

Do it Yourself

Planners can provide every service you may need, but doing a few tasks yourself can make some extra-special memories.

BY APRIL HALL



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Your wedding day is an opportunity to express your personal style. To create an atmosphere that reflects your tastes and personality, consider taking some key activities into your own hands.

Start at your computer. Casey Kieffer, co-owner of Make My Day Event Planning, says the computer is a best friend to anyone planning a wedding.

"If a couple is looking for something in particular to incorporate on their wedding day and cannot find it locally, I would be surprised if you could not find it online and get it," Kieffer says.

Donna Duffy, owner of Memorable Milestones in Millville, agrees. "Brides can also do some comparative shopping without leaving their house."

Finding a theme for your wedding makes creating your day easier. Duffy has helped brides develop Tuscan and French themes, among others.

Once the theme is decided, the bride and her support team can look for pieces that add to the ambiance. Ideas from magazines and the Internet can help. Visiting local craft stores such as Michael's, AC Moore and Joanne's can reveal unique materials for centerpieces and favors. Even home stores like IKEA provide supplies that can help satisfy a couple's vision of their wedding. The best part is that prices at such stores are low.

Bernadette Ash of Townsend will marry in June at her parents' waterfront vacation home in Rock Hall, Maryland. In the run-up to the big party immediately following at a nearby fire hall, she has made her own fan favors and treasure chest centerpieces.

Yet she has focused most on giving the ceremony site a feeling that fits her personality. Her tropical theme will be created through flower garlands on the rails of the dock at her parents' house and strings of seashells and starfish that will line a canopy where guests will sit. She ordered the shells and starfish online.

"I kept it simple," Ash says. "With our laidback style, I just went with my love of summer and water, so it wasn't hard for me to go with a natural look."

Environmentally conscious couples (or those who are simply not inclined to make crafts) can skip the Jordan almonds. Instead of putting a favor at every place setting, save the money, then write a check to a favorite charity. A simple note or sign can let guests know a donation has been made on their behalf.

Though wedding planners offer every imaginable service, brides can take on many other tasks at home. If

“Probably one of the most exciting things for brides is to receive their responses back from guests,” Keiffer says. “We offer invitation mailing and tracking, but most would prefer to receive them at home and keep track of their guests on their own.” Handmade invitations are also gaining popularity. Quality stationery, some photos and the key information printed from the computer require no more than a glue stick to assemble into invitations. If there are 30 cards to send, though, brides may want to think twice about making invitations—or enlist some free labor.

For ideas, many planners will provide a to-do list so a bride can see what she can do herself. Web sites such as theknot.com, brides.com and weddingchannel.com offer similar lists.

Other things a bride can do include finding the right vendors and lining up the deejay or band’s playlist. Because a wedding is often something of a family reunion, Duffy says brides can make arrangements for a continuing party. Guests will be invited to her parents’ home the day after Ash’s wedding for an afternoon of fun. Simple refreshments will be served, and several members of the family will dock their boats at the property.

At Memorable Milestones, Duffy offers everything from a hands-off planner to a total planning package. A middle-of-the-road plan is the “a la carte” option. Planning is shared by her company and the bride and groom. “We will absolutely be there on the day of (the wedding),” she says.

If a planner is out of the question, a bride should have someone—a bridesmaid, her mother or a close friend—minding the details so the bride is free to relax and enjoy her day.

Duffy says the DIY approach is popular with couples who have a tight budget, as well as the helpers to take it on.

“To do so much yourself, you need a great support system,” Duffy says.

“We come on to help for just a couple of hours for DIY brides.”

There are ways a woman can take on too much responsibility for her wedding, however. The bride should not worry about the set-up, the break down and everything in between on her wedding day, Keiffer says.

“Doing everything yourself can become a daunting task,” Duffy says. “Too often we want to get to the destination and miss the journey.”

Yet even on the big day, brides don’t have to hand over every task.

Finishing touches such as handling her own hair or makeup can be fun.

The bride can even create her own flowers. Use local blooms to ensure freshness, find a cool place to keep the flowers until the wedding (which should be within a day to two of receiving the flowers), and keep plenty of water handy in spritzer bottles and buckets.

Ash sums up her wedding as something that isn’t about spectacle and opulence, but about emotion.

“I feel like (our wedding) is about continuing what my fiancé and I have already begun,” she says. “We already have a great deal of love and respect for each other, so this day just lets everyone else see what we already feel.”



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