

Wedding GUIDE

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Wedding GUIDE

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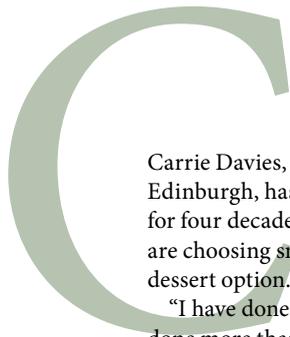
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cutting TRADITION

STORY BY JENN WILLHITE // PHOTOGRAPHY
SUBMITTED BY GERI GIRL BAKERY

Elegant, tiered wedding cakes are considered a long-held wedding tradition, but today's wedding parties are getting creative and thinking beyond the cake.





Carrie Davies, owner of Geri Girl Bakery in Edinburg, has been baking sweet desserts for four decades and said many of her clients are choosing small cutting cakes as another dessert option.

“I have done three tiers lately, but I haven’t done more than that,” Davies said. “I am still doing tiered cakes, but most of my weddings have been a cutting cake or a small, two-tiered cake and cupcakes or a dessert bar, which is a little bit of everything.”

Traditional wedding cakes of several tiers high haven’t gone completely by the wayside, but recently it is more of an economical decision.

Not only have ingredient costs risen considerably, Davies said, but a cake requires the necessity of a professional cake cutter,

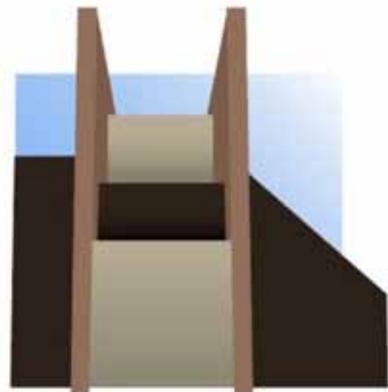
which can run in the neighborhood of \$200 for a large cake. Cutting a wedding cake in the customary two-by-two-inch slices is certainly an art form, and not for the faint of heart because not only does the entire cake have to be dismantled, but one wrong cut, and the cake is ruined and you won’t have enough to serve all the guests.

“You have to have someone who knows how to cut it,” she said. “It is time consuming and keeps the baker at the venue.”

Just up the road in Greenwood, Scott McCorkle, owner of Sweet Escape Cake Company, said he and his staff have been witnessing a trend of wedding parties opting for three-tiered cakes, which equals about 74 servings, with a smaller dessert option on the side, like cake pops, cookies or cupcakes.

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“Giving guests several options seems to always be a home run,” McCorkle said. “We are certainly trending that way in 2023.”

McCorkle said cupcakes gained popularity a few years back due to their presentation value, however, recently that popularity has increased as cupcakes offer convenience and are easier on the budget.

“The majority of wedding attendees prefer a slice of cake over a cupcake,” McCorkle said. “Unless both are preferred, then those who love cake love having the option of both.”

Michael Arnold, a baker and co-owner of the Original Party Mart in Columbus, said he too gets requests for three-tiered cakes, but mostly from traditionalists who consider a large tiered cake essential.

However, post-COVID-19, the majority of clients request cupcakes alongside a small cutting cake, he said. Averaging about \$1 a piece, cupcakes are oftentimes more economical, especially for smaller wedding parties, and easier when it comes to the logistics of transport and set-up.

“It is probably easier to go the way of the cupcake,” Arnold said. “It is less work for the baker, but at the end of the day it is the same for us either way.”

Another trend that is on the rise, Davies said, is the deconstructed tiered cake. It has the same layers, but each is displayed at varying heights on its own pedestal.

Wedding cakes are beautiful, but cupcakes have their own sweet benefits and versatility, Davies added.

Often displayed in a tiered fashion on a stand of multiple levels, the stand itself can also be decorated to complement the cupcakes and wedding décor.

Before making the final decision about what dessert to offer, it is good to also consider the logistics of storage.

“Almost every venue has a

fridge you can place a cake in, but you would be hard-pressed to fit an equal amount of cupcakes in a similar fridge,” McCorkle said.

When it comes to cost, a single tier of cupcakes is going to be about \$300, whereas the average tiered wedding cake starts in the neighborhood of \$600.

If there is one piece of advice Davies has for those who are planning their weddings, it is don't save the cake for last.

“Cakes aren't inexpensive and, unfortunately, for all of us, we have had to raise our prices,” she said. “People think they are going to do the dessert last and then find out they don't have enough left in the budget.”

Book the wedding date with the baker early and with a deposit, Davies recommended, then work out the details as the date gets closer. You don't have to pay in full up front, but it is good practice to get the ball going early in the planning process.

Also, make sure to taste test, Davies added.

If you're caught in a cake vs. cupcake conundrum and you really want to supply dessert for guests, selections of pies also work well, Davies said.

“I have done different things to where I've done a selection of pies that were precut,” she said. “There are lots of ideas out there if you don't like cake. Some people come in and say their fiancé doesn't like cake — so mini cheesecakes could be an option. There's a lot of ideas out there.”



Cupcakes by Geri Girl Bakery are a common alternative to the classic tiered wedding cake.

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wedding





Wedding planners and venues give advice to make your big day unique

STORY BY GREG SEITER
PHOTOGRAPHY SUBMITTED BY
THE EVENT CENTER AT MILL RACE

Weddings aren't meant to be stressful, but that doesn't mean they won't be. From unexpected guests to less than desirable weather conditions, bridal parties must sometimes adapt and adjust when things don't go exactly as planned. However, industry experts say flexibility, a willingness to break from tradition and an acceptance of small imperfections are all important traits for any couple to maintain prior to, during and after a wedding ceremony and reception in order to embrace and enjoy the overall experience, while enduring as little anxiety as possible.

Following the recommendations of others can also be helpful.

"Some of the best advice I can give a couple is to enjoy their day," said Autumn Miller, owner of Oak and Ivy Events, a wedding and event coordination company based in North Vernon. "Don't worry so much about things like what the napkins will have printed on them. In fact, guests may not even notice a lot of what you're spending time thinking about. Things will work out. Just breathe and concentrate on enjoying the experience."



Wedding planners and venue administrators must also embrace the possibility of change in order to accommodate ever-evolving bridal party requests.

“One of the biggest trend changes I’ve seen is that people are letting go of traditional things that have been done forever,” Miller said. “Brides and grooms are really incorporating themselves into ceremonies and receptions.”

A recommendation in that regard is to consider having a small ceremony in a non-traditional setting with a close friend or family member officiating, rather than at a place of worship with an ordained minister presiding.

“Weddings used to be held mostly in churches with receptions usually taking place elsewhere, but we’re hosting a lot of weddings and receptions right here,” said Shannon Truman, operations and program director for The Event Center at Mill Race in Columbus, a facility that offers a more than 4,000-square-foot multipurpose room and terraces with lake and park area views. “There are many unique photography spots here.”

Those in the business say another trendy tip leading up to a wedding itself is to consider the possibility of digitizing reservation cards. By doing so, and even providing a QR code, couples will save money on postage, while invitees will enjoy a simplified reservation process.

According to Miller, another budget friendly suggestion is to schedule the marital event for a day other than Saturday.

“For many reasons, Saturday weddings are becoming increasingly expensive,” she said. “Sunday weddings and even Friday nights make sense financially. I’ve even seen one on a Tuesday morning. That’s a little harder, though, because you’re asking people to take time off work.”




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In any case, those who prefer a Saturday wedding should look for a venue that allows flexibility in when decorations and other items can be dropped off.

“Half the battle is in getting everything to the venue so we have a Friday drop-off option,” Truman said. “People love that they can bring items in starting Friday morning without an extra charge.”

Professionals are also seeing a seasonal shift in the timing of scheduled weddings. In fact, while spring demand continues to be strong, those wanting to take advantage of natural Earth tones and late-year colors may want to consider the apparent movement toward fall weddings.

Another way to save a little money is to replace the

wedding cake with a dessert bar or snack table that holds different types of candy from which guests can pick and choose from a variety of bowls or dishes.

Of course, the only way to truly manage expenses is by establishing a budget to plan from.

“You’ll almost always go over but things will be so much easier to track and account for when you have a budget,” Miller said. “There’s no reason to go into debt over a wedding and reception but you have to start planning early.”

When it comes to photography, Truman and Miller suggest that a list be created in advance of the event in order to identify desired shots and the people

who should be in them. Bridal parties may even want to have formal family photos taken before guests arrive to save time between a ceremony and reception.

There are many other tips to consider, as well.

“If you’re getting married outdoors, make sure you have a rain plan,” Truman said. “We can set up the same outdoor look indoors and transform things pretty quickly.”

Miller said veering from tradition can sometimes make for an even more memorable wedding.

“I’m now starting to see dresses that are black or red and vows are really being customized to reflect each individual’s personality,” Miller said. “I’ve also noticed that brides aren’t tossing the bouquet or garter as often as they used to. In fact, they’re focusing on bringing things into their wedding and reception that are truly important to them.”

Truman agreed.

“Because we have a nice patio, we’re seeing an uptick in games being played after weddings,” she said. “Just about everything from cornhole to a large version of Jenga is possible.”

“Activities at weddings can be a lot of fun, especially if there’s downtime between the ceremony and reception.”

Those hoping to personalize the experience even more may want to invest in customized cornhole boards or hire a local caricaturist to create a keepsake for friends and family members.

For more information on services offered by Oak and Ivy Events, visit: <https://oakandivyeventsllc.com>

Additional information on The Event Center at Mill Race can be found at <https://millraceevents.com>





blooming
trends

Local florists offer advice on latest floral trends

STORY BY JON SHOULDERS

Dress. Venue. Guests. Invitations. Food. The list of items to tackle in the weeks and months leading up to your wedding day can seem interminable, and as such, your bridal bouquet might not always be foremost in your thoughts. Not that it's any less important — an inspired bouquet can put the perfect aesthetic punctuation mark on your ceremony.

Firstly, there's no need to wilt straight away if you don't have a firm direction in mind regarding the flower or arrangement type for your bouquet. Hop online and do some casual searches for color and style inspiration or strike up a conversation with a nearby florist. As you search, be sure to balance aesthetic considerations with realistic and budget friendly floral choices.

"Keep your wedding color scheme in mind when you first start thinking about what you

want," said Kelly Hatton, owner of Flowers from the Woods on Central Avenue in Columbus. "Keep in mind that not all fresh flowers are good for wedding bouquets. They don't last. Once you know what your colors are, then after that, determine what flowers would work and not work."

Roses and gerbera daisies are constant favorites, and lilies can contribute to a simple yet elegant arrangement. Combinations can work well also, such as roses with ranunculi, or alstroemeria with lilies.

"Of course, it depends on the time of year and the bridesmaids' dresses, but girls are staying pretty traditional with roses and lilies lately — not anything too different," said Ann Cox, owner of Folger's Four Seasons Florist. "If things start changing on Pinterest, that's when you'll see major changes in what girls are



“Hydrangeas are beautiful, but on a hot summer day they just faint. A good garden rose has lots of petals and they usually open really well. Just make sure you keep it cool and in a water source.”

ANN HARRISON

wanting, but we haven't seen any major straying from your classic flowers.”

Ann Harrison, the owner of Columbus-based Fisher's Flower Basket, recommends confirming with your florist of choice early to make sure they have your date available. “We're a small shop and we only do two weddings per weekend, so check early,” she said. “On the budget part of things, remember that florals are not inexpensive, but your wedding can be as inexpensive or as expensive, floral-wise, as you like, so be thorough when you're looking at what the options are and keeping in mind what your colors are.”

Don't forget that the specific setting of your wedding can have an influence on your bouquet choice, as well. Are you planning on an outdoor ceremony in a hot month? Perhaps avoid less-than-robust florals that may not make it through the day.

“Hydrangeas are beautiful, but on a hot summer day they just faint,” Harrison explained. “A good garden rose has lots of petals and they usually open really well. Just make sure you keep it cool and in a water source.”

Some shops can source out-of-season flowers from distributors that originate overseas, but factor in potentially higher pricing if you're seeking something that might not typically be available locally around the time of your wedding day.

“A lot of the girls I've had love to have local flowers though, and that's been a bit of a trend in itself,” Harrison added. “Anemone sunflowers, dahlias, and different greens like eucalyptuses are great.”

Harrison has also noticed large, cascading bouquets trending in recent months. “There's been a lot of green, a lot of hanging down with the cascades, and they're really sizable,” she said. “They've had a lot of garden

flowers — ranunculus and anemones and scabiosas.”

Hatton adds that sunflowers have also surged in popularity lately. “It has more of an outdoorsy look to it, maybe with some wildflower greenery and a burlap ribbon on it,” she said.

Don’t be afraid to accessorize and personalize beyond just the flowers, if that’s what you envision. Embellish with pins and layers of velvet or silk ribbon — even a special locket or pendant affixed to your preferred stem wrap.

“We did an arrangement not too long ago with light and dark pink roses, and we stuck pearls in the top of each rose,” Hatton said. “That’s becoming a popular thing to do.”

Preservation

After all the planning, preparing and petal perusing, it might be hard to let go of that beautiful bouquet that accompanied you on your big day, and there are a few ways you can preserve your flowers for months and even years. Dipping your flowers in wax can preserve them for a matter of months, and although this method isn’t permanent, it does keep the full colors of your bouquet alive. Just melt some wax in boiling water, then turn your stove to low, dip the flowers in and hang them upside down immediately.

Additionally, some florists offer freeze-drying, which involves freezing the flowers while they are in full bloom, thus retaining their brightness and true color.

“Another simple way is to hang them upside down to dry, keep them out of dust and don’t hairspray them,” Harrison said. “Let them dry back naturally and if you want, put them in a shadow box.” After drying, you can also press them in your desired shape — even just a few individual flowers, if the whole bouquet didn’t make it through

all that partying and dancing — and frame them.

While this isn’t technically a preservation method, why not hire an artist to paint your bouquet (or paint or draw them yourself, if visual art is your thing)? An oil or watercolor rendering of the flowers you took down the aisle can help to keep those memories vivid. If you can’t find someone locally, snap some high-res photos of the bouquet and search online for artists specializing in such images.

Still overwhelmed? Trust your florist — they’ve likely been through the bouquet process more times than they could count — and remember that it’s probably best to simply go with the choice of arrangement and flower types that speak to you most (even if sourcing and maintaining your choices are a bit more of a production than you might have anticipated), which will truly reflect the look and feel of your big day. You’ll be glad you did.





REGISTER WITH CONFIDENCE

Simple tips for a better wedding registry

STORY BY FAMILY FEATURES

For some couples, the idea of registering for wedding gifts is an exciting way to start planning for the home they'll be sharing as newlyweds. For others, the registry is just one more chore to check off the wedding to-do list.

Regardless of where you fall on the love-it-or-hate-it spectrum, most experts agree a registry is a good idea, especially for couples who will be setting up a home together for the first time. Keep these tips and etiquette guidelines in mind to get the most out of your registry.

Take inventory of what you have and what you need. For couples who've lived alone or together, the registry may be a way to fill in gaps for necessities neither of you already have. It's also a good way to begin upgrading the less expensive kitchen items and furnishings you had as college students or singles. Make a list of your needs and wants so you don't

forget any essentials. If you're still in doubt, request a checklist from the store where you'll be registering so you can do some planning.

Register for things at a wide range of price points. The whole purpose of a registry is to make it easy for your guests to get you things you'll like and need. Part of making it easy is recognizing your guests have diverse financial situations. While it's customary to gift the bride and groom, not everyone can afford an extravagant gift, especially if they've spent money on travel and attire to attend. While it's a good idea to offer modest options, don't shy away from bigger ticket items that a small group might chip in on together.

Keep access in mind when you choose where to register. Avoid stores that are local or regional if you have many guests who live out of the area. Also avoid the temptation to choose online-

only options, as some guests will prefer to see what they're buying. Aim for a mix of large national stores and online retailers.

Plan to block off at least a few hours for an in-person registry. It will take time to get everything set up. Traveling through the store, debating options and making your selections could take longer than expected. Also, be sure to ask how you can add to or edit your registry after your initial visit.

Get your partner involved. There are bound to be some parts of the registry your partner may not care about, but asking for input and making decisions together lets you both share in the excitement. Focus on things you'll each find useful as you settle into your new home. For example, the person who will be responsible for taking out the trash should get to pick the new kitchen trash can.





WEDDING PARTY ROLES

A wedding can be a wonderful and memorable experience for all of those involved. That's why you ask friends or relatives to share in the event and serve in your wedding party. Your offer is a wonderful honor, one that carries with it varying degrees of responsibility, depending, on the role each person will be playing. To help you decide whom to ask to be in your wedding party, here is a list of titles and responsibilities for each participant's role.

MAID OF HONOR

The maid of honor is a role typically filled by a sister or a very close friend. It is the equivalent of the groom's best man. The maid of honor's role, therefore, is typically very involved. Among her many responsibilities, the maid of honor accompanies the bride on shopping trips for her wedding dress, while also planning the bridal shower, bachelorette party and coordinating the bridal party gift for the bride. Also, the maid of honor helps the bride get dressed on her wedding day, holds the groom's wedding ring during the wedding and may be asked to help in the writing of invitations. The maid of honor will also typically act as a witness to the wedding and dance with the best man at the reception. If the woman you're asking is married, her title will be matron of honor.

BEST MAN

Perhaps the most well-known responsibilities of the best man are organizing the bachelor party and giving the toast at the reception. But the best man, who is typically a brother or best friend of the groom, also has a slew of other responsibilities. In addition to helping the groom choose his tuxedo and get dressed before the wedding, the best man coordinates the couple's gift from the groomsmen and takes care of the newlyweds' transportation to the airport after the reception or the next morning. The best man may also hold onto any payment that's due to the reception site or the donation for the house of worship and take care of any final financial details. He also holds the bride's wedding ring during the ceremony.

BRIDESMAIDS

Along with walking in the wedding procession, bridesmaids attend the shower and contribute to the bridal gifts. Bridesmaids, who are typically sisters or friends of the bride or groom, also dance with the groomsmen during the reception. To be further involved, each can be given specific roles, like reading a religious passage at the ceremony, providing assistance with choosing wedding vendors or helping to address wedding invitations.

FLOWER GIRL

If the bride has a sister who is especially young, that sister typically fills the role of flower girl. Since most flower girls are very young, their responsibilities are generally limited to carrying a basket of flowers during the processional and, depending on the bride's preference, tossing flower petals on the ground to mark the bride's entrance.

PARENTS OF THE BRIDE

The bride's parents may be responsible for hosting the wedding, if they are completely financially responsible for the event. In some cases, the father of the bride escorts his daughter down the aisle alone, but in other instances or in religious ceremonies, both parents may accompany the bride. In all cases, it's her preference. The mother of the bride may help fund or contribute to the planning of the bridal shower if the maid of honor needs assistance. These parents may also foot the cost of an engagement party or dinner to meet the groom's family.

GROOMSMEN

Groomsmen are the male equivalent of the bridesmaids, typically having nearly identical responsibilities. Sometimes, groomsmen can act as ushers for guests arriving at the ceremony. Groomsmen walk in the wedding processional and attend and help organize the bachelor party as well.

RING BEARER

Like the flower girl, the ring bearer is a very young member of the family, only the ring bearer is a male. The ring bearer's role is to carry a pillow with the rings sewn on it during the processional. Some couples choose to have the ring bearer and the flower girl walk next to one another during the processional.

PARENTS OF THE GROOM

The groom's parents should host a rehearsal dinner prior to the wedding. They may also choose to contribute to the wedding if they desire. In most cases, the groom's parents have limited responsibilities, but can be involved as much as the wedding couple would like. Traditionally, the groom's mother confers with the bride's mother on what color gown she is wearing, so as not to go with the same shade. The groom's parents may walk down the aisle in advance of the rest of the wedding processional and take their seats.



COUNTDOWN TO THE BIG DAY

To help you get a better understanding of how to plan a wedding and when you should be making certain decisions, here's a time frame you can follow to help ensure your wedding goes off as smoothly as possible.

10 TO 12 MONTHS BEFORE

If you haven't done it already, this is a good time to announce your engagement and introduce your respective families. Since most reception halls and churches have busy wedding schedules, it is also important to book both as early as possible, preferably at least a year in advance of your wedding day. It's also a good idea to start putting together a guest list around this time and ask your parents whom they'd like to invite as well. Also, since your budget will determine just about every aspect of your wedding, sitting down and determining what you can spend and developing a savings plan should be first and foremost.

6 TO 9 MONTHS BEFORE

This is the time when you want to start booking some services, such as a florist, caterer, a DJ/band and a photographer. However, some of the more experienced DJs and bands, as well as photographers, might have their schedules booked a year in advance, so this might be something you'll want to consider doing shortly after you get engaged and choose a date. Also, this is a good time to inform any guests who will be traveling significant distances of the date of your wedding. The earlier your guests can book a flight, the less expensive that flight will be.

This is also a good time to order gowns for both the bride and bridesmaids, as some manufacturers require a few months to ship to bridal shops. You might want to ask someone, such as your priest or rabbi, to be the officiant of your wedding. And much like out-of-town guests will save travel dollars the earlier they learn of your wedding date, you will likely save money, too, if you book your honeymoon around this time.

4 TO 5 MONTHS BEFORE

This is a good time to decide on wedding invitations, of which there are many styles to choose from. Also, now is ideal to start hunting for a wedding cake by sampling a number of different bakeries' cakes before ultimately making a decision. Just to be sure, confirm that all of the bridesmaids have ordered their gowns and start looking for a tuxedo for the groom, as well as the groomsmen. If you haven't done so already, purchase your wedding rings and let any other people you'd like to participate in your wedding (ushers, readers during the ceremony, etc.) know of your intentions.

2 TO 3 MONTHS BEFORE

Finalize your guest list and mail out your invitations. If your guest list includes a considerable amount of people who are spread out geographically, mail the invitations as close to 12 weeks in advance as possible. This is also a good time to finalize your menu choices for your guests, and find all your wedding accessories such as the ring pillow, candles, etc. Also, since it is tradition to provide gifts for those in the wedding party, as well as the parents of the bride and groom, this is a good time to decide on and purchase those gifts. Just to be safe, confirm that all groomsmen have ordered their tuxedos and finalize all transportation, both to and from the wedding and to the airport for your honeymoon.

1 TO 2 MONTHS BEFORE

Schedule the first bridal gown fitting. Also, finalize the readings you'd prefer during the ceremony and mail them out to anyone who has agreed to do a reading. If your family prefers to host a small gathering for close family and friends after the wedding rehearsal, the night before the wedding, this is a good time to order any food or drinks you might want to serve that night or make a restaurant reservation.

3 TO 4 WEEKS BEFORE

Confirm your honeymoon arrangements and see if your wedding rings are ready. This is also when you should get your marriage license and check the guest list to see who has and hasn't RSVP'd. For those who have yet to RSVP, you might want to contact them so you can get a closer idea of what the head count will be. You should also prepare and order your wedding program around this time.

1 TO 2 WEEKS BEFORE

Get a final attendance count and submit it to the caterer as soon as you know of it, while also providing a final seating chart. Pick up the wedding gown and tuxedo. Make sure the wedding party picks up their attire. Also, finalize your vows and confirm all wedding-day details such as transportation, photo schedules and addresses. And don't forget to pack for your honeymoon.

THE DAY BEFORE

This is mainly when you rehearse for the ceremony and make any final confirmations you might have to make. Also, make sure to get some sleep so you'll look good in all of your wedding-day photos.



WEDDING BUDGET

TOTAL WEDDING BUDGET

\$ _____

CEREMONY

Location fee _____

Officiant fee _____

Marriage license _____

Rings _____

Pillow _____

TOTAL CEREMONY _____

RECEPTION

Reception site _____

Food _____

Drinks _____

Rentals _____

Cake _____

Favors _____

TOTAL RECEPTION _____

ATTIRE

Gown _____

Headpiece/veil _____

Undergarments/hosiery _____

Shoes _____

Accessories _____

Jewelry _____

Makeup _____

Hair _____

Tuxedo _____

Shoes _____

Cufflinks _____

Men's grooming _____

TOTAL ATTIRE _____

MUSIC

Ceremony musicians _____

Band/DJ _____

Extra musicians _____

TOTAL MUSIC _____

FLOWERS

Ceremony _____

Bride's bouquet _____

Bridesmaids' bouquets _____

Corsages & boutonnieres _____

Reception centerpieces _____

Flower girl basket _____

Bathroom arrangements _____

TOTAL FLOWERS _____

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographer's fees _____

Videographer's fees _____

TOTAL PHOTOGRAPHY _____

TRANSPORTATION

Limousines _____

Buses/transport for guests _____

TOTAL TRANSPORTATION _____

STATIONERY

Invitations _____

Calligraphy _____

Postage _____

Thank-you cards _____

TOTAL STATIONERY _____

GIFTS

Wedding party _____

Parents _____

Other _____

TOTAL GIFTS _____

HONEYMOON

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TOTAL HONEYMOON _____

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