

**Jewelry**  
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The absence of color allows it to reflect and refract light.

• **Clarity:** This refers to the lack of natural internal inclusions, which jewelers call "inclusions" or "fingerprints." Inclusions obstruct the flow of light within the stone, so the fewer there are, the better.

• **Carat:** Think about it this way: Approximately 250 tons of ore must be mined to yield a one-carat polished diamond. That helps explain the rarity of large diamonds. However, bigger isn't always better, which is why smaller stones with a better cut, color and clarity can be more expensive.

As engagement rings go, the favorite remains the brilliant-cut diamond solitaire. But don't overlook other shapes, such as oval, pear, marquise or emerald.

As with any jewelry, you'll want to consider its function when you choose a setting. If you'll be wearing the ring all the time, opt for a low-profile setting that helps protect the stone. If it's something you'll wear mostly on special occasions, you can choose a high-ridged setting that shows off your treasure.

Since a diamond engagement ring is often the most valuable piece of jewelry a young bride owns, it's wise to have the ring properly insured. Make sure it's covered for its full replacement value, and have the policy updated as the years go by.

**FORGOTTEN GEMS**  
When the Princess of Wales and the Duchess of York sported sapphire and ruby engagement rings, they showed brides and grooms everywhere that engagement rings can feature any gem.

If diamonds are out of your budget or if you simply prefer something else, try any of a number of other gemstones. If you met in March, you might wear a quartzine, which symbolizes youth, hope and health. If he popped the question in September, opt for a ring of sapphire, which is the stone for that month.

Gems have their own language. Ruby is said to ensure a harmonious life, and pearls are the symbol of happy marriage. Amethyst is another stone that encourages peace and tranquility (two good tributes for any marriage). If your beloved is a hothead, wear opal, which is supposed to cool tempers and restore sanity.

If you love diamonds and want a gemstone for sentimental reasons, remember that settings can feature both.

**BEAUTIFUL BANDS**  
Wedding bands used to be basic, plain gold affairs. Now you can select them in a variety of textures and tones.

Textures include hammered gold, matte finishing, engraving, beading, braiding, weaving, beveling, embossed motifs, bamboo, diamond cut and appliques. Wedding bands can be made of platinum, white gold or gold — or a combination for a two-tone effect.

**Incredible, edible cakes**

By Sharon Achatz  
Copley News Service

No wedding is complete without the bride, her groom — and a cake.

Some brides even choose to forgo a separate wedding band altogether by having the gem for the engagement ring placed in a more substantial setting.

But while etiquette used to call for a tiered, all-white confection, today it can come in any flavor, color or shape. And the topper no longer need be the traditional bride-and-groom figurine.

Today's wedding cake is just as likely to be a fondant frosted chocolate cake as it is to be a lemon sponge cake with custard filling as it is to be a spice cake with coconut filling.

Its frosting fills are just as likely to be black-and-white as paste, and it's more than possible that the flowers adorning the cake will be real rather than a confection.

For show-stopping surprise, the cake may be shaped as an airplane, castle or the state of Texas rather than a tiered tower.

The choices and potential combinations are endless, and there are as many different cake ornaments as there are kinds and styles of cakes — just check out the profusion at various party stores, stationery shops or bakeries.

Couples who share special interests top cakes with tiny scuba divers, skiers, elephants, dinosaurs or seashells; nostalgic couples may borrow the toppers from a parent's cake or have a crystal work of art created to become a new family heirloom.

Those who relish the idea of an iced, white wedding cake topped with bride and groom can go for the unusual with the tradition of a groom's cake, generally a spice or chocolate cake sculpted in an imaginative shape.

do you compromise? Can a sophisticated walnut-and-glass table live happily with rustic twig chairs? "It's possible," says Marcus. "Some of the most interesting rooms are made up of seemingly conflicting styles."

Learning to recognize the elements of some of the more popular looks and how they blend with other styles may help you decide what works best for you. Consult the following definitions of decorating styles to familiarize yourselves with them:

**• Southwest or Santa Fe.** This popular style has casual elegance that's hip and sophisticated, yet at the same time plain and folksy. The elements that make it work are:  
Simple lines, functional forms, sunset colors, primitive art, hand-carved pieces.  
Silver, turquoise, tin and copper accessories.

**• American country.** Stripes, geometrics, American Indian and Mexican motifs, Navajo rugs and blankets, including Haitian cottons, terra-cotta pottery, kachina dolls.

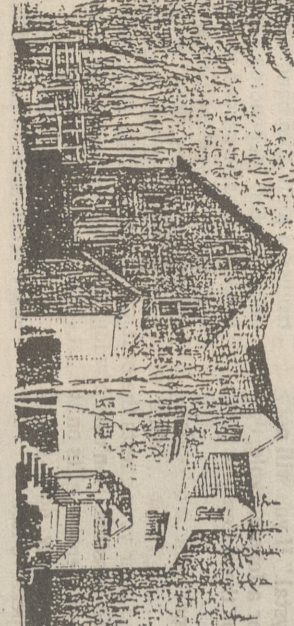
**• Victorian.** A perennial favorite, the Victorian style's sentimental, cluttered and romantic look is perfect for the collector. Elements that make it special are:  
Dark, glossy woods, richly upholstered furnishings, tufted fabrics, velvets, chintzes, danask, crewel and lace.  
Wing chairs, rounded furniture lines, claw-foot tables, wicker, four-poster beds, sleigh beds.  
Bric-a-brac, tassels, buttons and fringe.  
Paisley, stripes, large-scaled florals, tapestry prints — with a layering of pattern-on-pattern.

**• Contemporary.** Spare and restrained, the contemporary flavor allows you to achieve maximum effect with minimal furnishings. Elements of contemporary are:  
Sectional sofas, leather-and-chrome "Barcelona" chairs, straight-backed "Lawson" sofas, modular units, geometric shapes.

**• French country.** A style that's a relative of American country but more curved and rounded, feminine and lighter. It can be recognized by:  
Colors of the Mediterranean — blue, sand, peach, pink.  
Hand-painted tile.  
Miniprint cottons and hand-worked cotton lace.  
Armories, alcove beds, baker's racks, farm tables, farm implements, Celtic motifs.  
Quimper pottery (a popular porcelain pattern featuring yellows and blues), brass and copper pots, terra-cotta tile, used brick.

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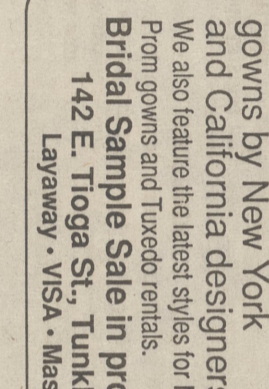
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Most new brides try to "do it all" alone when entertaining for the first time  
Percent who purchased ready-to-serve foods or asked for help from their mother  
12%  
88%  
Percent who prepared the entire meal by themselves  
SOURCE: KAPUS North America, Inc. survey of entertaining profiles of American newlyweds  
Copley News Service

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