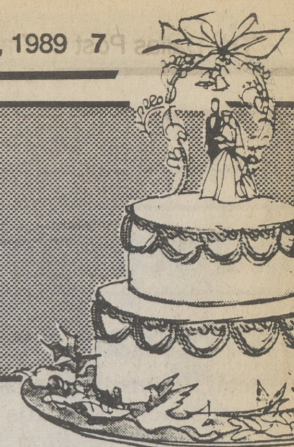


Plan The Perfect Wedding



Romancing lace for lovely brides

By Lisa Lebowitz
Copley News Service

If there was ever any doubt that weddings are romantic, those doubts were put to rest with the debut of this year's gowns.

"Wedding gowns today are more romantic than ever before," says *Bride's* magazine editor-in-chief Barbara Tober. "I think the most important thing to remember is that they're very, very feminine."

This season's silhouettes are simpler and more elegant than a year ago. Whereas last year the skirts of many bridal gowns cascaded with lace and overflowed with pearls, this year, skirts are simplified.

"Many of the skirts are totally plain without any embellishments at all," explains Holly McMunn, director of public relations for Bridal Originals. "In fact, trains and skirts have unadorned fabric with just a touch of lace. The emphasis has really gone to the bodice of the gown."

Look for lavish hand beading and the use of appliques on both the front and back. Or, hand beading appears on sheer lace that covers flesh-tone organza, creating the illusion of a show-through look.

Some gowns appear lingerie-inspired, mixing lace and embroidery for a feel borrowed from intimate apparel.

Necklines receive new emphasis, and this year, there are innovative alternatives to traditional high-neck styling. The portrait collars, capelets, fichus and scarf-tied looks that appear in ready-to-wear also influence bridal clothes.

"Also important this season are wonderful decolletage — off-the-shoulder looks," says Tober, "and unusual necklines that billow into sheer bishop sleeves."

When shoulders are bared, look for bows or fabric rosettes that draw attention to the shoulders.

There also is significant back interest this season: Keyhole cutouts, V-designs filled in with pearls and ruffled bustles keep eyes trained on the bride as she glides down the aisle.

Peplums are another point of interest — they're more prominent and architectural than they have been the last few seasons.

Waistlines are slightly higher, and in more fashion-forward gowns may even be Empire.

"The sheath is another gown

Bride's Guide to Fabric and Lace

It's helpful to know the differences in fabrics and lace when you are shopping for your gown and attendants' dresses.

Charmeuse. Classic charmeuse is made of silk. Polyester blends are also available. It is a soft, lightweight cloth that drapes beautifully.

Crepe de chine. Silk or blended fabric with a floating quality.

Faille. A full-bodied pure silk or polyester fabric often used for autumn or wintertime gowns.

Organza. Crisp sheer silk, often accented with appliques.

Taffeta. That silk or silk-blend fabric known best for its rustle — just like Mammy's red silk taffeta petticoat in "Gone With the Wind."

Tulle. Looks like veiling, and many brides use it on their headpieces. Also nice in layers on a dress.

Alencon lace. An expensive lace from France. Beloved for its delicate leaf and floral patterns.

Brussels lace. Rare, delicate lace with subtle designs. Imported from Belgium. Used on the finest gowns.

Chantilly lace. Also from France, it is known for its delicate spider's web pattern. Authentic Chantilly is identified by its soft feel.

Schiffli embroidery. Made in the United States, it comes in delicate patterns resembling more expensive laces. It is embroidered on the gown.

Copley News Service

shape that's enjoying a resurgence," adds McMunn.

And if skirts are full at the hip, they may be pegged at the ankle, creating a dome shape that looks fresh now.

Another strong trend this year is the use of color in bridal gowns. Blush pink and icy gray-blue show up in trims and overskirts, providing options to the classic ecru, ivory and white.

The traditional fabrics are still popular — silks, satins, taffetas — but they are joined by fluid fabrics such as chiffon and georgette, and iridescent fibers that create a frosted look.

Bridesmaids, too, are more colorful and florid than before. This is the year of the cabbage rose. While the silhouette of bridesmaid dresses, like bridal gowns, is simpler, more ladylike, the fabrics burst into bloom with floral chintzes. Tulips and daisies also

appear, as do polka dots.

Off-the-shoulder looks, ornamented with a simple ruffle at the neckline or a bow at the waist complete the English country feel.

As in ready-to-wear, the more classic single- or duo-tone attendant dresses are brighter than last year. Pastels are punched up. Look for brighter colors, such as mint and lemon ice, orchid, coral, turquoise blue and jade green.

These brighter gowns may have mini-ruffles on the skirt that create a tiered effect or an insert of matching lace on the bodice or at the bustline to enhance the design.

While the floral bridesmaids' gowns frequently are cotton or silk this year, the single-color dresses appear in classic taffeta and satin.

And what about the mother of the bride?

"They're in better shape and



FLORAL FASHION - The right flowers add to the romance of any wedding. Shown here: This bride is wearing lilies of the valley in her hair, which are repeated in her cascade bouquet of stephanotis, gardenias, star of Bethlehem and lilies. Floral design by Teleflora.

looking younger than ever," comments Tober. "We love to see them in chiffon dresses and beautiful, floating evening looks."

The perfect dress for the mother of the bride is one that reflects her personality. And there currently are many flattering options in late-day and evening silhouettes.

"What they want to avoid are dresses that look mousey and don't have the presence of glamour," adds Tober.

If you can't find a look that suits you in the stores, join the 38 percent of brides who either sew or have their gowns made each year. Sewing allows you to choose sequined lace or re-embroidered white lace that uses pale pink in the trim.

"Another way to use pink — a very important color this year," says Rose, "is as an underlining, topped by sheer white or ecru."

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BARB'S BRIDAL

Toasting the couple

By Carol Cutler
Copley News Service

Toast invariably involves a slice of bread. Far less often do we experience that other form of a warm toast — the one that accompanies raised glasses and salutatory greetings.

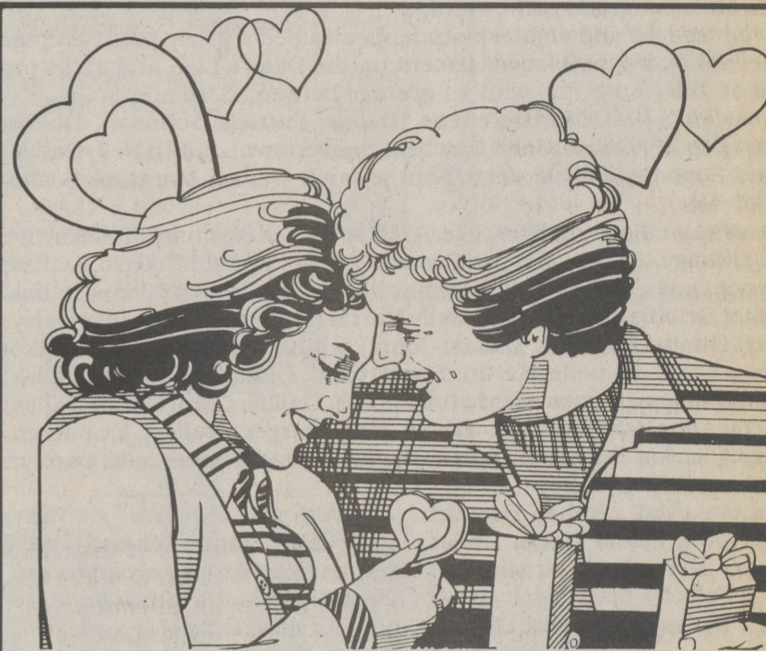
Toasts often revolve around two people deciding to get married.

First, there is the engagement party, when the happiness of the couple is toasted. A few days be-

fore the wedding, many ribald toasts flow throughout the course of the bachelor's dinner.

The first toast at the wedding is always given by the best man to the bride. Often, the groom follows with a toast to the bride's mother. We take the couple one step further to a christening, when the godfather toasts the health of the infant.

Unfortunately, not all marriages are viewed in the same smooth-flowing light.



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