

Wedding Cache

By Jane Earle

The one true thing that can be said of every bride-to-be is that she wants her wedding to be unlike anyone else's, a love story with a fairytale ending that guests will gush over for years to come. At the very least she wants the day to end without exes and in-laws throwing cake or barbs. With so much froth and gauze as standard in traditional wedding rituals, modern brides (and their grooms) are throwing those stale ideas overboard and making memories that run deep

Jason Corriere has advice for prospective bride grooms: don't let the mariachi band members stand too close behind you during your vows. "Otherwise, in all the pictures you will look like you are wearing a sombrero."

Corriere knows what he's talking about. The mariachi band at his wedding ceremony was intended to add to the festivities, (albeit with certain risks to the groom), when he and his wife Susan were married at Playa del Carmen, Mexico. They are among the thousands of American couples who choose to be married somewhere other than in the bride's home town as tradition long dictated. Among those who choose a destination wedding, ocean-side locations are the most popular, followed closely by mountain vistas.

Location is only one of the time-honored wedding traditions getting the heave-ho in a changing social climate. Brides do not always wear white these days, although it is still the dominant color choice. Some brides no longer want a wedding gown that has a train and bridal veils are rarely seen. Most brides don't throw their bouquets to the arms of their waiting friends and attendants and the garter has gone the way of the veil.

Getaway Bride

Marriages are on the decline, yet destination weddings are booming. Named Number One in Mexico on the 2007 Conde Nast Traveler Gold List of World's Best Places to Stay, La Casa Que Canta in Zibuatanejo features a salt water pool, fresh water pool, a spa and cooking lessons on site for the honeymooners' enjoyment.
andrewclarkphotography.com.

A large part of the wedding traditions we grew up with were handed down to us from the Victorian era when a woman's life was lived under the "care and protection" of one man or another. Today's wedding is being designed by a generation of women who may be well into a career as a surgeon or jet pilot when she gets married. She no longer needs, nor will accept, the notion of being handed off by her father to the groom. Social customs are changing as well, moving from formal to informal in everything from dinner parties to funerals. It is at the reception where the wedding has seen the most changes.

As brides reject the old rituals, they are looking for new ways to put their own mark on their wedding and make it memorable for them and their guests. Individuality is what drives the new look in weddings. This is especially true of older brides, says wedding consultant Michelle Gillette. "Brides who have been to a lot of weddings and are looking for ways to be unique come to me to help them do that."

One wedding Gillette managed was for an older couple who wanted to surprise their guests with an impromptu ceremony. This couple had given a holiday party annually for several years so they sent out the invitations for the party as they always did and said nothing about the wedding. Meantime, Gillette went to work engaging caterers, flower arrangers, musicians and concealed them all about the house. "There was even a tent in the back yard that couldn't be seen from the front of the house," she says. About an hour into the cocktail party all the guests were completely baffled for a moment as they were led to

the tent. Gillette judges the event a great coup. The bride got exactly what she wanted. And that is how bridal consultants judge success. They are there to carry out the bride's wishes, do the work and give advice—if asked.

If a wedding is no longer a rite of passage, it is still one of the most important days in a person's life, and couples want to mark the beginning of their life together with a celebration. With the rigid bonds of convention and tradition loosening, weddings have grown larger and more complex. Today's couples are more affluent than in previous generations, and they are spending big money on weddings. The \$100,000 wedding is no longer reserved for the über-rich. Any millionaire can do it. As a result, the bridal consultant has come out of the background and onto the leader board in the wedding day countdown.

Even Susan and Jason Corriere, who started out wanting "something very small" engaged a bridal coordinator to handle things in Mexico. "We got engaged in December and sent out announcements in January that we were going to be married in June in Mexico and our friends said, 'Great, we'll take our vacation then and come to your wedding,'" Jason says. And they did. Susan made the travel arrangements for all the wedding guests and reserved a villa where the whole wedding party stayed. The coordinator did the rest, and three days after the wedding, they left Mexico with their marriage certificate in hand.