

Fall Bridal Showcase

REGISTRY: Choosing the gifts you know you'll love

By Sharon Williams
Copley News Service

Go ahead, don't be shy. If you're planning a walk down the aisle in the foreseeable future, you and your betrothed are allowed, encouraged, even urged to make out the wish list of your dreams.

The official name for this list of lists is the bridal registry — something that no couple should overlook amid the many plans and preparations surrounding a wedding. After all, this is the only time in your life when it is acceptable for you to ask for everything your heart desires.

Chances are good — even great — that you'll end up receiving much of what you've requested, since the bridal gift registry greatly simplifies the timeless tradition of gift-giving.

The typical registry service is provided free of charge, and what ends up on the list is in the hands of the bride and groom themselves. Most begin by meeting with a gift consultant employed by their favorite department store or gift emporium, then go on to survey all the options available.

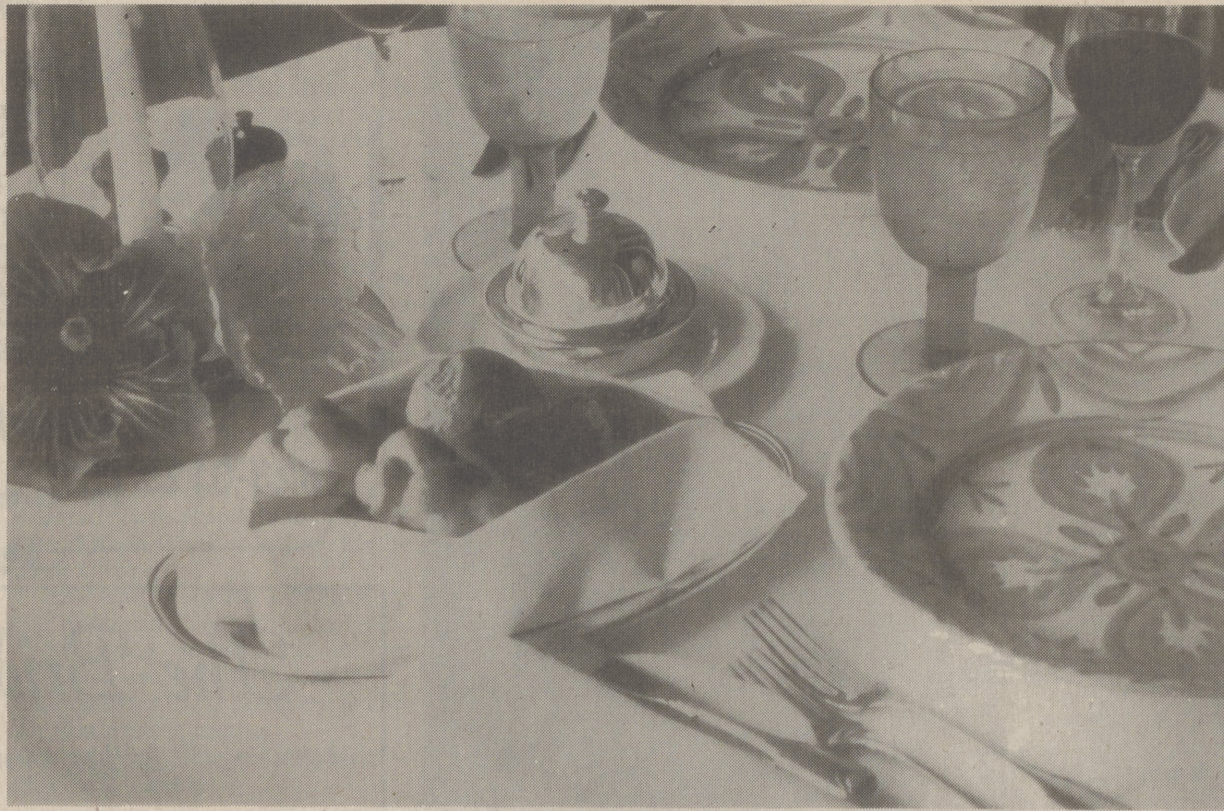
Once some big decisions about the objects, shapes, sizes, colors and patterns are made, the couple compiles a list of the items they want and quantities they need. The store's job is to keep your selection record on hand — either manually or via computer.

When guests come to the store, they can request a copy of your registry list — then go shopping. The store keeps a running tally of what has been purchased — and what's still up for grabs.

EVER-CHANGING MOODS

The traditional registry has taken some interesting twists and turns over the past few years. For instance, time once was when registering was a chore left to the bride and her mother and virtually ignored by the groom.

But in the 1990s, wedding experts say grooms are much more involved in selecting what goes into their first dwelling. Today, it's not at all unusual for a man



Smart gift registries include elegant items couples can use every day.

who has lived on his own to be just as opinionated as the bride, especially since he likely has some heavy-duty entertaining experience under his belt — and is proud of it.

A gifted wedding consultant can help such couples choose the gifts that satisfy individual tastes and mesh perfectly with what they already own.

RULES OF REGISTRY

For a registry to be effective, couples must do more than just breeze in and out of a given store sometime before the wedding day, and then expect everything to magically fall into place.

- Couples should register three to six months before the wedding, advises *Bride's* magazine. Any earlier, and some seasonal patterns and promotional items may be out of season and stock by your wedding day. Wait until later, and you'll shortchange the enthusiastic guests who want to shop early.

- Keep a running gift list, and compare notes with your registrar after every shower so that your list agrees with hers. Once you begin to receive gifts, touch base with your registrar every few weeks or so to ensure that you and she have the same items marked off.

- Make a note of each item you receive, who sent it and any thoughts that come to mind when you unwrap it. This will make writing thank-you notes easier; once gifts start piling up, cards are easily misplaced, and it be-

comes tough to remember who gave what.

- Save mailing labels from the packages you receive. If you decide to return the gift, the label may be your only proof of purchase.

REGISTRY HOT SPOTS

Traditionally, engaged couples head off to the china, crystal and household areas of department stores to register for dinnerware, flatware, crystal and other wanted wares. Such is still the case today, but the possibilities don't end there.

One rule of thumb: Avoid overlap in registry locations. Register for each item in one store only; otherwise, the job of keeping track of gifts that have and haven't been purchased will fall into your lap.

One way to simplify matters is by registering at a large department store chain; in most cases the registries at each branch are linked by computer in order to keep the gift tally updated.

How do you get the word out about where you are registered? It's best, say wedding experts, to let your mother and bridesmaids discreetly spread the word, although it is acceptable for a shower hostess to include registry cards in shower invitations. It would be a major wedding faux pas, however, to include such cards in the wedding invitations.

THE GREATEST GIFTS

So what is it that the two of you really want? Sometimes the an-

swers don't come right away, so give yourself plenty of time to make choices, say wedding experts. For instance, devote a day or so to linens, then move on to china patterns instead of trying to cram everything into one frustration-filled afternoon.

Many brides-to-be visit their favorite stores alone during quiet off-hours to narrow down their selections before returning with their fiances to make the final decisions. Your registrar — who is something of an expert in everything from wedding etiquette and bone china to dealing with manufacturers and stock numbers — can be as valuable as a fairy godmother when it's time to hammer out the decisions.

Brides and grooms can also glean ideas by going through registry lists found in bridal books and magazines. When registering, it's smart to be specific about what you want, so be sure to list both a style number and written description on your registry form.

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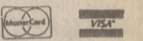
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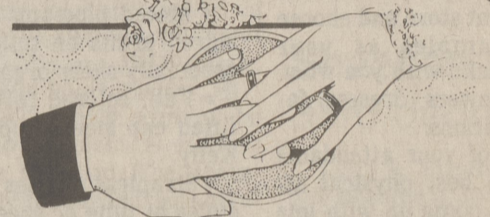
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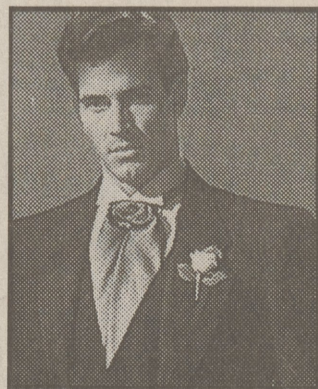
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