

Wedding Feature

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For anyone planning nuptials this winter, our Winter Wedding section is full of ideas for incorporating the season into the celebrations. Topics including wintertime flowers, wedding jewelry, incorporating a holiday theme and more.

Publication Dates: Friday, Feb. 18, Apr. 29, Sept. 3 and Nov. 12

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Planning a Destination Wedding

In some areas, the COVID-19 pandemic is waning while in others, concerns over variants are rising, even among the vaccinated.

Even while the coronavirus continues to evolve, weddings are still being planned, including destination weddings. If your dreams still include traveling somewhere magical, keep reading. We've got hot advice for keeping you safe and your dreams intact.

BE FLEXIBLE

The best advice experts from Brides magazine can give about planning a destination right now is to be flexible and be prepared. As restrictions lift in some areas, people are rushing to finalize wedding plans. But pay attention to health risks, including news on variants and travel restrictions, and to government COVID-19 guidelines.

"Unfortunately, we've seen that these two do not always align — sometimes laws being too lax when risks are high and sometimes being too strict when risks are low," Annie Lee from Daughter of Design and Plannie told Brides. "There has been an unpredictability and capriciousness to when local government officials update COVID-19 rules, so couples continue to plan for both hopeful and cautious scenarios until this is truly all behind us."

PLAY IT SAFE

Whatever you decide to do, make the best health decision for both you and your guests. And that means guarding your mental health, too. Consider taking some of the stress out of any upcoming nuptials by downsizing guest lists and

making decisions as far out as you can, including for the next year.

"It will be nearly impossible to secure the right talent once the world opens back up," Alison Laesser Keck of Alison Bryan Destinations told Brides. "Book everything as soon as possible! Whether you're doing this by yourself or with a planner, you'll want to

book many of your vendors simultaneously as your venue to guarantee availability."

HIRING A PLANNER

A destination wedding, with the added layers of travel and now a pandemic, is much more complicated than your average wedding. Hiring a planner that specializes in destination weddings can help

make your big day as stress-free as possible.

"Definitely get one on board before you sign any contracts," Laesser-Keck says. "There are COVID-19 policies and other things to negotiate. Now, more than ever, these strategies are vital. Also, if you have to postpone again, your planner's relationships with vendors will be everything."



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A Holly Jolly Wedding

When you're planning a winter wedding, you've got a Santa-sized elephant in the room.

You've got two choices — ignore it completely or embrace the fun. Here are some ways to work the most wonderful time of the year into the most wonderful day of your life.

GO GREEN AND RED OR SILVER AND GOLD

One of the first choices you might be asked to make is to choose the color palette that the rest of your wedding will revolve around. Consider picking holiday hues in green and red or metallic silver and gold.

LOOK AT HOLIDAY VENUES

If you've got some time to plan, consider holiday-centric venues for your big day. Parks or historic homes are big draws, especially when turned out for the holidays with lots of lights and finery. Be aware that a holiday wedding is also competing with other celebrations, so you need to be ready to book as soon as you can.

FESTIVE FLORALS

Work holiday greenery and plants into your floral arrangements. Not only will they bring a festive feeling to your nuptials, but they are more likely to be more budget-friendly than roses and other ironicals. You can also

repurpose your centerpieces and other larger arrangements for holiday celebrations.

CATERING

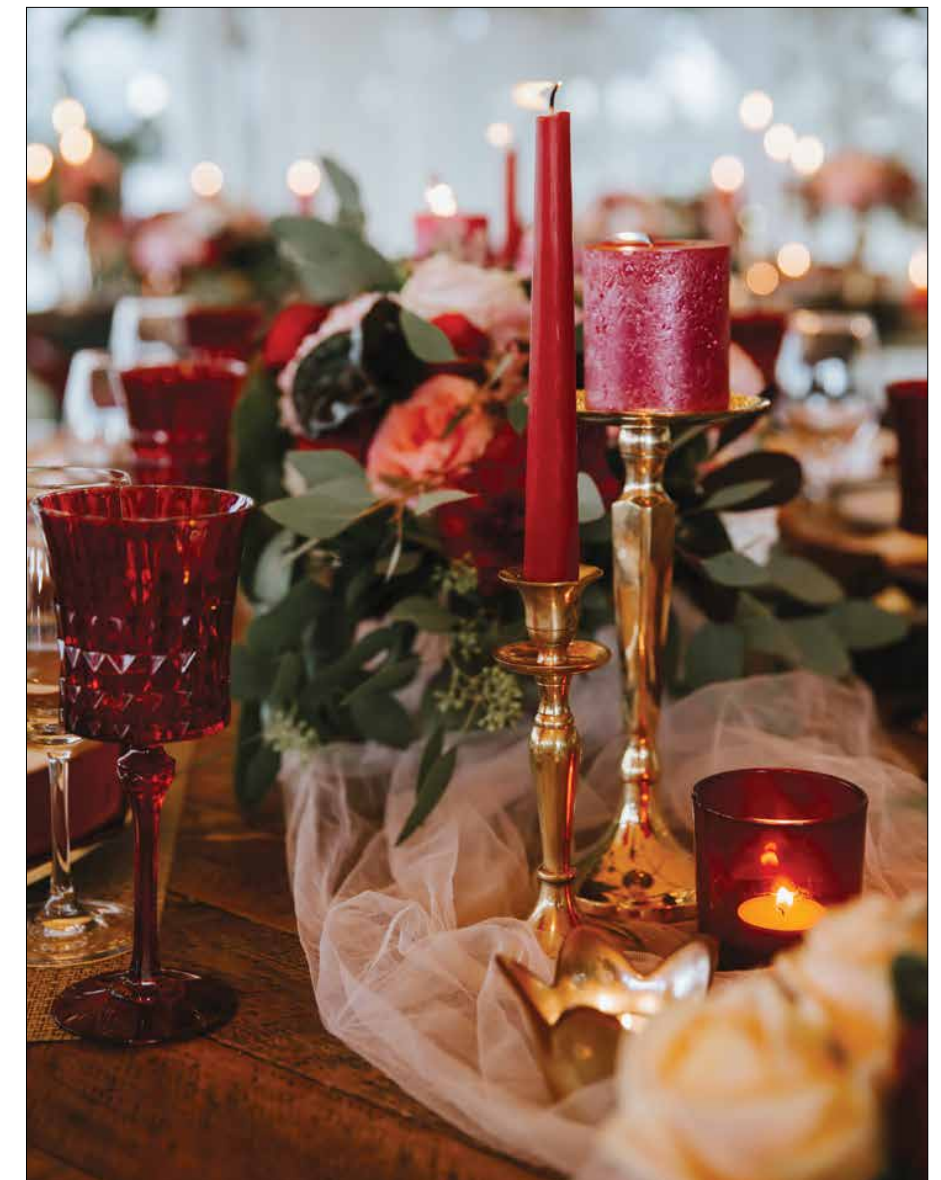
Give your reception some holiday flair with traditional holiday food and drinks. Think of warming flavors like ginger, cocoa and mulled wine. Consider a table of Christmas cookies for dessert and think about adding some of your family's traditional holiday goodies to your menu.

WARM TEXTURES

Some kinds of fabrics, such as velvets, chunky knits and faux furs, are popular around Christmas for a reason — they're warm. Add them to your wedding plans in the form of table runners, lap blankets (especially if any part of your ceremony is outside), a shrug to wear during your reception and more.

CANDLES

Go for the warm glow of candlelight around your venue and reception area. Not only is it holiday appropriate, but it's romantic as all get out. Create special moments for candle lightings during your ceremony, maybe as you walk back down the aisle.



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Winter Wedding Jewelry Trends

Jewelry in the form of a ring is often how the wedding planning begins.

But don't forget your other accessories in all the details for planning your big day. Here are the biggest trends in bridal jewelry for this year.

DROP EARRINGS

Go big or go home when it comes wedding day earbobs. Bridal stylist Micaela Erlanger told The Zoe Report that maybe it's because we've all been Zooming for a year, but big, bold earrings are where it's at this season.

"Every dress requires earrings. You're not going to go with bare earlobes," Erlanger said. Consider classics like diamonds, pearls and blingy beads in long, trailing tiers.

AFFORDABLE PIECES

Wedding jewelry doesn't have to break the bank, either. Budget-friendly costume jewelry offers pieces that brides don't have to worry about in all the worrying about practically everything else. Costume pieces are also pandemic friendly, Erlanger says.

"Social distancing is still very much a thing right now, and as a result, we're seeing this trend of people doing a small celebration followed by plans for a larger party the following year. That's where we're seeing a lot of fun costume jewelry come into the mix."



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GO LUXE

The other side of that argument, of course, is that smaller celebrations can be more luxe.

"Because couples have had to downsize their plans, there's this movement of people who are taking the money that would've gone towards that big wedding and putting

into that piece, whether it's the engagement ring or the pair of earrings," Erlanger said. "It's really about making sure you can get more mileage out of pieces. That's what modern couples are looking for."

HAIR ACCESSORIES

Jewelry is also making its

way into wedding day hairdos. Brooches, antique necklaces and other pieces are now the brides crowning glory.

Don't have a diamond rope laying around? Look for embellished combs, barrettes and bun holders to bring a dash of sparkle to your wedding 'do.

ETHICALLY SOURCED MATERIALS

Most of us have had enough of conflict, and that includes in our jewelry. Today's brides, Erlanger says, are concerned about the source of their jewelry pieces. Look for sustainable lab-grown diamonds or stones that are sourced from conflict-free mines.

Five Great Reception Ideas

Vows, gowns and flowers take center stage at the wedding, but the reception can really be your time to shine as a couple.

The party should represent who you both are as a couple and celebrate your unique love for one another and for your friends and family.

Here are some eye-catching ways to do that, courtesy of The Knot.

GET CREATIVE WITH THE GUESTBOOK

Sure, you can have a regular guestbook and pen. Or you can get out of the boring box. Think about a way guests can leave their best wishes for you in a way that reflects your hobbies, loves or values. Are the bride and groom sports fans? Signed baseballs, footballs or basketballs are great ways to reflect that.

CHECK YOUR PHONES

If you want your guests to be present and in the moment (and you don't have a hashtag for your wedding), consider setting up a phone check station similar to a coat check at your favorite restaurant. Recruit a couple of friends to man the desk and guests can check their devices in and out.

RECHARGING STATIONS

On the other end of that spectrum, you can set up



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recharging stations around your reception to make sure everyone keeps their Instagram feeds update with the hottest pictures from your big day. Take a cue from event planning and make sure the stations are convenient but out of the way of the dance floor and that there are plenty

of comfortable places to sit around it.

COOL COCKTAIL IDEAS

Bespoke cocktails are so last year. Jazz up the bar at your reception with hot ideas like ice cubes with your monogram and drink pouches — adult and otherwise.

Talk to your caterer about more ideas to personalize your food and drink options in creative ways.

SCENTSCAPING

Long winter nights are perfect for candlelight decor, and with candles comes the opportunity for planning the

perfect scents for your wedding and reception. Plus, scent is tied to memory, so the smell of your favorite candles will bring back happy memories for years to come. Just make sure that the scent is light enough not to aggravate guests with allergies and sensitivities.

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Flowers for a Winter Wedding

You might not think of flowers in winter, but there are plenty of petals that are perfect for colder-season celebrations.

Work with your florist to find budget-friendly blooms that will give you all the punch of spring and summer varieties.

FLOWERS IN SEASON

The experts at Teleflora say that winter weddings can find a rainbow of in-season flowers to pick from. These include amaryllis, anemone, camellias, Casablanca lilies, forget-me-nots, French tulips, gardenias, holly, jasmine, orchids, mini gerbera daisies, paperwhites, poinsettias and roses. You can also choose from filler stems that are in season year-round, including Queen Anne's lace, solidago, limonium, Montecasino aster and hypericum.

PALETTES

Given that wide range of options, your florist can find blooms to suit any color palette and look. Winter brides can choose from solid-white or ivory-hued bouquets, or even go bold with deep reds. Think of incorporating traditional holiday flowers, too, to add a festive aspect to your big day. Add accents like pinecones, winter greenery and mistletoe for a understated holiday touch.

HIRING A FLORIST

While the option exists to do it yourself, an experienced florist can help you pick stems that will perfectly accent your big day. They can also work with their vendors to get the best prices and help you stick to your budget. Before you talk to florists, know how you

want to use flowers in your big day. This is a decision you need to make fairly early on; florists who do weddings tend to book up early, especially during a time of year when you're competing with holiday celebrations.

Talk to your family and friends — especially any recent

brides — and ask for florist recommendations. Read reviews online and your potential florist's website. You might also consider visiting the florist's shop to see how they do things before scheduling a one-on-one appointment.

When you've narrowed it down, make that appointment

and talk to the florist about your vision, theme and guest list.

Also ask them about their availability, style, pricing and services. Talk to them about how they'll handle delivery and set up on their wedding day and what services they do and do not offer.



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Bridesmaids Gifts

They're a huge part of your life and of your wedding day. They're there when you're crying over nail polish colors, budgets, blown honeymoons, pandemics and reception playlists.

They also maybe fed you too many margaritas during that bachelorette party. But you love them, anyway.

Brides says the average price point for bridesmaids gifts is \$75-\$100, but feel free to spend whatever you feel is appropriate. Here are some unique bridesmaids gifts to show them how much you appreciate them being there for you.

BESPOKE JEWELRY

Jewelry can look expensive without being expensive, and it can come from the heart. Consider working with a local artist or even one you find on a network like Etsy to make bespoke earrings, necklaces or bracelets for your bridesmaids crew.

PAJAMA SETS

Snag a few sets of matching or coordinating pajamas and have them monogrammed by a local embroidery shop. Wrap them in a pretty paper and include a heartfelt note about just how much they mean to you. PS: These PJs would make

a great wedding morning picture.

SUBSCRIPTION BOXES

For the gifts that keep on giving, sign each of your crew up for a subscription box that everyone will enjoy. You can find a subscription box for just about anything nowadays. Look around for a service that

you can all share in. Maybe you all like to garden (succulent gift box, anyone?) or love makeup. You'll get memories not only of your big day but all year long.

CHAMPAGNE FLUTES

Maybe your girl gang is all about the celebration cocktails. Grab a set of tumblers or stemless flutes. You can add person-

alization, monograms and more to make it more personal. If champagne flutes aren't your thing, you can find just about any beverage container and jazz it up, including flasks, highball glasses and coffee mugs.

GET COZY

Nothing says winter wed-

ding day like cozy blankets, scarves, mittens or a hat. Find a matching set or pick out a luxe item to hand out for your best gals, especially if your wedding day's going to take you into the chilly weather for any length of time. Bridesmaids dresses aren't exactly known for their warmth, you know



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Groomsmen Gifts

They're your best buds, your bros, and they're going to be there for your big day. So what's a guy to get his friends?

Keep reading for some great groomsmen gifts that are sure to show them how much you care. Without it being, you know, weird.

DOPP KITS

A Dopp kit is a toiletry kit used by both men and women to store grooming supplies. It was invented, Copper River Bags says, by Charles Doppelt, a German leathersmith, in the early 20th century. During WWII, the Dopp kit became popular after they were introduced to the military. Samsonite purchased Doppelt's company in the 1970s to produce Dopp kits and trademarked the name. These small, squarish bags can be monogrammed or personalized, and because everyone needs one, they're great for gifting.

FLASKS

Flasks are a great way to surreptitiously take the party with you wherever you go, and they come in a variety of colors and materials, most of which are easily personalized. AskMen.com says there's two ways to carry a flask — either in a jacket pocket or in the hip pocket of your trousers. Jeans, the site says, show too



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much and give your flask away. Another acceptable option is to stow it in the top of your boot. Clean your flask by rinsing it out with hot water and leaving it to air dry overnight. If you're changing out the type of booze you're carrying, rinse it with a little

lemon juice from time to time. Avoid soap, as that can change the taste of your alcohol.

SWISS ARMY KNIVES

Victorinox, the company that makes the famous Swiss army knife, started in 1884

when Karl Eisener opened a cutlery in Ibach-Schwyz. He made a compact knife with an array of practical functions. Over the years, the functions have changed and the Swiss army knife became synonymous with the world's most versatile pocket tool. Now, in

addition to the classic red finish, Swiss army knives come in a variety of materials, colors and patterns, and they can easily be personalized into a great and thoughtful gift for the outdoorsman or just for the guy that always needs a corkscrew to hand.

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