller.com
- 2| **Parkhill Jewelry**
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parkhilljewelry.com
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REHEARSAL DINNER

- 1| **Mara-Leo's Italian Food Truck**
mara-leos.com
- 2| **Cork & Cap Restaurant**
480 New Holland Ave. No. 3000, Lancaster
corkandcaprestaurant.com
- 3| **The Pressroom Restaurant**
26 W. King St., Lancaster
pressroomrestaurant.com

WEDDING BAND

- 1| **Brent L Miller Jewelers & Goldsmiths**
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brentlmiller.com
- 2| **Koser Jewelers**
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koserjewelers.com
- 2| **Finch Jewelers**
1575 Fruitville Pike, No. 1, Lancaster
finchjewelers.com
- 2| **Ream Jewelers**
58 N. Queen St., Lancaster
reamjewelers.com

WEDDING CAKES

- 1| **Oregon Dairy**
2900 Oregon Pike, Lititz
oregondairy.com
- 2| **House of Clarendon**
240 Harrisburg Ave., Lancaster
houseofclarendon.com
- 3| **Byers Butterflake Bakery**
44 W. Main St., Leola
byersbakery.com

WEDDING DRESS

- 1| **Tiffany's Bridal Boutique**
1832 N. Reading Road, Stevens
tiffanysbridalboutique.com
- 2| **In White**
18 N. Queen St., Lancaster
inwhite.com
- 3| **POSH Bridal Shop**
117 S. West End Ave, Lancaster
poshbridal.com

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER

- 1| **Leslie Ann Photography**
45 Ramsgate Lane, Lancaster
lesliannphotos.com
- 2| **PhotOle Photography**
108 W. King St., Lancaster
photole.com
- 3| **Lauren Fisher Photography**
355 E. Liberty St., Lancaster
laurenfisher.photography

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expressionslimo.com
- 2| **Infinity Transportation Services**
221 N. Prince St., Lancaster
infinitytransportationservices.com
- 3| **Drumore Estate LLC**
331 Red Hill Road, Pequea
drumorestate.com

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- 1| **Drumore Estate LLC**
331 Red Hill Road, Pequea
drumorestate.com
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melhornmanor.com
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