

A guide to the decisions you'll make, from save-the-dates to thank-you notes

# It's All in the Details



# Unveiled 2012

## 86 Modern Romance

Making vintage lace, layers, and crystals current.  
Styling by Jan Leach  
Photographs by Susan Jackson



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People plan. Weddings happen.  
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By Nancy McMullen

**91** Do it yourself or hire it done?  
Tight budget? Here's how to prioritize what to do and what to hire out.  
By Shera Dalin

**THIS PAGE:** Elizabeth Fillmore Eve satin gown, \$3,960. Fleur De Lis Bridal Boutique, 8109 Maryland, 314-721-2457, fleurdelisbridal.com. Meg Jewelry bird-cage veil, \$313. Simply Elegant Bridal, 1004 Olive, 314-241-8201, simpleelegantbridalstl.com. 18-karat white-gold diamond—and—South Sea pearl earrings, \$3,650. Elleard Heffern, 101 S. Hanley, Ste. 110, 314-863-8820, heffern.com. 18-karat white-gold pavé-diamond multicross bangle, \$16,260. Genovese Jewelers, 12460 Olive, 314-878-6203, genovesejewelers.com. 18-karat white-gold micro-pavé emerald-cut diamond ring, price upon request. Elleard Heffern. Lisbeth Dahl coin purse, price upon request. The White Rabbit, 9030 Manchester, 314-963-9784, thewhiterabbitstl.com.

**P. 69:** Bellissima Couture "Bendeca" beaded and layered organza gown, \$2,228. Simply Elegant Bridal. Round diamond drop earrings, \$2,400; three-diamond pendant necklace, \$1,100; 14-karat white-gold pavé-and-cluster ring, \$3,700. Timekeepers, 17 N. Meramec, 314-721-4548, timekeepersclayton.com. Six-rose gold, white-gold, and yellow-gold bangles, \$4,100 each. Elleard Heffern. Cake stand provided by Proposing Dreams Weddings & Events, proposingdreams.com. Pink meringues provided by La Bonne Boucheé, 12344 Olive, 314-576-6606, labonnebouchee.com.

**PP. 69-70 & 86-92:** Model: Jentri Rae, West Model & Talent Management. Hair and Makeup: Danielle Erb

# Things We Love

## BRIDAL EDITION



### ring in the new year



By JAN LeAch / Photographs By Kevin A. Roberts

**ROW 1:** 14-karat white- and yellow-gold three-stone ring, \$3,000. Timekeepers, 17 N. Meramec, 314-721-4548, timekeepersclayton.com. Private Collection platinum round diamond ring, price upon request. Elleard Heffern, 101 S. Hanley, Ste. 110, 314-863-8820, heffern.com. Vintage platinum round diamond bezel ring, \$17,000. Timekeepers.

**ROW 2:** Private Collection platinum oval-sapphire ring, \$27,700. Elleard Heffern. Platinum yellow-diamond ring, \$35,000. Timekeepers. 14-karat white-gold oval-domed black diamond-and-pavé diamond ring, \$4,050. Genovese Jewelers, 12430 Olive, 314-878-6203, genovesejewelers.com.

**ROW 3:** 18-karat white-gold micro-pavé emerald-cut diamond ring, price upon request. Elleard Heffern. 14-karat white-gold diamond pavé-and-cluster ring, \$3,700. Timekeepers. Private Collection platinum Asscher-cut diamond ring, price upon request. Elleard Heffern.

# Things We Love / BRIDAL EDITION



1. Mary Green ivory silk-and-pink lace teddy, \$84. Jule, 9757 Clayton, 314-983-9282, [juleonline.com](http://juleonline.com).
2. Jenny Walker gold flower drop earrings, \$65. Mezzanine, 2741 Sutton, 314-645-2777, [shopmezzanine.com](http://shopmezzanine.com).
3. Deborah Lippmann Prelude to a Kiss nail polish, \$16. Lusso, 165 Carondelet Plaza, 314-725-7205, [lussohome.com](http://lussohome.com).
4. Prada Raso Stones satin frame clutch, \$1,460. Neiman Marcus, online only, [neimanmarcus.com](http://neimanmarcus.com).
5. Reed & Barton Williamsburg flask-and-beaker gift set, \$110. Saks Fifth Avenue, Plaza Frontenac, 314-567-9200, [saks.com](http://saks.com).
6. Torre Designs customizable necklace with initials, \$45. Daisy Clover, 8146 Big Bend, 314-962-4477, [daisy-clover.com](http://daisy-clover.com).
7. Black-silk striped tie, \$95. Ermenegildo Zegna silver textured tie, \$150. Neiman Marcus, Plaza Frontenac, 314-567-9811, [neimanmarcus.com](http://neimanmarcus.com).
8. Crystalline champagne toasting flutes, \$390. Swarovski, multiple locations, 888-207-9873, [swarovski.com](http://swarovski.com).
9. Champagne-satin wedges, \$59.95. Nordstrom, multiple locations, 314-255-2000, [nordstrom.com](http://nordstrom.com).
10. Tickled Pink thank-you cards, \$25. Kate Spade, Plaza Frontenac, 314-991-8820, [katespade.com](http://katespade.com).
11. Chanel Glossimer Pagoda lip gloss, \$28. Nordstrom, multiple locations, 314-255-2000, [nordstrom.com](http://nordstrom.com).
12. MAC Prep + Prime cream, \$28. Nordstrom, multiple locations, 314-255-2000, [nordstrom.com](http://nordstrom.com).



13.



14.



15.



16.



17.



18.



19.



20.



21.



22.



23.



24.

- 13. Michael Kors oversized chronograph watch, \$225. Neiman Marcus, online only, [neimanmarcus.com](http://neimanmarcus.com).
- 14. F. Hammann crocodile-print shoeshine kit, \$125. Neiman Marcus, Plaza Frontenac, 314-567-9811, [neimanmarcus.com](http://neimanmarcus.com).
- 15. Cupcake bath bomb, \$14. Lusso, 165 Carondelet Plaza, 314-725-7205, [lussohome.com](http://lussohome.com).
- 16. Vera Wang Lavender Label glitter peep-toe ballerina flats, \$225. Neiman Marcus, online only, [neimanmarcus.com](http://neimanmarcus.com).
- 17. Alexandra Ferguson Happily Ever After recycled-plastic pillow, \$134. Lusso, 165 Carondelet Plaza, 314-725-7205, [lussohome.com](http://lussohome.com).
- 18. Feather, rhinestone, and sequin hair clip, \$4.95. H&M, multiple locations, 212-564-9922, [hm.com/us](http://hm.com/us).
- 19. *Handmade Weddings*, \$24.95. Nordstrom, West County Center, 314-255-2000, [nordstrom.com](http://nordstrom.com).
- 20. Hanky Panky blue-and-white lace thong, \$32. Jule, 9757 Clayton, 314-983-9282, [juleonline.com](http://juleonline.com).
- 21. Stayclip stainless-steel collar-stay set, \$35. Moris Fashions, 26 Maryland Plaza, 314-361-6800, [morisfashions.com](http://morisfashions.com).
- 22. Gucci black patent lace-up shoes, \$550. Saks Fifth Avenue, Plaza Frontenac, 314-567-9200, [saks.com](http://saks.com).
- 23. Tokens & Icons game-used Cardinals baseball cuff links, \$196. Lusso, 165 Carondelet Plaza, 314-725-7205, [lussohome.com](http://lussohome.com).
- 24. Ms. & Mrs. Miniemergency Kit for Her, \$18. Blush, 110 N. Clay, 314-965-4411, [shopblushboutique.com](http://shopblushboutique.com).

# Love, Actually

SELECTIONS FROM TWO OF THE YEAR'S MOST MEMORABLE WEDDINGS



**Brooke  
Wehner  
&  
Travis  
Russell**



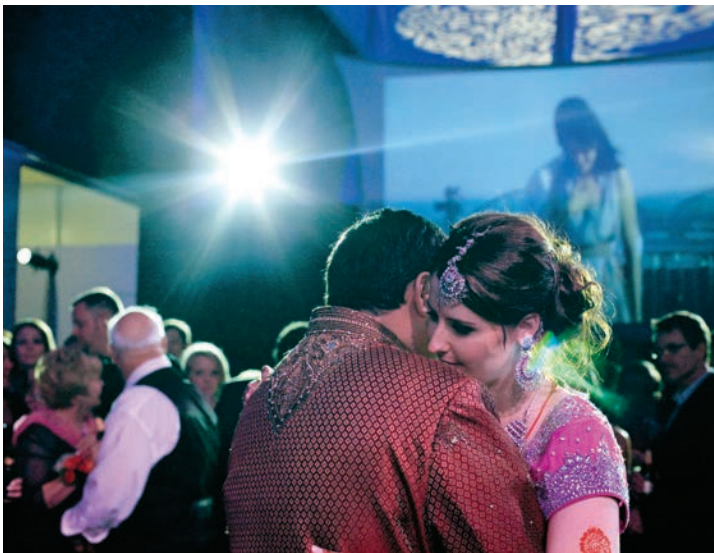
**Date**  
January 15, 2011

**Ceremony AND Reception**  
When *MTV* producer Brooke Wehner and local artist Travis Russell began planning their wedding, they knew they wanted it to be a getaway for family and friends—with St. Louis touches. Their ceremony and reception took place at the Blucacao Beach Club in Playa del Carmen, Mexico.

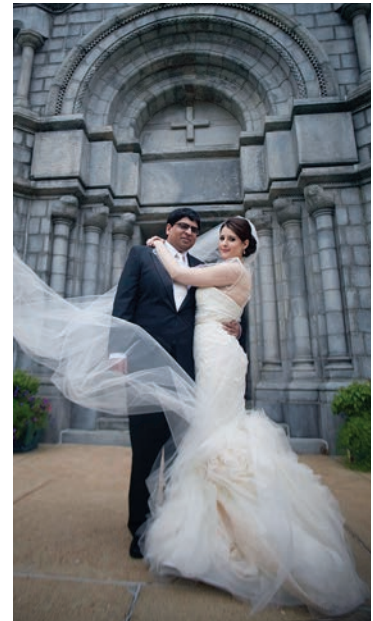
**St. Louis in the Spotlight**  
Planning the decor came down to how it would pack; among the local items they brought were tote bags from the curtain factory, a guestbook from All Along Press, jewelry from Women's Closet Exchange, a headpiece from simply elegant Bridal, and—most important—rings from a diamond foster fine art jewelry.

**Photographer**  
Megan Thompson Photography,  
meganthompsonphotography.com





Kelly  
Hummert  
&  
Amit  
Dhawan



**Date**  
November 18–19, 2011

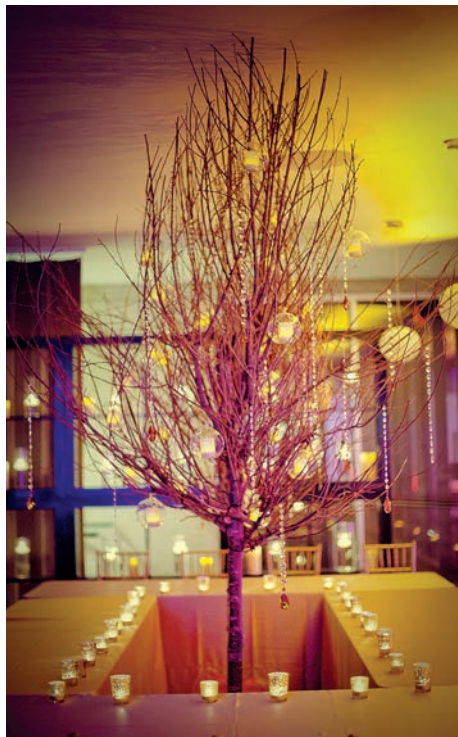
**Ceremony Sites AND Reception**

All-star event planners Kelly Hummert and Amit Dhawan enjoyed a two-day wedding celebration including a Mehndi party for the bride at Lumen on Friday, a Saturday-afternoon ceremony at the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis, and a Hindu ceremony and Lumen-catered reception at the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

**A Match Made in the Stars**

This power couple had an impressive turnout during their wedding weekend. The many notable guests included Rams running back Steven Jackson; actress Tika Sumpter; Kelly's manager Tony Davis; and best man Sam Koplar and his father, Ted, sportscaster Mike Calabrone emceed the reception.

**Photographer**  
Greg Lappin Photography,  
greglappinphotography.com



# Planning for the Unpredictable

PEOPLE PLAN. w EDDING S h APPEN.

By Kim Aubuchon

Asks, she says yes, eventually they both say, “I do,” and the credits roll. This is basically what movies and TV tell us about weddings.

But anyone who’s been married or involved in a wedding knows about the months of planning behind that one day.

SLM asked readers for their planning stories and got a variety of tales. Some weddings seemed to plan themselves, while others, despite meticulous planning, had a few wrinkles.

Local teacher of the deaf Ashley Richter recalls, “My husband was allowed to pick out one thing by himself: the limo.” He chose a “one-of-a-kind” luxury Hummer H2, a “nightclub on wheels” that sat 25 to 28 people with extended headroom. That—along with custom paint and wheels, flat-screen TVs, and a fully stocked bar—made it her husband-to-be’s dream.

The day of the wedding, Richter, her husband, and their wedding party exited the church to find themselves rideless. Moments later, their

“limo” arrived. This was no mobile nightclub; instead, they found themselves face to face with a school bus that had been painted black—and was billowing black smoke from its tailpipe. Their original vehicle had gotten a flat on the highway and needed to be towed back to the rental company because of its custom wheels, so the company graciously sent them this equally luxurious replacement. “Our photographer joked that it looked like we were going to prison, not a reception!” says Richter. “Later, when we received our wedding photos, our photographer Photoshopped one of the bus pictures to have the phrase ‘Prisoners of Love’ on the side.”

Erin Eckardt is still planning her May wedding, but she already knows one of her favorite memories will be shopping for the dress.

“The first dress I tried fit me perfectly, and I felt like such a princess. I knew it was *the* dress!” she says. “I came out of the dressing room and my mom took one look at me and said, ‘Oh, Air-e’ [a childhood nickname] and started crying!”

Some things can’t be planned for, though. Bobby’s future father-in-law died suddenly, three weeks prior to the wedding. Despite the heartache caused by this unforeseeable upheaval, Bobby’s wife, Marilyn, still recalls how much her father had dreaded wearing his tuxedo. When the rental was cancelled, she says, she could still hear him calling it his “fruit suit.”

Lyndsie Thurnau’s husband, Stefan, was stationed in California with the Marines during the planning process, so they mostly collaborated through email. But some tasks can’t be done electronically, like taste-testing cakes. A groomsman, Steve, gladly accompanied her.

“We had such a great time tasting different cakes, fillers, and icings, it never crossed our minds to mention that he wasn’t the groom,” says Thurnau. It wasn’t until the staff commented on what a fun couple they were that they realized they should probably explain...

Nature can also be an unpredictable factor. Lexi Mills and her husband, Nate, planned a late-winter wedding to coincide with spring break, since they were both working on college degrees. They also hoped the snow would be on its way out by then. But by Wednesday of their wedding week, schools were cancelled due to 3 feet of snow. By Friday, the town was basically shut down. They called off the rehearsal, but gathered a group at the church to decorate.

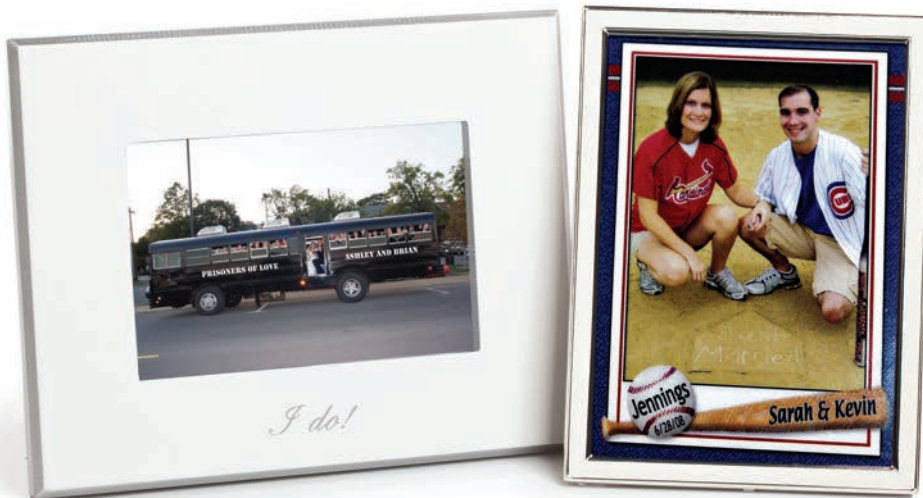
That was when they realized they didn’t have a marriage license. Says Mills, “That was the one thing I must have forgotten to check off my list...or maybe I never added it to my list. All I know is that Friday night about 7 p.m. was the first time I heard the words ‘marriage license.’” Luckily, a friend of a friend who was a county clerk agreed to come in Saturday to issue one.

When they finished decorating, they returned to their cars and noticed snow blown back over the road. “All three vehicles got stuck, and of course, no one had a shovel,” remembers Mills. “My dad, Nate, and our guy friends had to dig all the vehicles out by hand and push them.”

On Saturday, they had a beautiful wedding with a great turnout—and for the honeymoon, they went to San Antonio, Texas, where it was 70 degrees and sunny.

Then there are couples who opt out of wedding planning altogether. Stacy Smugala definitely didn’t have a traditional wedding, but “I think how we got there is a funny story,” she says.

She and her husband, Tim, had been dating for five years. They were arguing over some-





thing trivial, running errands, when Tim asked if they were ever going to get married. They got a marriage license that day and were married the next morning, on St. Patrick's Day. They let loved ones know by phone and Facebook.

Now they've been married for almost two years, and last summer, their son, Patrick, was born. "If I had it to do over again, I would not," says Smugala. "This was the best wedding I've ever been to; it was just me and my husband."

Sixth-grade teacher Sarah Jennings is a major Cardinals fan, but she fell in love with an equally fervent Cubs fan, Kevin, and they planned a baseball-themed reception. Favors included custom-etched baseballs and baseball cards with the couple in their respective teams' jerseys and all of their wedding stats on the back.

A few days before the wedding, they started loading favors into the car to deliver them to the reception hall. Kevin took the tote full of baseballs and walked out the door first. When Sarah heard him shout and curse, she hurried outside. He'd stepped off the front porch and sprained his ankle so badly, he chipped a bone.

They left the emergency room with a set of crutches and concerns that Kevin wouldn't be able to stand at the altar, much less dance at the reception. But he was determined to go on. He wore his brace under a shoe two sizes too big and participated in everything, including the first dance. A groomsman even gave him piggyback rides around Forest Park for photos. "By the end of the night, his ankle was incredibly swollen, black and blue," recalls Sarah. "He didn't complain one bit. I am one blessed Cardinals fan, who married one amazing Cubs fan!"

Some plans are best kept secret. Karen Campbell and her husband, Greg, planned their wedding for October 2010—with a surprise for family and friends, who thought they were marrying in a private ceremony. "We sent an announcement saying we were getting married in Arizona on 10-16 and also announcing a 'dinner-party reception' on 10-22," she says.

The "reception" was to be held on The Chase Park Plaza's Starlight Room terrace. Drapes over the windows and doors kept guests from seeing inside as they arrived. When the time came, the curtain was raised, and guests saw the couple standing at the altar, waiting to be wed.

"Our guests were in absolute shock," says Campbell. "It was amazing. We and our guests still can't believe we pulled it off!"



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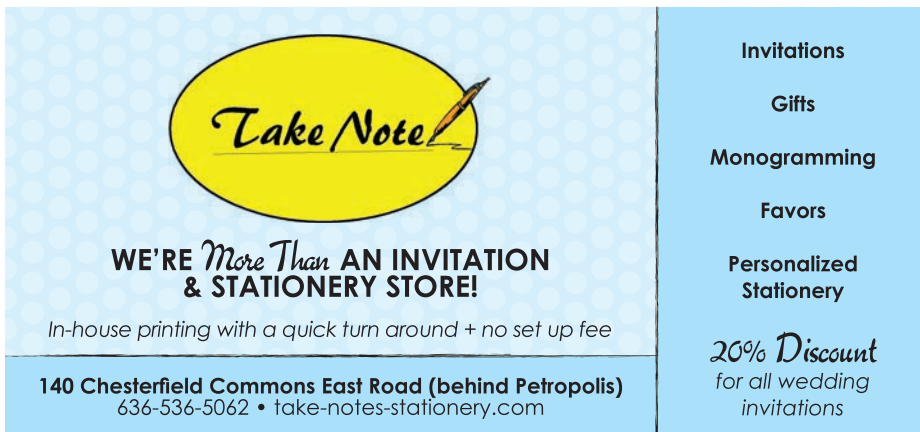
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TO hELP yOu PARE DOW N yOuR ch OIc ES.

By Nancy McMullen

**I**n the age of Internet shopping, couples have more and more choices. “The biggest benefit to online shopping is that brides are more prepared than ever when they start to plan their wedding,” says planner Renée Joshu of Weddings by Renée. “The downside is, you’re not getting the personal, face-to-face service you get with local vendors. But it’s great for helping you come up with the design and feel you want for your wedding.”

Moreover, while it’s now *possible* to buy pretty much anything for your wedding online, some elements of your big day, like your dress, are still better suited to buying locally. *SLM* talked to Joshu and other experts to help you make a few of those local-versus-online decisions.

## ↳ Loo K oNLiNe ◀ invitations

There are thousands of websites with great artists (including a number of local ones who sell online) who will create truly custom invitations for you. Many sites offer discounts for buying save-the-dates, invitations, programs, menu cards, etc. together. If you’re concerned about paper quality and the feel of the invitation, almost all invitation sites will send a sample. For the DIY set, some invitation shops on Etsy send a custom-designed PDF that you can print yourself. And for those who want to make their own invitations, free, downloadable fonts and clip art online can help you design your dream stationery. Search for “free printable invitation templates” to find stylish starting points. Others to try: Shine Wedding Invitations ([shineweddinginvitations.com](http://shineweddinginvitations.com)), Wedding Paper Divas ([weddingpaperdivas.com](http://weddingpaperdivas.com)), and Download & Print ([downloadandprint.com](http://downloadandprint.com)).

## favors

When you’re buying in bulk, online shopping is a good option. You can find deals on items ranging from candy to personalized gifts on party sites that aren’t necessarily geared toward weddings, then package them yourself. If you’re having a destination wedding, for instance, it’s easy to find favors related to your locale or to the season. Another option couples are choosing is making a donation to a favorite charity in lieu of favors. Most organizations accept dona-



tions online, and you can put out custom notes to explain the importance of your beneficiary. Places to start: Shop at Brides ([shopatbrides.com](http://shopatbrides.com)), Oriental Trading ([orientaltrading.com](http://orientaltrading.com)), and JustGive ([justgive.org](http://justgive.org)).

## o ne-of-a- kind accessories

When you’re looking for accessories, check online first to get a sense of your options. Sites like Etsy have an amazing selection of veils, headbands, hair clips, and other accessories. See something close to what you want? Many shops on Etsy will work with you to customize accessories that fit your desired look and feel. You can also find more offbeat accents, like bouquets made out of vintage brooches, that will make your wedding memorable and serve as a keepsake. Where to begin: Luxe Deluxe ([etsy.com/shop/luxedeluxe](http://etsy.com/shop/luxedeluxe)), The Red Magnolia ([etsy.com/shop/theredmagnolia](http://etsy.com/shop/theredmagnolia)), and Hair Comes the Bride ([haircomesthebride.com](http://haircomesthebride.com)).

## gifts

It’s nice to give your bridesmaids, groomsmen, and family members something special to show appreciation for the effort they’re putting into your wedding day. Personalized gifts create something unique that your loved ones can use in the future. Whether you go with personalized drink coozies (not just in neoprene!), engraved jewelry, a journal, or even a monogrammed stainless-steel survival kit, there are tons of options online. Or for something even more personalized, a photo book can be a good gift option. Where we’d start: Personal Creations ([personalcreations.com](http://personalcreations.com)) and RedEnvelope ([redenvelope.com](http://redenvelope.com)).

## ↳ Loo K Loc ALly ◀ flowers

On your wedding day, you want your flowers to look freshly picked and vibrant. Although some online retailers offer centerpiece options, there’s no way to tell whether the flowers will make it through the mail well or even be what you’re envisioning. For the best results, especially for bouquets, corsages, and centerpieces, go with a local florist. For those worried about budgets, take heart: There are ways to cut costs locally without gambling on flowers by mail. Talk to your florist to substitute locally grown, in-season blooms in place of more exotic flowers like orchids. For larger arrangements, consider using fillers or less expensive flowers in large quantities to make an impact. And DIY brides can check out local flower markets or even supermarkets to get good deals.

## dress

One of the most important elements of the wedding, the bride’s dress is really something to be bought in person. It’s often a major purchase, and for the money you’re spending, you want it to be just the way you’ve envisioned it. Even if you normally have a strong sense of what looks good on you, with wedding dresses, that all goes out the window—dress sizes and silhouettes vary among designers, so you should try on a selection to find the perfect fit. For a more casual wedding, you might be able to find something online to suit you, but gotcha return policies can make this iffy—it’s still best to shop around. Before you go, research photos online and in bridal magazines to find what inspires you the most. If your dress budget is tight, you can buy a simple silhouette and embellish it with a sash, or take it to a tailor, who can add lace or premade beading.



### Brides Maid dresses

Since the tradition of bridesmaids with matching dresses was established, the bridesmaid dress has gotten a bad rap. For many maids, the thought of sporting their friends' favorite-but-not-flattering color, or an expensive dress that fits the bride's style but not theirs, isn't the most exciting proposition, especially when they know they're going to be in dozens of photos. Do your bridesmaids a favor and shop around for a dress that fits both the style of the wedding and the personal style of the bridesmaids. Alternately, an increasingly popular option is to let your maids choose the dresses they want, but all in the same hue. Also, don't feel limited to choosing dresses specifically made for bridesmaids. Look at your favorite stores for simple silhouettes in the color you want for the wedding—this can make it easier, especially if your bridesmaids live in different cities.

### food

Even if you're a professional (or professional-caliber) chef, you probably won't want to spend the day before the wedding cooking for friends and family. Go online to get reviews and recommendations for local caterers, but don't book until you meet with them in person and do a tasting. If food isn't the most important piece of the puzzle for you, booking someone on the spot can be tempting, but you want to make sure the caterer understands the experience you want for your guests. Food and drink can be expensive, but caterers often will work with you to bring down the price by offering substitutions and creative menu ideas. If the food is important to you, shopping around is a must, but make sure to check with your reception venue first—many have an in-house caterer or contract with certain outside vendors only. Be sure to take that into consideration before booking your venue.

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# Modern Romance

Styling by Jani Leach  
Photography by Susan Jackson















## Credits

**PP. 86–87:** Richard Designs crystal tiara, \$214. Simply Elegant. Rhinestone earrings, \$60. Clarice's Bridal, 4627 Hampton, 314-351-2499, claricesbridal.com. Lazaro tulle ball gown, \$3,650. Maiden Voyage Bridal, 120 Henry, 636-394-5858, maidenvoyagebridal.com. Private Collection platinum round-diamond ring, price upon request. Elleard Heffern. 18-karat yellow-gold diamond cuff, \$4,100; 18-karat rose-gold diamond cuff, \$4,100; 18-karat white-gold diamond cuff, \$4,100; 18-karat white-gold coin edge cuff, \$700. Elleard Heffern. Flowers courtesy of Bloomin' Buckets, 9844 Manchester, 314-961-4040, bloominbuckets.com. Table courtesy of The White Rabbit.

**P. 88:** Rivini Dari strapless trumpet gown, \$6,897. Fleur de Lis. Cultured-pearl strand, \$25,200. Elleard Heffern. Pearl-and-rhinestone bracelet, \$40. Clarice's Bridal. 14-karat white- and yellow-gold diamond ring, \$3,000. Timekeepers. Chair courtesy of Amie Corley Interiors, 314-496-6022, amiecorley.com.

**P. 89:** Jim Hjelm strapless floral-appliqué ruffle gown, \$3,799. The Ultimate Bride, 1512 S. Brentwood, 314-961-9997, theultimatebride.com. Satin ribbon headband, \$195. The Ultimate Bride. Diamond- and-South Sea pearl drop earrings, \$4,600. Elleard Heffern. Meira T. pavé diamond disc pendant necklace, \$825. Genovese Jewelers. Diamond cuff bracelets, \$4,100 each. Elleard Heffern. Sondra Roberts yellow floral organza clutch, \$64.90. Nordstrom, multiple locations, 314-255-2000, nordstrom.com. Private Collection platinum round-diamond ring, price upon request. Elleard Heffern.

**P. 90:** Lazaro champagne satin ball gown, \$3,800. Maiden Voyage. Toni Federici cathedral-length veil, \$1,000. Maiden Voyage. Toni Federici feather comb, \$350. Ultimate Bride. Oval sapphire- and-diamond earrings, \$18,000. Elleard Heffern. Vintage platinum round-diamond bezel ring, \$17,000. Timekeepers.

**P. 91:** Pronovias Siena ruffled organza dress, \$1,599. Ultimate Bride. 18-karat tapered diamond-baguette drop earrings, \$16,000. Genovese Jewelers. Yellow ombré cashmere- and-wool scarf, \$98. Nordstrom. Platinum yellow-diamond ring, \$35,000, Timekeepers. Flowers courtesy of Bloomin' Buckets.

**P. 92:** Casablanca Bridal Couture silk shantung gown, \$1,280. Clarice's Bridal. Ribbon-edged veil, \$75. Ultimate Bride. 18-karat white-gold filigree earrings, \$3,700. Elleard Heffern. 14-karat white-gold diamond band, \$750; rose-gold diamond band, \$835; 18-karat white-gold milgrain bezel eternity band, \$2,750. Genovese Jewelers. 18-karat white-gold milgrain bracelet, \$5,950; 18-karat white-gold small-milgrain bracelet, \$7,575; platinum bezel-set diamond bracelet, \$6,350. Elleard Heffern. Private Collection platinum Asscher-cut diamond ring, price upon request. Elleard Heffern. Flowers courtesy of Bloomin' Buckets. Cake by Sugaree Baking Company, 1242 Tamm, 314-645-5496, sugareebaking.com.



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# Do It Yourself or Hire It Done?

TiGh T bud GeT? here's how To priori Tize  
wha T To diY and wha T To hire ou T.

By Shera Dalin

**M**any couples say they felt fireworks when they fell in love, but few can say pyrotechnics exploded during their wedding reception.

Britni and Karl Eggers can claim both. When the St. Louis couple married under a white tent in May 2005 in Liberty, much of their wedding and reception was homemade. But the polished outdoor affair didn't seem homespun, especially the finale. The 10-minute fireworks display took Karl and Britni's sister, uncle, and father, Harry Lee Boggess, most of the day before the wedding to prepare.

"My dad had a fireworks company," Britni explains. "Yes, it was called Crazy Harry's. But he did all kinds of things for our wedding."

Britni and Karl decided to play off of the Chinese origin of fireworks for their wedding theme. As graphic designers, they found that many of their wedding's elements, from the invitations to the reception decor to the band (the groom and his bandmates entertained the guests), lent themselves to a do-it-yourself effort.

Britni's father, a talented handyman, built a lattice backdrop for the ceremony and rigged up electricity and Chinese lanterns for the

reception tent. And friends pitched in to shoot a Polaroid photo of each guest or couple on arrival, on which they could write a message to the newlyweds. Britni later used Shutterfly (shutterfly.com) to create a guestbook from scans of the photos.

Like many couples, Britni and Karl wanted to avoid starting their married life in debt. Other couples go DIY not necessarily to save costs, but because they have special expertise or want to make sure certain aspects of their wedding are exactly as they envision. But while it's certainly possible to do everything yourself, not every part of a wedding lends itself equally to a DIY approach. How do you determine what to do yourself and what to hire out?

A big factor is the size of the wedding, says planning guru Sarah Grus: "Smaller, intimate weddings of approximately 50 or fewer people are more favorable to do-it-yourselfers. They are more manageable for doing the centerpieces, invitations, escort cards, programs, menu cards, music, and even food, as long as you have someone to handle setting up everything the day of the wedding."

For those looking to save money or add a personal touch to their reception, for instance, a candy-bar dessert station featuring the couple's fave confections can work well—and it can be created up to a month ahead of the wedding. On the paper end of things, many couples go with money-saving online printing services like Vistaprint (vistaprint.com) or PrintingForLess.com for save-the-date cards, invitations, response cards, and envelopes.

And you don't have to stop there, says Allison Hockett, co-author of *The St. Louis Wedding*



*Book* (stlweddingbook.com). You could have a friend become an ordained minister online and perform your ceremony. Or you could even take cake-decorating and flower-arranging classes to do your own cake and flowers, she says. (Picking up a new skill you can use again in your future life together is a good way to remember why you're planning a wedding in the first place!)

So where should couples draw the line? The experts agree: Without a doubt, hire a professional photographer for your big day.

"If you are going to splurge in any area, this is the one," Hockett says. "I had an amateur photographer that did my photography. I won't name names, but my pictures weren't the best."

DIY stationery also has its pitfalls. Grus recalls a bride who decided to create her own

## Are You Cut out to DIY?

Go through our checklist before taking the plunge.

- AM I EXCELLENT AT TIME MANAGEMENT?
- AM I A PROCRASTINATOR?
- DO I TRULY ENJOY DOING THIS SORT OF WORK?
- HOW MUCH DOES THIS ASPECT OF THE WEDDING MATTER TO ME?
- DO I HAVE THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT AND SPACE FOR STORAGE AND ASSEMBLY?
- DO I HAVE ADEQUATE HELP, ESPECIALLY FOR SETUP?
- DO I NEED TO SAVE MONEY?
- IS THE PROJECT I HAVE IN MIND MANAGEABLE FOR THIS SIZE OF WEDDING?
- HAVE I ACCURATELY ESTIMATED THIS PROJECT'S COST IN MATERIALS AND TIME?
- COULD A VENDOR DO THIS BETTER, FASTER, MORE EASILY, OR FOR LESS MONEY?



programs and menu cards and the near-disaster that followed. After recruiting her sister and then two friends to help just days before the wedding, the bride ran out of materials to make the cards, made multiple trips to the printer, stopped and started the project to attend prewedding events, and ultimately didn't finish everything until 1 a.m. on her wedding day. In the end, Grus says the bride spent three to four times more than if she had given the whole job over to her invitation vendor.

Grus believes wedding flowers are also best left to professionals, due to their delicacy and the complexity of care needed. "The week before the wedding should be spent relaxing, getting a mani or pedi, and spending time with out-of-town guests or bridesmaids," she suggests.

But sometimes DIY can save the day. Newlywed Jaelyn Davis of Dogtown says the handmade touches at her vintage country-style wedding kept things together, while adding uniqueness and sentiment to the proceedings.

For decoration, she filled blue Mason jars and old vases from her grandmother's base-



ment with loose bulk white flowers she bought from a florist and grocery store. Her favors were bags of kettle corn, which she and her husband, Tyson, love.

The day of the outdoor wedding at Twin Oaks Vineyard in Farmington turned unexpectedly windy, buffeting the reception tables' white tablecloths. Jaelyn had her father dash to the store for a ball of twine, which she used to tie the tablecloths to the table legs in poufs.

"It ended up working out great, and it looked so much better," she recalls. "Plus, it really fit in with the theme."

**SHERA DALIN IS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST, BELIEVER IN DIY WEDDINGS, AND THE AUTHOR OF THE ART OF BARTER: HOW TO TRADE FOR ALMOST ANYTHING. 🍷**

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