



• TYING THE KNOT THE •



FREELANCE WRITER SALLY NOBLE WROTE THE STORIES IN THIS SPECIAL SECTION.

Maine weddings are all over the place, literally and figuratively. They are as contemporary, traditional, or quirky as the people who live here. Nuptials happen in small country churches or Victorian inns, at seaside resorts, on ski slopes or huge fields filled with wildflowers with views of grand yachts sailing by.

Some traditions are too much fun to forgo, like lobster-bake rehearsal dinners. Perhaps others, like corny, canned wedding photos, need updating.

What follows is our third annual special section devoted to romance and weddings. Here you'll find a variety of practical advice from experts—everything from music, photography, unique settings, and etiquette, to how to pack your honeymoon suitcase as well as memories from couples who have tied the knot in Maine.

Are you wondering, for instance, about traditional rules dictating who pays the tab for what at the wedding? They're passé.

Thinking about European lace for a wedding dress bodice? It's a new fashion statement.

Many classics endure—like the venerable thank-you note. See what Emily Post's descendent, Anna Post, has to say on the subject in our exclusive interview.

A wedding is a happy occasion. We hope reading about planning one will bring you pleasure. *

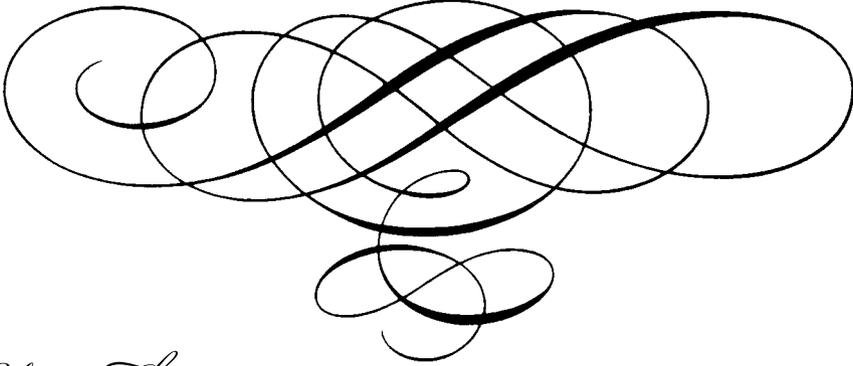


Tips

FROM THE

Experts

• PHOTOGRAPHS BY STACEY CRAMP •



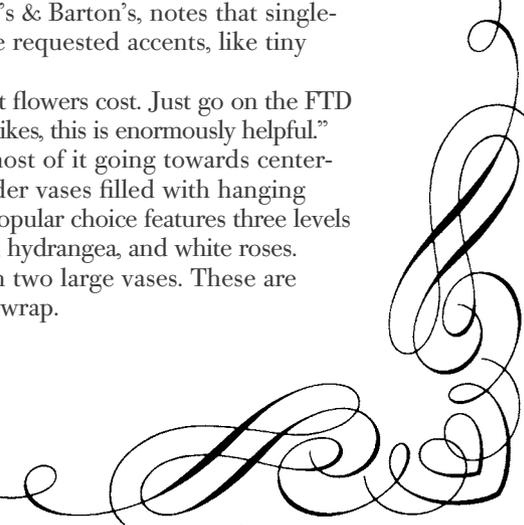
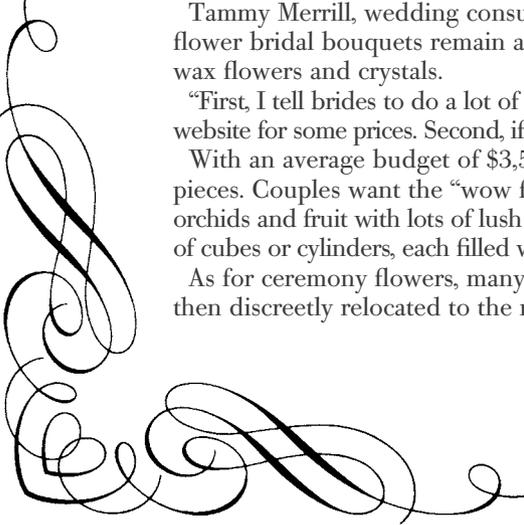
Love Your Flowers

Tammy Merrill, wedding consultant for 12 years at Portland's Harmon's & Barton's, notes that single-flower bridal bouquets remain an enduring trend. But lately brides have requested accents, like tiny wax flowers and crystals.

"First, I tell brides to do a lot of research so they have a good idea of what flowers cost. Just go on the FTD website for some prices. Second, if the bride brings me pictures of what she likes, this is enormously helpful."

With an average budget of \$3,500 to \$4,000 for flowers, Merrill sees most of it going towards center-pieces. Couples want the "wow factor," she explains, such as large cylinder vases filled with hanging orchids and fruit with lots of lush flowers spilling out of the top. Another popular choice features three levels of cubes or cylinders, each filled with a particular flower, such as calla lilies, hydrangea, and white roses.

As for ceremony flowers, many clients select bountiful arrangements in two large vases. These are then discreetly relocated to the reception once the wedding service is a wrap.





Photography Flair

“I ask my clients to help me focus on the important guests,” says photographer Michele Stapleton. “I need a list of up to 20 people, relatives and friends, those who you’d just die if they weren’t in your wedding album.”

Stapleton, whose style is photojournalism—she snaps unexpected moments that speak more authentically than canned shots—strives to capture the many moods of any wedding, from the sweetly poignant to the caught-off-guard funny. To accomplish this, she does her research. “As I drive to the rehearsal, I memorize the list of names and hope for a good shot of getting everyone. If all else fails, I ask a friendly guest to please point someone out.”

And while she wants the look to be authentic, she is not above retouching, such as removing that Exit sign hanging above Uncle Harry’s head. It used to be prohibitively expensive, but now with digital photography, color and details can be enhanced in a flash. Expect to pay \$4,500 and up for high quality wedding photography, she adds.



The Classic Dress Still Reigns

“Styles may change, but the four basic shapes of a wedding dress remain traditional,” explains Cathy Mullen Pearl, owner of Spoil Me, a boutique located on Portland’s Exchange Street. “There’s the Cinderella ball gown, the trumpet-mermaid shape, the simple sheath, and the Empire dress.”

But a few new trends are spicing up these classic looks. More dresses now come with straps, cap sleeves, or a clever little shrug—the allure of bare shoulders is fading. Also, according to Mullen Pearl, intricate lace, an old European look, is extremely popular, no matter which shape a bride selects.

Finally, organic wedding dresses are carving out a market, and while they’re pricier than you might expect—an unbleached cotton dress at Spoil Me runs from \$3,000 to \$4,000—Mullen Pearl is quick to compare the quality of pure cotton to silk. “When finely spun, they’re really not that dissimilar.”



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Let the Music Play

Diane York, owner of Diane York Weddings and Events Inc., does not mince words when it comes to what works at a happy wedding. She tells her clients that using an iPod to entertain the crowd is not an option.

“For one thing, [the audio players] have to be perpetually supervised and have no way to respond to the mood of the crowd. And then there’s the music couples often play on their iPods.”

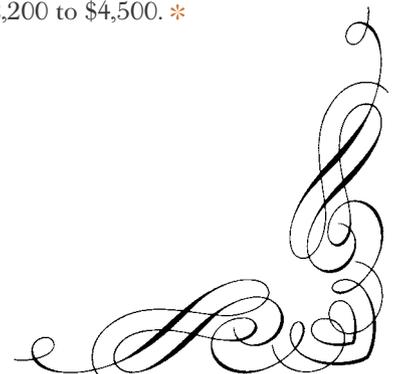
“I tell couples that they absolutely must play some music for the over-50 crowd. These older guests often have come a great distance and brought all these lovely presents. They deserve to occasionally dance to music that’s familiar.”

Here’s what she says Mainers can expect to pay for music:

Deejay
\$700 to \$1,600

String quartet
for the prelude, ceremony, and
cocktail party: \$400 to \$600

Band
(more than five people playing):
\$2,200 to \$4,500. *



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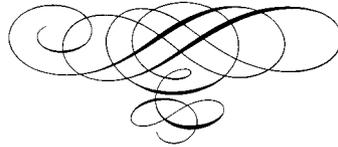
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What's New in Etiquette? All Manner of Good Manners



It's been a long time since Emily Post put pen to paper to illustrate the perfect thank-you note from the bride and groom. Her classic, *Emily Post's Wedding Etiquette*, was first published in 1922. Many updates later, Emily's great-great-granddaughter Anna Post has just written a book for the 21st century on modern wedding etiquette.

In this new guide, still stamped with the matriarch's name (*Emily Post's Wedding Parties: Smart Ideas for Stylish Parties*, published by Harper Collins), the author offers advice on everything from engagement parties to dividing up wedding costs.

Holding dear to the thinking that good manners are about being considerate, Post stresses warmth and poise, never snobbery, in her book. All her great-great grandmother's basics are still here, though. She even offers updated instructions on how to write that longstanding pillar of proper etiquette, the thank you note.

Port City Life interviewed Anna Post to hear her thoughts on how a few key wedding traditions have been updated.

BUDGET

In Emily's day, the groom's family paid for the rehearsal dinner and the honeymoon and the bride's family paid for the ceremony and reception. Times have changed. "There's no 'normal' anymore," says Post. "People are finding funding wherever they can."

Some pay for specific "tasks," she says. Perhaps an aunt pays for the caterer, an uncle the band, a godparent the flowers, and so forth. Another trend is to have the costs split three ways, with his and her parents and the couple each paying a third.

"Have a money talk," suggests Post, "where everybody talks about expectations and finances."

And here's where basic etiquette comes into play. "Everyone should remember that a contribution is a gift, not a guarantee," Post asserts, ever aware of potentially bruised feelings. "No one should feel pressured to give more than they are comfortable with."

On one matter, she is adamant, however. When it comes to the engagement party, the couple may not pay for the event. Anyone may pay for this celebration except the bride. Why? Tradition.

CHILDREN

At many weddings, whether or not to invite children becomes a matter of contention. "It's perfectly okay to choose not to have children at the wedding," asserts Post. "Guests should realize that this is not their day, it's the couple's day, and it's their choice whether to have children."

"Consider having a separate room or separate table supervised by a friend who's paid. Let parents know in advance, so they can talk with the caregiver. But if you've decided to invite children, be prepared that they may stay with their parents. Just because you've offered child-care doesn't mean your guests will take you up on it."

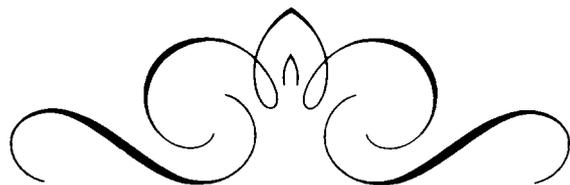
INVITATIONS, ETC.

SAVE-THE-DATE NOTES "This is a great tool to give plenty of notice to guests with busy schedules," says Post. "But remember, you can always add to the list, but you cannot take anyone off."

WEDDING INVITATIONS "As soon as you know the location, send them—hopefully six to eight weeks out."

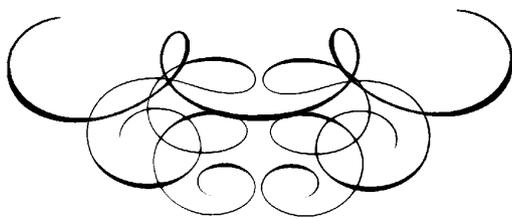
RSVP "A week before you need the final number, enlist help to call the people who have not yet responded. Say something like, 'Hi, I'm just calling about X's wedding, but we're really near the end of the week. Could you please let us know if you're coming?' As frustrated as you may be, the goal is to have loved ones there. So many events are casual these days, some people forget that there are events where formalities like RSVPs are important."

THANK YOU NOTES First, the bride and groom should be clear on their deadline for this social essential. Post disputes the "up to a year" line of thinking and gives couples no longer than three months to send their gracious missives. Anyone completely stumped on how it's done will find that her book quite nicely takes the sting out of the job. After reading the author's "Ten Thank-you Do's and Don'ts," feel free to lean heavily on her excellent template. It's a brilliant illustration with lots of fill-in-the-blank variables. *



FIND A SETTING THAT SUITS YOU

From fireside to beachside, these six places are uniquely Maine



GARDEN VARIETY

At the newly expanded Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, the rugosa roses are as spectacular as the quiet flow of rock-sculpture fountains are peaceful. In June, hundreds of rhododendrons blossom. The lily pond on a hazy summer's day summons the beauty of a Monet painting.

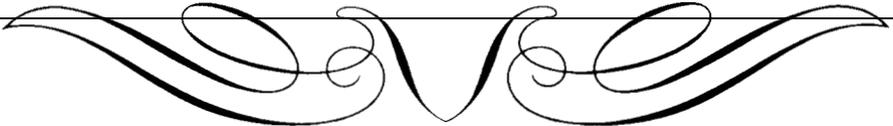
Nestled along the Back River in Boothbay, the 248-acre sanctuary of natural and cultivated landscape is the quintessential spot for an outdoor wedding of almost any size.

"A garden wedding has always been my dream," said Molly Barker, an attorney who wanted a casually elegant wedding with a big white tent and lots of children giggling and dancing. She got it here.

Many of her 200 guests traveled from out of state for the celebration, so she treated them to a vacation getaway that included a sit-down dinner and an old-fashioned big band. The children twisted and turned to the music and the adults were charmed by their favorite oldies. Hers was a wedding of flowers and sentimental touches, like the simple Italian lace veil the bride wore, a gift from her mother.

The CMBC offers several setting options. The Cleaver Event Lawn & Garden is an open area suitable for a large tent. Perennial borders grace this setting, which costs \$3,500 to rent (the tent is extra), for a maximum of 200 guests. The Rose Arbor & Garden can accommodate a sweetly romantic, small standing ceremony, while the Café Terrace and kitchen garden, with its fruits, vegetables, and herbs, makes a delightfully different cocktail party setting. Finally, the Kitchen Garden Café can accommodate anything from a sit-down dinner to dancing. The wall of large windows creates a romantic alfresco feeling, while a roaring fire in the corner makes this an elegant winter venue.

Prices for weddings from ten guests on up range from \$250 to \$750 for ceremony sites and from \$750 to \$3,500 for receptions. (Note: These are 2008 prices and subject to change.) For further information, call 207.633.4333 or e-mail rentals@mainegardens.org.



AN ARTFUL OCCASION

Who but the extremely wealthy gets married with million-dollar paintings gracing the reception hall walls? These days, anyone who holds a wedding at the Portland Museum of Art.

Nearly four years ago, the Rockwell Kent exhibition served as the striking backdrop for Jessica Hollander's wedding to Jason Johnson. At the time, the couple lived in Washington, D.C., where Hollander was pursuing a master's degree in exhibition design at George Washington University.

The bride, who grew up in Portland, and her groom invited 80 guests to celebrate a festive weekend in Maine, with the highlight, of course, their reception at the PMA. A sit-down dinner was held in the Glass Gallery, where rare glass and ceramics provided a sparkling background. Then the wedding party climbed the grand stairwell to I.M. Pei's dramatic Great Hall for dancing. The exhibition halls were open, with guards requesting guests check their cocktail before entering.

"We really have no major restrictions," explains Jennifer Graves, project manager for administration and special events. "Except no lit candles—they make terrific battery-powered candles that look the same—and no red wine, because it damages the unsealed granite of the museum floor."

Portland Museum of Art's rates range from \$500 to \$3,200, the highest of which covers use of the Great Hall and Glass Gallery from 6 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on Saturdays. For further information, call 207.775.6148 or e-mail jhgraves@portlandmuseum.org.

INTIMATE AT THE INN

Nothing could be more endearing than an intimate wedding with a guest list streamlined to include only your closest friends and family. Consider gathering up these favorite people and inviting them to an exclusive Maine wedding weekend set in a romantic inn. The Blackberry Inn in Camden is one such venue that opens its Victorian doors to these intimate retreats.

Innkeepers Jim and Cyndi Ostrowski are a cheerful and hospitable pair. Jim prepares the memorable haute cuisine while Cyndi tends to her abundant garden, scene of many ceremonies.

The unobtrusive owners have perfected understated elegance. The antiques are not only real, they're comfortable. The old clocks keep time, and no one is flustered if you enjoy the thick Oriental rugs with bare feet.

Available to do whatever it takes to help the weekend running smoothly, Cyndi has been known to drive a temporarily forgotten mother-of-the-groom to the church and on another occasion, rescue a bride whose wedding-dress zipper was broken.

"I sewed her into the dress and then gave her a pair of scissors to give the groom on their honeymoon wedding night," she laughs.

For forty of your nearest and dearest, the rate runs \$7,500, which includes all 11 guest rooms in the Blackberry section for two-night accommodations; breakfast each morning; four-course gourmet wedding dinner with choice of meat, seafood, or vegetarian entrée; champagne toast; table flowers; choice of linen colors; and cake set up and service (although the cake is extra, as are tax and gratuity).

For further information, call 1.800.388.6000, or visit innsatblackberrycommon.com.

FIELD OF DREAMS

For an outdoor alternative, why not hold your wedding on a two-acre meadow at Wolfe's Neck Farm in Freeport? The rolling field offers stunning views of woods and salt water. Here's where kayaks ply and yachts sail on the brilliant blue waters of Casco Bay.

Rental of the farmland, from Friday night through Sunday afternoon, costs \$900. The only requirements are that the guest list not exceed 150 and that the bridal couple retain Atlantic

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Tent Company for tents, tables, chairs, dance floor, band stand, lights, and heaters. Everything else, from catering to the portable toilets, is up to you.

“Typically there’s a lobster bake after the Friday night rehearsal dinner, then the wedding is the Saturday event. On Sunday, often the wedding party hosts a laid-back barbeque,” says Nathaniel Herron, owner of Atlantic Tent. “But unusual things happen here. I knew one bride who rounded up a crowd to shop at L.L. Bean the midnight of her wedding day.”

For further information about the field rental, contact Myra Dileo at 207.865.4469. Rates at Atlantic Tent Company range from \$1,000 to \$2,800—“approximately \$10 to \$20 per person,” says Herron. For further information, call 207.563.5800 or visit atlantictentmaine.com.

HARDLY LAST RESORTS

For some couples, having one luxurious spot for ceremony and reception, with everything taken care of by a professional planner, is the preferred choice.

The Landing at Pine Point is expected to be a full-service events facility when it opens in the spring of 2009. The former St. Jude’s church in Scarborough boasts a palatial 60-foot ceiling with exposed wood beams and 7,500 square feet of space. It includes a stage, mezzanine, and full-service kitchen that can seat and serve over 400. Best of all, it’s 500 yards to the beach.

“It’s going to be a Nantucket, Martha’s Vineyard-style gateway to the Pine Point area,” says Jim Ciampi, who runs Cityside Events, owner of the facility. “From guests potentially having their wedding ceremony on the beach and dipping their toes in sand, then retreating to one of nicest facilities in the area, it’s going to have all the amenities for a grand event.”

The venue’s packages start at \$4,000. For more information, call 207.774.4527 or visit citysideweddings.com.