

# Can you have your (wedding) cake and eat it too?

BY KELLY TERRY  
Copley News Service

Is it important for you to arrive at your wedding by a horse-drawn, gilded carriage, dressed in a \$2,000 Galina gown? Would your wedding day be meaningful only if your vows on that remote island where you shared your first kiss? And what about the reception - are giant ice sculptures, Godiva chocolate party favors and a 10-piece band really necessary?

How you dress, where you have your wedding and how many people you invite are all factors determined by your wedding budget. So, where do a bride and groom begin when deciding how much money to spend on that all-important day?

Experts offer differing advice on how to determine a wedding budget, but what most agree on is the fact that a couple must decide on the guest list before they can proceed any further.

"It's sort of a chicken and an egg thing," says wedding guru Leah Ingram.

"Until you know how many people you can invite, you cannot realistically set your budget," adds Ingram, who is the author of "The Bridal Registry Book" and "The Portable Wedding Consultant." Her third book, "Your Wedding Your Way," comes out in January, 2000.

Where experts differ in their opinions is (beginning) how (ending) to determine the guest list in the first place.

Author and wedding consultant Deborah McCoy believes that the quality of the reception is more important than the quantity of guests you invite.

A wedding is really a very intimate, family and friends affair. People who are out of the loop find

weddings very boring," explains McCoy.

"My favorite weddings are those with 100 people. Everyone enjoys themselves and no one is intimidated. If you keep your guest list small, you're gonna be able to do things better," adds McCoy, who also owns a full-service bridal shop in Boca Raton, Fla.

"You're the hosts of your first party as man and wife. If guests are walking out saying, 'I'm so hungry, I'm going to Denny's, you haven't had a successful wedding reception.'"

Millie Bratten, editor in chief of (beginning) Bride's (ending) magazine, has a different take on the guest list.

"It's a very individual approach," says Bratten, who has worked for Bride's for 20 years. Bratten suggests writing down what is important to you.

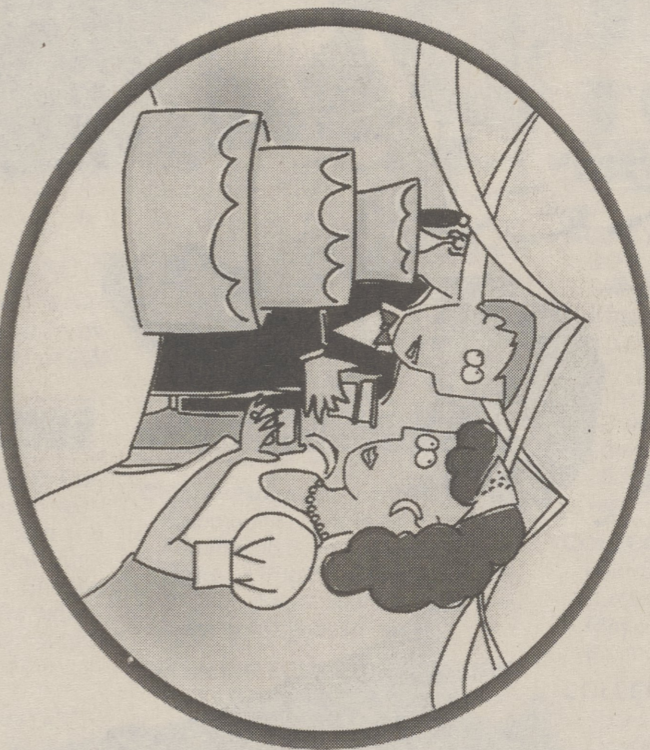
"That's the time to dream," she says. "Is it small and intimate in a restaurant? Do we want to go to an island?" are questions that Bratten poses.

"From your dream, look at what's most important to you. Is it the nostalgic location? Is it the time of day? Is it the number of guests?"

Bratten encourages couples to invite as many people as they want.

"If the most important thing is to have all the guests you want, but the dinner is too expensive, then have a brunch, or cocktails," she advises.

So once you've determined how many to invite, then what? According to a recent survey done by (beginning) Bride's (ending) magazine, the average cost of a wedding is just over \$29,000 in New York City, a little more than \$16,000 for nuptials in the Midwest; and, on the West Coast, the



Smart planning can stretch the wedding budget.

bill comes to nearly \$19,000.

McCoy says if you're smart, creative and innovative, you can cut that cost in half.

She offers tips on what not to skimp on ("bite the bullet" commitments), and what corners to cut ("extraneous extras," she calls them).

Top priorities should be entertainment and food at the reception, and photography and videography at the ceremony, she says.

When a bride mentions to McCoy that she wants to skip entertainment at the reception or serve appetizers only, McCoy

photographer to shoot formal pictures at the wedding, then have friends take informal shots at the reception," she suggests.

"So many people don't feel the need to have a video and that's so wrong," says McCoy.

Everything that you do will be recorded. The wedding day for the bride and groom goes by so quickly, most say it's such a blur, they can't remember everything.

McCoy reports that the couples with a video say, "I'm so glad I got it. I didn't realize my fiancé was crying at the altar" or, "I didn't know Aunt Mary was there."

In her latest book, "The Elegant Wedding and the Budget-Savvy Bride," McCoy covers all the bases when it comes to planning a wedding.

Here are several of her money-saving tips:

- Have an off-season wedding (summertime in a warm climate; or a Friday evening or Sunday afternoon ceremony, for example).

- Avoid the "extraneous extras" like matchbooks, imprinted cocktail napkins, swizzle sticks, "basically, all those expensive favors from the back of wedding catalogs," she says. "Weddings are so expensive that, to me, the invitation is favor enough."

- Skip the limousine ride. Instead, she says, "rent a huge, white Lincoln Continental. You can use it all weekend, pick up relatives, run errands, etc. And then have a friend or family member play chauffeur on the wedding day."

- Make your own headpiece and veil. McCoy says you can do it for less than \$35. For a headpiece, she says, buy a hat frame and glue on silk flowers, pearls and sequins. Or, for a tiara, McCoy

believes in pinching pennies there either.

"You can hire a professional See BUDGET, pg 7

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## Maids in a Row

Organizing a coordinated look for a bevy of bridesmaids, while taking into account their own sense of style and beauty, can be one of the most difficult tasks for a bride. A good start is to brainstorm with the maids to get an idea of their tastes and budgets. Identical carrying-and-necklace sets or "jewelry compliance," as well as shoes dyed to match the dress and same-colored hose are essential, too. If the budget allows, a beauty team should be brought to do the bridal party's hair and makeup to ensure equally flattering looks and formality. (CNS)

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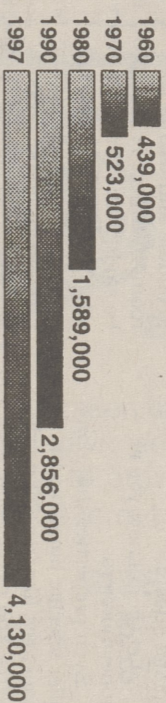
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## WEDDINGFACTS

### Unmarried couples more common

In 1997, the number of unmarried couples topped 4 million for the first time. A third of these couples had children.

NUMBER OF UNMARRIED COUPLES COHABITATING



■ About 35 percent of individuals between ages 25 and 34 have never been married.

■ About 10 percent of the adult population is divorced.

SOURCE: Census Bureau

Copley News Service/Dan Clifford



## Have your cake and eat it, too

(continued from page 2)

bought a \$40, three-strand necklace made with pearls, crystals and gold, and glued it onto a tiara hat frame, which cost her \$1.

- Make your own invitations: McCoy says she found beautiful stationery and card stock at Kinko's and was able to make 100 color invitations on her computer for about \$20 (not including postage).

- The gown: "In a bride's mind, that's the most important item that she shops for when planning a wedding," McCoy's advice: Take advantage of sale racks in traditional bridal shops and look for a discontinued dress. "Isn't it better to buy a \$2,000 dress for half price than to buy a full-price dress for \$700?"

- Rings: The second largest expense of a wedding, according to McCoy, "I advise that you hit your local pawn shops, and study my chapter on diamonds (in "The Elegant Wedding and the Budget-Savvy Bride"). I buy all my jewelry in pawn shops. I teach you how the industry is regulated and how it's safe to shop there."

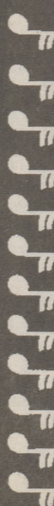
McCoy assures.

- The honeymoon: If you plan on using frequent-flyer miles, plan one year in advance and go off-season.

## What's His Name

All things being equal, *Bride's* magazine now publishes *Groom*, a guide to wedding planning created exclusively for engaged men. The guy whose primary functions used to be popping the question, then showing up at the wedding, now has a status elevated above bystander. Groom stories range from relationship advice and etiquette to wedding fashion and gifts for groomsmen. (CNS)

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