

FALL BRIDES

2013



Choosing the Rings

The proposal was special and the engagement period was full of bliss, love and anticipation for the big day.

Now that it's finally here, hopefully you have planned for one of the most vital aspects of your wedding: the ring.

Style, cost and personality should all come into play when you are selecting the symbolic jewelry that will grace your fingers until death do you part. Since the engagement ring will be paired with the wedding ring in most cases, use it as a guide to building the perfect set.

THE FOUR Cs

According to the American Gem Society, the four Cs of diamonds that brides and grooms should consider are cut, color, clarity and carat.

Cut is the actual fashioning of the diamond and can have the greatest overall impact on the beauty of the ring.

Diamonds can be found in most colors, including blue, yellow and brown, providing an opportunity to customize your ring. Most diamonds possess blemishes or inclusions, but generally not to the point of negatively impacting a ring's overall clarity.

The carat is the diamond's physical weight measured in metric carats, and is highly objective. Talk over the four



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Cs with your ring dealer to find the best option for you and your spouse.

COST (THE FIFTH C?)

The four Cs are crucial tools in determining the optimum rings, but so is cost. There is no cut-and-dry rule for how

much to spend on wedding rings, so go into the selection process with an open mind and realistic expectations.

Set a budget on what you want to spend on your rings and stick to it. Some jewelers work on commission, so be ready for their best sales pitch. This also means that they may be willing to negotiate with you to make sure

they secure your business.

Arm yourself with knowledge of various diamond and sets, and follow your plan of action.

MATCH YOUR PERSONALITY

Ultimately, you need to feel comfortable with the jewelry that you will sport for many

years to come. If you generally do not wear a lot of other jewelry, then maybe a flashy, multi-carat diamond is not for you.

Conversely, a large-cut ring may be the perfect accessory to your jewelry collection. Match your rings with your personalities to make sure you don't end up regretting your ring-buying decision.

Picking a Unique Theme

A fall wedding doesn't have to mean pumpkin centerpieces, pine cone decorations and auburn-colored dresses.

Knock your guests for a loop with a unique, thoughtful theme to leave them talking for years to come.

Subtle selections to your decorating strategy can still evoke the feeling of fall, so think creatively about how to integrate both the season and your personalities into your theme.

COLORS

Oranges, browns and purples are great starting points for your fall-colored wedding, but why not opt for variations of those traditional hues?

A contemporary burnt orange can serve as a striking visual for tablecloths or chair backings. Meld it with muted browns and purples to capture the attention of your guests.

Some planners ditch the seasonal-color strategy all together and choose to incorporate bright pinks or yellows to convey a warming summer feel. Flexibility is key when considering your colors.

TABLE DECORATIONS

Do you have the perfect centerpiece already picked out in your mind? You may be able to enhance it with other complementary table pieces.

A vase of floating candles and berries can be supplemented by other dried fruits or wheat strewn across the table. And be sure to offer customized parting gifts that match your colors.

For your tablecloths, consider layering various textures like satin, velvet or crochet to match whatever theme you are hoping to establish. And don't forget the napkins or placemats. Incorporate your color palette across all pieces to create a cohesive tone.

FALL FOODS

Your food and drink menu is the perfect opportunity to infuse a little seasonal flair into your wedding.

Pheasant can be a unique replacement for the traditional chicken, beef or pork entrée, while pumpkins and squash make excellent bases for soups, cheesecakes, pies and turnovers.

Get creative with your drink menu, as well, with regular apple cider or a hard version with rum. Many red wines also pair perfectly with fall courses, as do amber craft beer selections.



Weddings and Technology

Technology has infiltrated every aspect of our daily lives. Weddings are no different.

Mobile technology provides great opportunities to enhance and share your wedding day, at little or no cost to you. Social media, blogging, photo-sharing and more are all viable tools that you should consider integrating into your wedding plans.

But before you go overboard with your tech-savvy wedding, try to remember the more traditional guests likely to attend your event. Finding the perfect mix of trendy technology and old-fashioned approaches will ensure a great time for everyone.

VIRTUAL GUESTS

With families and friends spread out across the country, some guests will likely be unable to make it to your wedding.

Luckily, many programs and software options exist for offering free, live video streams.

Invite your guests to attend virtually through their webcam for a front-row viewing of the wedding and reception, if you choose. They don't even have to worry about traveling or dressing up.

TWITTER HASHTAG

Many receptions use large projection screens to display touching slideshows and videos.

In the present world of Twitter hashtags becoming pronounced aspects of all large-scale events, you can hook your projection screen up

to a laptop and display a live feed of your Twitter hashtag.

Notes of congratulations and well wishes – in 140 characters or less – will grace the screen throughout the reception.

PLANNING

Keeping track of your various plans, design ideas and financial responsibilities can be a tough task for any bride or groom.

Luckily, you have access to a sea of mobile applications ready to help you stay organized.

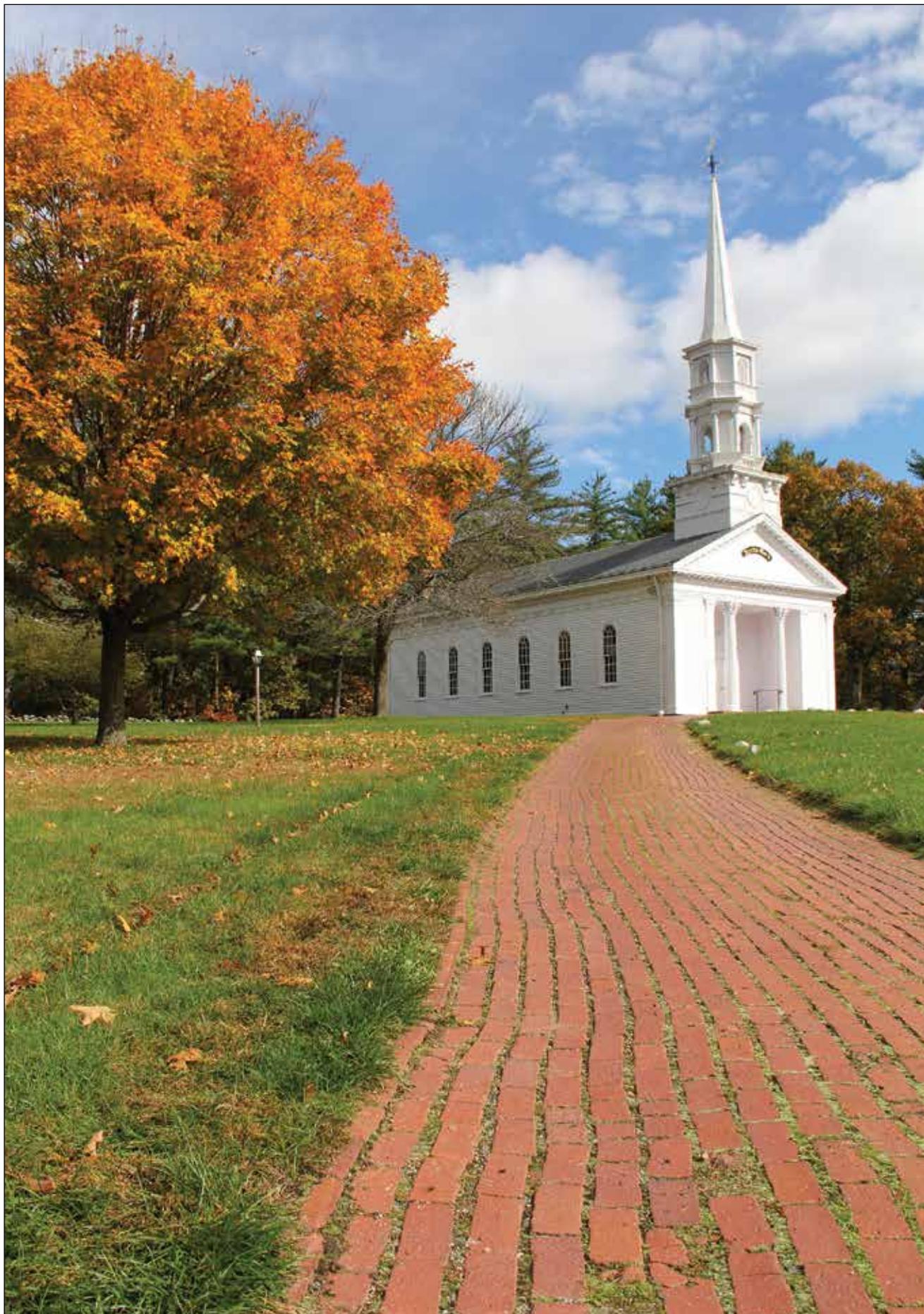
Checklists, to-do lists and journals are just a touch away in your preferred app store of choice. Many financial apps are also available to

help you create and track your wedding budget.

Some even come with alerts to let you know when you are approaching deadlines for paying the caterer, venue or photographer.



Location, Location, Location



With fall weddings come the added factor of weather that can be difficult to plan for months in advance.

But strategic decisions and viable backup plans can make any fall wedding shine, no matter the temperature or forecast.

Sit down with a wedding planner to fully explore all of your venue options, as the location will drive many of your decorating and scheduling decisions.

You may consider hosting your wedding and reception in the same location to cut down on potentially hazardous travel if your area is susceptible to fall-time snow or sleet.

WARM UP

In most locations throughout the United States, the fall season is accompanied by dipping temperatures and chilled breezes. Don't let this keep you from planning the perfect wedding – even outdoors.

Many venues feature large fireplaces or fire pits that will help keep your guests warm while racking up major style points.

Consider a venue that boasts both interior and exterior areas for entertaining, which would allow you the opportunity to offer a terrace cocktail hour and indoor dancing at the same reception.

DESTINATION WEDDING

Weddings on a bigger budget can ditch the cold weather all together. Tropical destinations are ideal places for beautiful beachside backdrops and all-inclusive receptions.

With friendly staffs who are well-versed in coordinating such affairs, resorts often are the best choice for weddings. Tropical getaways may not be ideal for many people on your guest list, so consider inviting your closest family members and friends while still having a smaller ceremony or reception to celebrate back at home.

CITY BUILDINGS

Historical buildings, zoos or museums are sometimes overlooked options for unique weddings.

Most of these venues are often willing to host large events and can feature awe-inspiring backdrops and features.

Your local chamber of commerce is usually a great place to start if you are interested in exploring your options for city locations.

The Groom Lounge

Much akin to the man room that is becoming prevalent in homes across America, the groom lounge is carving out its place in wedding receptions.

Scotch or cigar stations and rooms adorned with leather couches and TVs are great ways to incorporate a groom lounge.

Whether indoors or outdoors, lounges can be decorated in the same color scheme as the overall wedding tone, or can be laid out in a more man-friendly way.

But while it is named after the groom, experts still urge men to remain attentive to the needs of his significant other on their special day. The lounge is intended mostly for male attendees to enjoy each other's company and escape the sometimes loud, uncomfortable dance floor atmosphere.

THE BIG GAME

A Saturday fall wedding is likely to take place directly on the day of a big college football game or major league baseball playoff matchup.

Help your guests avoid their urge to sneakily check their phone every five minutes for the score of the big game by giving them a spot with a TV. Just don't be offended if they skip the cake-cutting ceremony to watch the big game.

FUN AND ACTIVITIES

An area for video games or lawn activities offers the perfect place for a groom and his friends – both male and female – to blow off some steam during the reception.

Lawn bowling, darts or bags provide

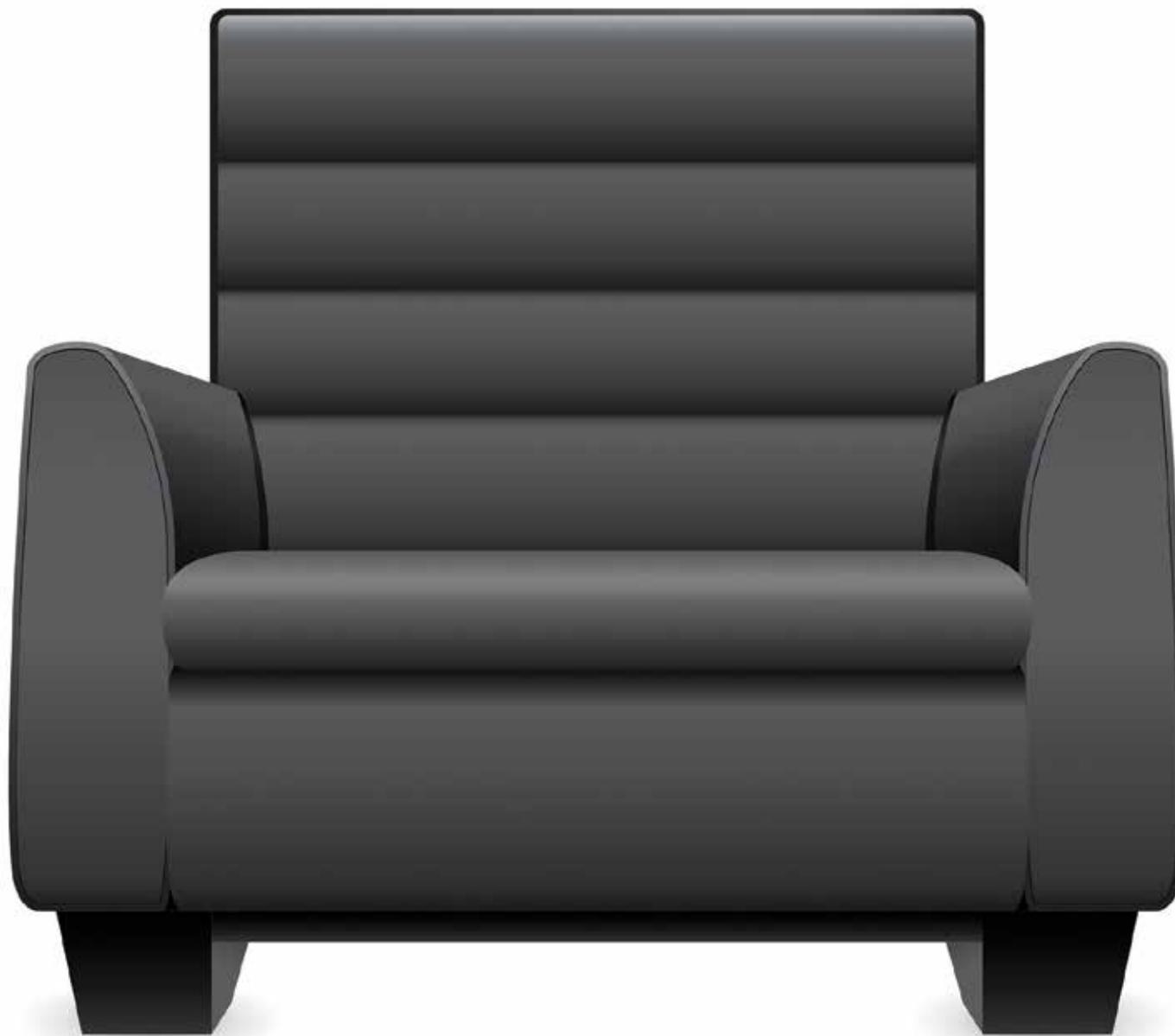
a competitive, fun outlet on an otherwise formal day. You can really go all out with a tent-enclosed area for video gaming or shaded lawn activities.

SINGLE FRIENDS

For the male friends of grooms who come without a date, the lounge erases the awkwardness that these guests may feel while everyone else dances

or dines together.

By providing your single friends a place to unwind during the reception, you can boost your guest count and enhance your overall wedding experience.



Adding the Extras

Dollar dances and toasts have been the focal points of many weddings throughout the years. Why not set your wedding apart?

Your personality will determine how unique you are willing to go, but even for more traditional weddings there are many ways to infuse some spark into your special day.

Ask around to find out what your friends, family members and co-workers remember most from the various weddings and receptions they have attended. Pick out the best ideas and put your own spin on them.

PHOTO BOOTHS

Many professional photography studios now offer traveling services and on-site booths, providing your guests the chance to conveniently capture memories from your wedding.

Most booths come equipped with fun props and backdrops, but also high-quality final products printed within seconds. Guests can take a break from the dance floor to get their pictures taken, and the booths generally fit more than five people inside.

The photo slideshows serve as the perfect parting gift that your guests will surely keep and display.

COCKTAIL HOURS

Cocktail hours can be the perfect way to break up your guests' waiting time while you and your wedding party finish photos or other responsibilities.

Schedule your cocktail hour to begin a half hour before you arrive to your reception site. This strategy will ensure that your guests reach their destination well before you, and are ready to greet your party with open arms.

Cocktail hours should be dimly lit with subtle music to invite your guests to converse and interact with each other.

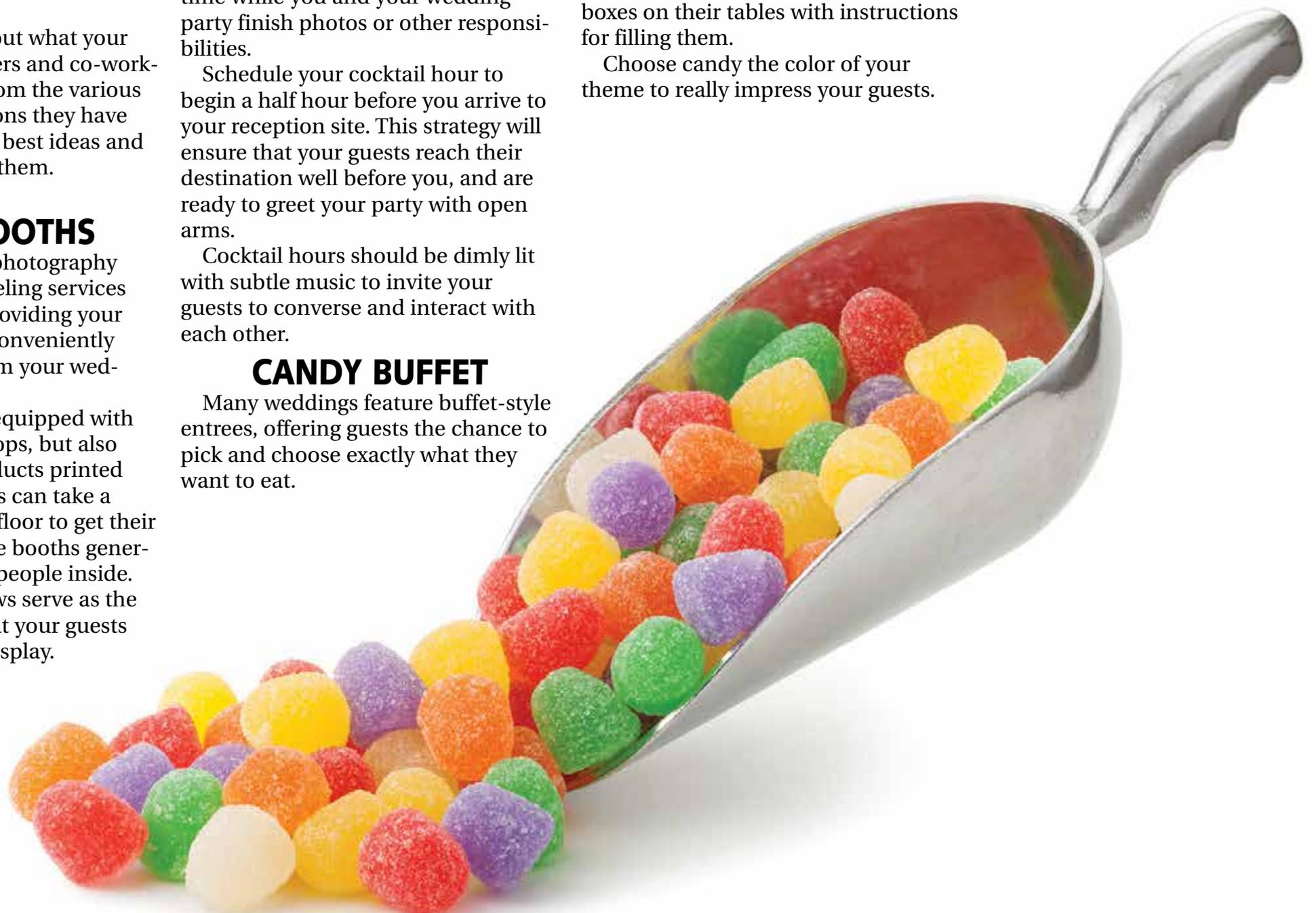
CANDY BUFFET

Many weddings feature buffet-style entrees, offering guests the chance to pick and choose exactly what they want to eat.

The same type of method can be used for dessert, with a unique candy buffet that includes various types of sweets. Provide your guests mini boxes on their tables with instructions for filling them.

Choose candy the color of your theme to really impress your guests.

And be sure to offer various textures, types and sizes of candy within different shapes of jars to help maintain an interesting visual layout.



Planning on a Budget?

Caviar and valet parking isn't right for every wedding. But scaling back doesn't have to mean compromised style or fun.

Separating your needs from your wants is a good starting point for planning a wedding on a budget. By thinking creatively you can utilize a thrifty approach to pull off a spectacular event.

DIY PLANNING

Wedding planners are invaluable resources. They have executed many successful weddings and possess insider knowledge on hot trends. But they are also expensive. Some big-city planners can cost you more than \$4,000 for their services.

With online research and a little elbow grease, you can serve as your own planner and defray the high cost of going professional.

Enlist the help of your friends to choose your colors, themes and wedding features. This will generate more ideas that you may not have come up with on your own.

CLOSE THE BAR

Open bars may keep your guests happy but they can definitely hurt your wallet. Offer one or two free drinks per guest, or select a predetermined number of kegs. Once the free beer or wine runs out, shift the bill to your guests.

Also, avoid the pricey champagne toast, instead letting your guests toast with whatever drink they have picked up from the bar.

Even unlimited soda for the kids and non-drinkers can rack up your bill in a hurry. Impose a small charge for all drinks to help recoup some of your drink deposit.

DISCOUNT SERVICES

We all have a friend who dabbles in graphic design. Reach out to them to provide discounted services for your wedding.

Sit down with your artistic friends to design the perfect invitations. If you're lucky, your friends may even throw in their help for free or as part of their wedding gift.

