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THERE'S NO NEED TO STAND ON CEREMONY WHEN IT COMES TO PLANNING YOUR WEDDING. HERE, STRAIGHT FROM THE EXPERTS, ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS ON THE TRENDS TO TACKLE—AND THE ONES TO DITCH—TO ENSURE YOUR BIG DAY IS THE STUFF *YOUR* DREAMS ARE MADE OF.

By Jennifer Leslie Kramer





IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT NEARLY EVERY bride has been dreaming about her wedding day since she was a little girl, walking down the "aisle" with an oversized beach towel as ersatz wedding dress and holding a "bouquet" cobbled together from whatever odds and ends she picked up around the house. But when the time comes for legitimate wedding planning, there's no room for such props. Only the finest sartorial selections will do: flowers should remind guests of a veritable garden, and of course, food, invitations and all the details in between must be considered. So read on for everything worth knowing about today's hottest bridal trends.

TO EACH HER OWN

Wedding pros around the country counsel that a wedding should be a reflection of the bride and groom—their personalities, their tastes and all of their favorite things. Whether that means a country hoedown, an Italian-inspired street fair or something totally tropical, guests entering your event should have no doubt in their mind exactly who they are celebrating. Preston Bailey, wedding planner to the stars, advises brides to ask themselves what they would do if they didn't fear upsetting anyone else with their choices. Therein lies the roadmap to your

dream wedding.

While there are innumerable ways to make your wedding your own—as they say, the devil is in the details—there remain certain themes and looks that rule the wedding roost. Local wedding pros, including Karla Dascal of Miami-based Karla: Conceptual Event Experiences, notices her brides mixing opulence with natural, organic elements. "Think wood and water elements used in the décor," she explains. "An overall simplicity as elegance vibe is replacing over-draping and over-the-top linens. When setting the tone

of the event, we prefer using creative lighting arrangements to overdone fabric."

Along with this more relaxed vibe comes a rustic elegance and boho-chic look, evident in everything from the food to the floral arrangements. Picnic-style décor, intentionally mismatched bridesmaid dresses and muted earth tones make for a theme that is rising in popularity.

Alejandro Muguerza, president of Miami's Le Basque, a full-service catering and event design company, asserts, "Our appreciation lies with naturally arranged florals, naturally pure linens and textures. We don't ever want to fight the space, the season, the location and nature of the occasion. We'll make it natural without sacrificing the formality of the event by sourcing décor and food that is locally available, such as good fish, tropical ferns, seashells and tropical produce for a South Florida affair."

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME Most wedding websites suggest allotting 10-15 percent of the overall budget for flowers. That includes the bridal party's bouquets and boutonnieres as well as all centerpieces, aisle décor and a chuppah, if you're having one. So how are brides spending their money in 2015? Following the less-is-more trend, floral arrangements have become less fussy. Muguerza avoids "tight

paves of flowers and contrived, symmetrical looks," opting instead for a more natural shape incorporating branches, ficus roots, ferns and other indigenous flowers and plants.

Popular choices include lush greenery, fragrant herbs like mint, rosemary and lemon leaf, and ivy and ferns being strung together to use as table runners and chair swags. Creative couples are even using them to redefine tent ceilings and chandelier edging. Options such

as these not only create a casual, just-picked look, but a focus on local, seasonal blooms may be easier on the wallet as well.

The ultimate authority in wedding planning, none other than Mindy Weiss, has noted something similar, and in a recent blog for Bridalguide.com pointed out that "tall, overpowering arrangements, even in massive ballrooms" are out, and that "low centerpieces create a greater sense of intimacy."

COME HUNGRY...

But be prepared to move. Seated, formal dinners, while still a popular option for traditional receptions are slowly being replaced by more progressive evenings that include interactive, themed food stations—think freshly shucked oysters, made-to-order crepes or even sushi rolled to order—edible installations, heavily passed hors d'oeuvres and mini tastings of paired bites

and beverages. A preset first course not only helps create a sense of formality, but is also a perfect time for toasts. This new wave is all about movement, and encourages guests to mix and mingle instead of being tied to their table the whole evening.

Joy Wallace, the Miami mind behind A Joy Wallace Catering, Design & Special Events, is noticing a turn to smaller courses throughout the evening with a focus on local craft beers. "A lot of my brides are also requesting late-night bites," she adds. "It's a way to get a little something in your guests' stomachs right before they leave. We've done a mini mug of amber ale paired with a slider on a tray and it's always a popular choice." But the late-night food truck trend?

According to Muguerza, it's out. "Everyone is doing it now and it's rather dated."

While it may seem like the farm-to-table movement is



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Long farmhouse tables decorated with groups of greenery at low levels creates a rustic and relaxed look.



another dated fad—after all, it's definitely not new—it's still going strong in the wedding scene, not only in selecting locally grown/raised produce and meat products, but even in their presentation. Long oversized tables in place of traditional rounds and family-style service encourage interaction and evoke memories of sharing special dinners with friends and family, which, after all, is what a wedding is all about.

SETTING THE TONE

While a great deal of thought goes into a number of aspects of wedding planning, unfortunately the same can't always be said for invitations. Couples often choose to cut corners on collateral such as invitations, menus and programs, focusing instead on the more lavish parts of the ceremony and reception. But according to wedding pros, this is a huge mistake. After all, save-the-dates and the subsequent

invitations are a first glimpse into the wedding day and set the tone for everything that follows. If you're afraid of breaking the bank, Weiss suggests emailing save-the-dates, which allows couples to splurge on formal invites, especially those with hand calligraphy, vintage stamps—which can be triple the cost of traditional stamps—and beveled edging.

These one-of-a-kind options take your papergoods to the

next level, and according to Ceci Johnson, the go-to renowned stationery designer among royals, A-list celebs and luxury brands and member of Acqualina's Wedding Dream Team, the sky's the limit. From hand-painted floral prints that are a reflection of her clients' gardens, custom family crests, or luxurious mixed metals—"the combination of metallic rose gold, copper and blushes is reminiscent of a stunning Florida



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Statement jewels like chandelier earrings and cuff bracelets add a special note to the wedding gown; sleeves, especially in lace, low backs and belly-baring separates are trending on bridal runways this season as seen in these gowns from Monique Lhuillier and Mira Zwillinger.



COURTESY OF: Chic Peristien





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Ceci Johnson and her design team create one-of-a-kind invitations that include hand-painted landscapes, personalized game boards and metallic-toned, laser-cut edges.

sunset," she says—Johnson has done it all. "We are going to keep challenging and pushing the limit of what's expected from a wedding invitation. That means using a combination of interesting materials...and reimagining how the invitation is presented; we've created everything from music-playing boxes to custom game board boxed sets."

RIPPED FROM THE RUNWAY

It's safe to say that the most treasured part of wedding planning is finding the perfect dress—that gown that makes you feel like the princess you've always dreamed of being when

all eyes are on you. But where to begin? Just like everything else in Wedding World, the options are endless, and you'll need to tackle the project knowing not only what works best for you and your body, but also the look you're trying to achieve. According to Catherine Fox Milian, owner of the fabled Coral Gables bridal boutique Chic Parisien, "We're seeing a lot of low backs this season, along with more coverage on the sleeves, slimmer silhouettes—a replacement of the full, airy skirts that were popular the past few years—and gowns that are more eveningwear-inspired

than traditional bridal styles," she describes.

While some of these choices are easy to imagine, others may leave you slack-jawed. Also popular this season: Separates with crop tops, colorful floral patterns, capes and feathers. Milian is a fan of separates and florals as a "great option for confident, fashion-forward brides that are absolutely wearable and easy to translate off the runway." Tara Latour, Monique Lhullier and Theia are just a few of the designers that sent separates down the runway this season, which are on point for a warm-weather destination wedding.

Once you've decided on a dress, it's time to move on to accessories. In a *Behind the Seams* blog post on the company's website, Terry Hall, fashion director at New York City's iconic Kleinfeld, points out, "Whether it's a pop of color with a fun shoe or a custom belt...a lot of brides are deciding to be more daring with their accessories because they truly add to the gown. Accessories are what makes every bride unique." If you've chosen a simple silhouette and neckline, try making it pop with a statement jewelry piece like a chunky necklace or chandelier earrings. **FA**

