



Spring Brides

Going Big

Spring's biggest wedding trend is just that — big. Gone are the dainty, delicate touches of seasons past and in are big blooms, big bows and bold colors, says Harper's Bazaar.

Here are a few ways to take your spring ceremony to the next level.

BLOOMING DRESSES

Designers are opting for big flowers, but not in the bouquet. Instead, look for posies as part of the gown itself. Rich embroideries, plush appliques and as breathtaking accents were all spotted on designer runways. Remember, though, if you've got a giant geranium on your hemline to keep the flora toned down elsewhere.

TONE UP

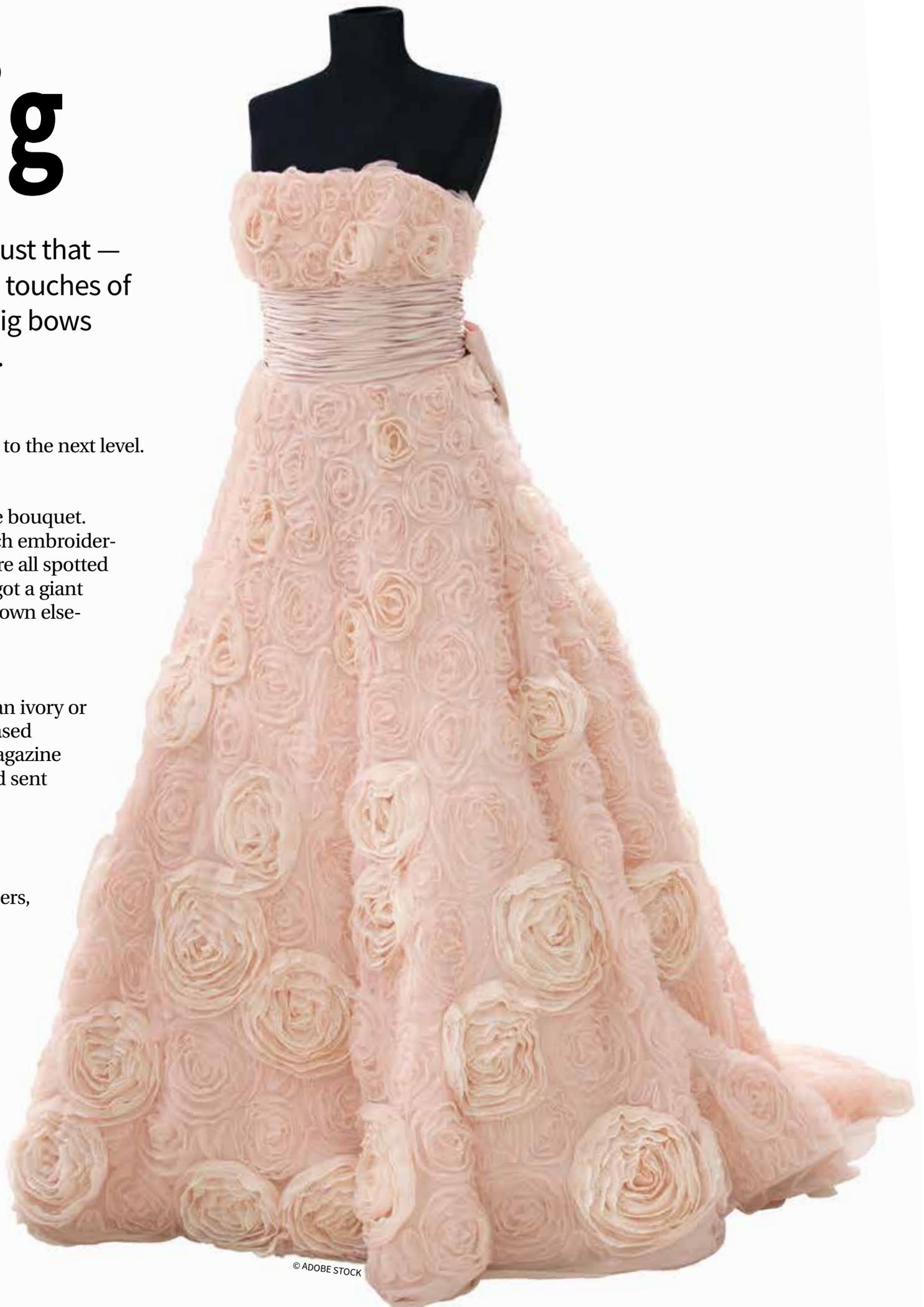
Also spied on the catwalk: More bridal options than ivory or white. Perennial favorite designer Vera Wang showcased gowns in nude, violet and even bright red. Brides magazine says other designers turned their palettes purple and sent out a variety of pale lavender pieces.

GLITZ AND GLAM

New gowns also offered up lots of dazzle in edgy metallic silhouettes. Also on trend: cascades of feathers, roaring ruffles and oversized bows. Again, with bold styling, remember to keep the rest of your ensemble simple to avoid looking too over the top.

A VARIETY OF SHAPES

Wedding dresses aren't just waist-cinchers anymore. Try on a new shape like a swingy, flowy trapeze or a gown with an empire waist. These dresses are often easier to wear and require fewer layers than your more traditional gown. Ask your bridal shop to point you to a unique waist and length to flatter your shape.



Hiring a Photographer

For as much planning as go into them, your actual wedding day will probably pass in a blur. So it's important to choose the right photographer to preserve memories for you to look back on. Keep reading for tips on choosing just the right photographer to preserve your special day.

DO

Ask for a portfolio. A photographer's portfolio showcases their best work. Ask to see a complete wedding set to get a better idea of how the photographer operates. Look for uniform quality in the shots and see that the photographer's style matches your own.

Come armed with questions. Typical questions should include if the photographer shoots digitally or with film, if they charge extra for travel or parking, and if there will be a written agreement for your events. Hint: There should be.

Scour that quote. Be on the lookout for extras that you don't need, like extra prints or a CD copy of your album. Don't be afraid to ask to substitute those items out for things you would like, such as a parents album or personalized thank-you cards.

DON'T

Take the cheap route. A professional wedding photographer costs money. Don't ever rely on Cousin Ed to take professional-grade shots (unless, of course, he is a professional wedding photographer. Then, if he offers, go ahead.). That said, go over your contract carefully to make sure your expectations and your pho-



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tographer's talents align.

Overlook venue rules. It may sound silly to you, but venues usually have those rules for a very good reason.

Sure, just one little wedding full of flashes won't hurt the priceless artifacts behind your church's altar, but think of a whole season's worth of flash-

es, several times every Saturday.

Prioritize product. Pay for the photographer, not the goods, says the International

Society of Professional Wedding Photographers. Who cares if you have giant canvas prints of your big day if you can't stand to look at them?

On Trend: Jump In

The wedding jumpsuit is officially a thing for 2019. If you're a bride who bucks tradition and loves a good tailored trouser over puffy layers of tulle, you're in luck this season.

Designers at all budget levels are jumping on board with a jumpsuit for every taste and style.

TRADITIONAL

OK, so the jumpsuit may never be strictly traditional, but Brides magazine says the tradition-loving, jumpsuit-seeking bride should look for options in white or ivory with lace. Be sure to pick a suit that's lined for modesty's sake.

MINIMALIST

For the no-fussiest of no-fuss brides, it's all about the fabric. Look for a simple silhouette in satin, let's say. But with minimal details, what there is must be on point. Craftsmanship, especially in small details like pleating and straps, should be perfect. Ask your bridal shop for options and alterations for the best wedding-day fit.

BOHEMIAN

Go boho with lots of texture and embroidery. A flowy, romantic jumpsuit also pairs perfectly with the outdoor ceremony, so feel free. Wide leg versions mimic a skirt, but you can also find plenty in cropped lengths to let you shake a leg on the dance floor.

DRESS OR PANTS? BOTH!

If you can't make up your mind, look for a jumpsuit with a detachable skirt. On for the ceremony, off for partying it up at the reception. Make sure your maid of honor or bridesmaids know how to work the detachable skirt and that you'll have a place to stash it while you party.



Catering on a Budget

The source of many a bridal headache, catering and menus may make up a huge chunk of your wedding budget. Ask these questions to pull off a stunning smorgasboard while staying within your budget.

Are you licensed?

This means your caterer hasn't run afoul of your state's department of health (not today, ptomaine) and also carries insurance. If the caterer is also providing bar service, make sure they've provided for your state and venue's rules about alcohol.

Do you have references?

Talk to at least two references, preferably those that have had a similar style wedding or a similar number of guests. Ask particularly what it's like to work with the caterer and what their personality is like.

What kinds of cuisine do you specialize in?

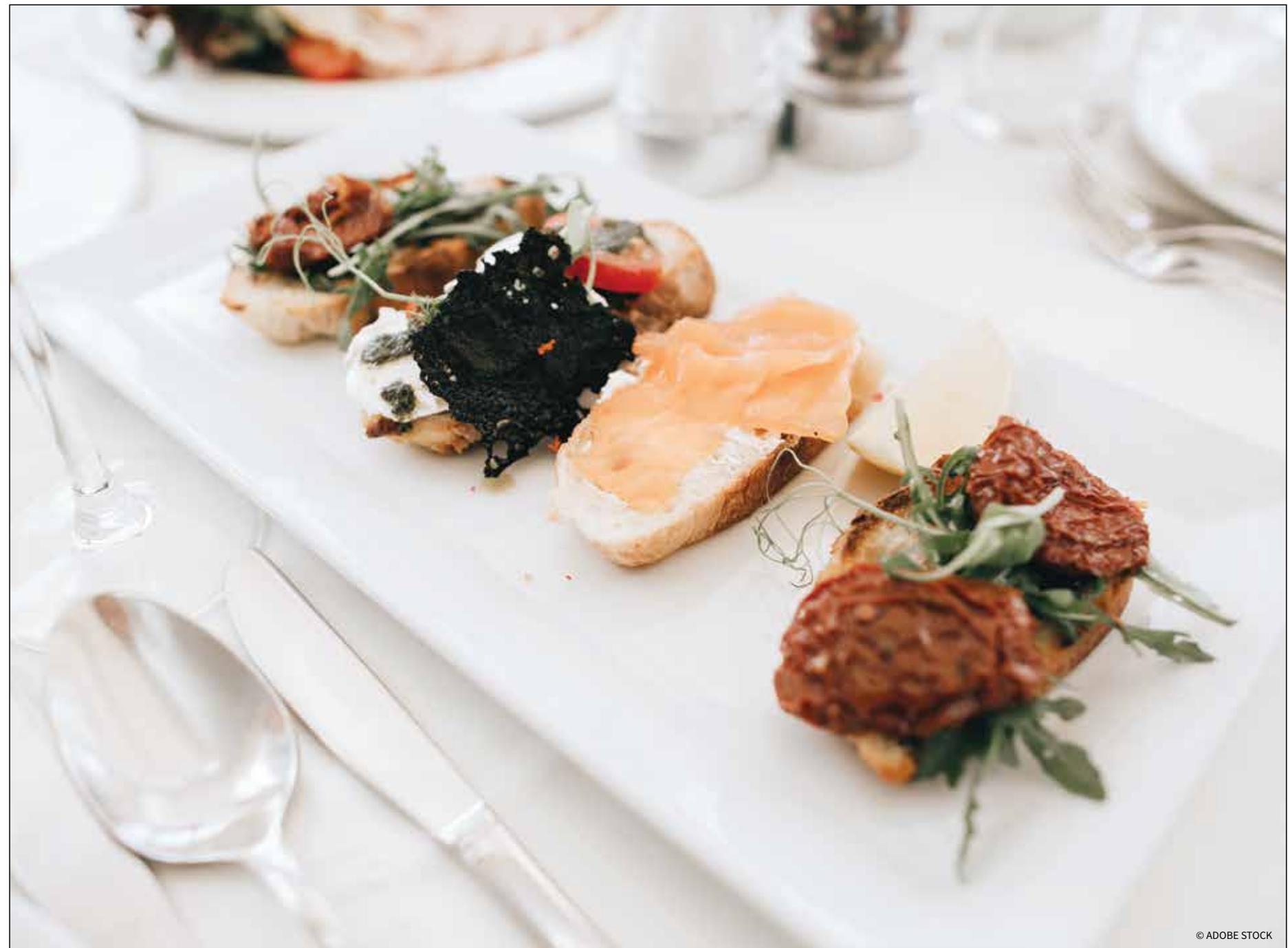
It should go without saying, but don't hire someone who is known for their traditional American fare to lay out a sushi spread. If you've always dreamed of having a certain cuisine at your wedding, go for a caterer that specializes in that.

Is the meal full service?

This means the caterer will attend to table settings, drinks and cleanup. If it's not, be prepared to hire more staff and arrange for these things on your own.

Is there an additional fee for special requests?

Someone there is going to be gluten-free or vegan or require



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other special meals. Ask the caterer if they can do that and, if so, if there's an extra charge. Make sure to leave room in your budget.

Can I see serveware, table settings, linens, salt and pepper shakers, etc.?

If your caterer offers these

services, make sure to lay eyes on them before the big day.

That way you can be sure the plates and tongs are up to your standards. If the caterer doesn't

bring these things, you'll need to know so you can leave room in the budget for rental, either from your venue or a separate company.



Trends in Wedding Rings

This year's engagement rings go way beyond the classic sparkler. Here are a few of the top engagement ring trends from the folks at InStyle.

TWICE AS NICE, BANDS AND STONES

If one giant diamond is good, two

must be better. For the chicest of rocks, put two stones on one single band. Or, keep the single stone and choose a ring with a double band, lined in diamonds or not, your choice.

GEM DANDY

More couples are ditching the traditional diamond for colored gemstones like sapphires, rubies and emeralds. Making the switch may get you a bigger stone for your money

and speak to a bride that makes her own lane.

PUT A HALO ON IT

Halo effect rings have smaller diamonds ringing the center stone, often making it look larger than it is. Work with your jeweler to find the perfect diamond to accent this unique setting.

PURE PEAR

This year's hottest diamond shape

is the pear.

A pear diamond, the Gemological Institute of America says, consists of the head (the bottom), the shoulder (where it starts to move toward the point), the belly (the middle), the wing (as the diamond tapers) and the point.

GIA says the perfect pear has gently rounded shoulders and wings. Wings should form attractive arches so that the stone doesn't look too narrow or too short.

Maximize Your Flower Budget

Next to your dress, flowers are perhaps the most visible part of your wedding. According to Brides magazine, you should be budgeting around \$3,000 for your big day's blossoms. For that kind of money, you need to be careful who (and what) you pick. Here are some tips saving some green on your wedding flowers.

THINK SEASONAL

Ask your florist to work with seasonal foliage to not only give your wedding a sense of time and place but also to save on your budget. If you just have to have that special, costly flower, go for it, but ask the florist to keep it minimal and mix in other, less expensive blossoms.

PUMP UP THE VOLUME

Go for flowers with large, showy blooms instead of lots of smaller stems. Florists may also opt to mix in structural pieces like branches to make arrangements look fuller. Give the florist their head, but also reiterate that you're on a budget.

GO BIG, BUT JUST ONCE

If your heart says flowers everywhere on every surface but your wallet says bud vase, see if your florist can make one big show-stopping arrangement and deploy it effectively. Place this bad boy in one key area and opt for smaller, less-expensive arrangements elsewhere.

REUSE

Have the florist recycle ceremony flowers at the reception. And, when possible, use the venue's own natural beauty to accentuate the blooms. Use lighting or other decor to add



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some umph to what you can afford, and guests won't notice what's not there.

GET CREATIVE

Instead of giant floral centerpieces on tables, mix in smaller

arrangements with things like personal keepsakes, pictures, candles or other items for a

cozy, intimate feel. Consider using plants, too, instead of cut flowers for a savings.

On Trend: How Sweet it Is

Nothing has more potential for complications on your wedding day than the towering cake at the end of the reception hall.

They make entire TV shows about building (and moving) what may be the largest cake you'll ever have to buy. Make your wedding shine and stay on the cutting edge with these cake trends.

GOING UP

Towering cakes are hot right now, says American Cake Decorating, and brides are soaring past two- and three-tier cakes for eight- or nine-tiers of sugared bliss. These cakes come with serious logistics issues, though. Make sure your baker is comfortable making (and moving! Did we mention moving?!) such a tall cake, and that your venue will make this as easy as possible. Read: Please don't make anyone bring a nine-tier cake up five flights of stairs.

COLOR IS WHITE HOT

Gone are pale pastels and blinding white icings. In are deep, moody colors and shining metallics. Look for ways to add shine with edible pearls and dramatic, elegant frosting colors. If you're going bold, balance it out with a simple, elegant cake shape and style. There can be too much of a good thing.

GET NAKED

Not like that. Naked cakes are the hottest of hot trends and feature cakes with little to no frosting and exposed edges and sides. Ask your baker to use buttercream for this application, which is a tad more heat friendly than heaps and swirls of frosting. Naked cakes also allow for the flavor of cakes and fillings to shine through. Make sure your baker makes an A+ cake and also take the opportunity to have fun with your filling.

SMALL WORLD

If big isn't your thing, cut out the cake and go for a small dessert table filled with the couple's favorite treats. Pies? Yup. Cookies? There. Fresh berries and cream? By the spoonful. This presentation offers up lots of variety and also makes for a heartwarming personal reception.

