

# TUSCALOOSA bridal

DIRECTORY

Spring-Summer 2026  
FREE





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# TUSCALOOSA bridal D I R E C T O R Y

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The TUSCALOOSA BRIDAL DIRECTORY is a unique Directory full of useful information about planning your wedding. It includes checklists of what to do when, lists of who pays for what, and facts about invitations, announcements and much more.

Your Wedding Day is very special and we encourage you to use professionals like those you will find in the Directory. When contacting those professionals listed in the Directory, let them know how you found them. Finally, please let us hear from you—your comments will help us provide a better service to you and others in the future. **Congratulations!**

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# Wedding Dress Shopping

## *What Every Bride Needs To Know*

by Jasmine Aycock & Grace Smithart, *Stylists at Lady In Lace Bridal*



**C**ongratulations on your engagement! As you embark on the exciting journey of wedding planning, one of the most important and personal decisions you'll make is choosing your wedding dress. To ensure a flawless experience, here are some essential tips to guide you through the process.

It's never too early to begin your search for the perfect wedding gown. Ideally, you should start shopping 10-12 months before your wedding day. Dresses are made to order, and it can take up to 6 months for your gown to arrive. A customized dress may take up to 8 months. Starting early gives you ample time to explore different styles and accommodate alterations.

Where you purchase your wedding dress is just as important as the dress itself. You'll be working closely with the store's staff for up to a year, from the initial appointment to the final fitting. Choose a store with a team that is not only friendly and supportive but also knowledgeable about fabrics, styles, and the latest trends. A reputable store will carry high-quality brands known for craftsmanship and attention to detail. Additionally, if the store does not have an in-house seamstress, they should recommend a professional who is familiar with wedding gowns to ensure expert tailoring.

Choosing your wedding dress is a special and sometimes overwhelming experience. While it's tempting to bring several friends and family, too many opinions can make it harder for you to decide. Consider bringing only a few trusted loved ones whose opinions you value most. Remember, this is your day, and the final decision should be yours.

Most bridal shops will assign you a stylist who is experienced in helping brides find their dream dress. Your stylist is there to guide you, so it's important to be open and honest with them about your preferences, budget, and any concerns. Keep in mind that wedding dresses often look different on the hanger than they do on your body, so trust your stylist when they suggest trying on something that might surprise you.

When planning your budget, remember that the cost of your dress is just one part of the equation. Veils, accessories, and alterations are additional expenses that need to be factored in. Most dresses, even if they are in your size, will require some level of alteration to achieve the perfect fit. Creating a separate budget for these items will help you avoid any surprises down the road.

After your dress arrives, you'll need to schedule fittings to ensure it fits perfectly. Alterations are a normal part of the process, and your seamstress will work with you to tailor the gown to your body. This may include adjusting the length, taking in or letting out seams, and adding a bustle. Typically, you'll have two to three fittings before your dress is ready.

Shopping for your wedding dress should be a joyous experience, and with the right preparation, you'll be able to enjoy every moment. By starting early, bringing the right people, trusting your stylist, and planning for additional costs, you're well on your way to finding the dress of your dreams. Happy shopping!

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## Grooming the Groom

**T**here's no disputing that the wedding is the bride's day, but that doesn't mean the groom doesn't need to pay attention to his appearance. Take pride in knowing that you are a beautiful couple with a perfect sense of style.

Whatever the style and degree of formality you choose for your wedding, there are a few key points regarding fit when ordering formalwear for groom and groomsmen.

**Shirts:** Whether pleated front panels or traditional smooth-fronted ones, shirts should fit snugly around the neck.

**Pants:** The bottom hem of the pants should touch the top of the shoes.

**Jackets:** As a general rule, you should be able to cup your fingers under the sides of your suit jacket. Jackets should fit snugly, but comfortably with some room at the waist. Vents on the sides of the jacket should lay smoothly and follow bodylines.

**Sleeves:** Sleeves that drop below the thumb or come midway down the hand are too long; if the wristbone is showing, the jacket is too short.

**Collar:** The collar should hug the neck and the lapels should not buckle.



With all the attention given to the men's clothes, an important detail that is sometimes overlooked is the groomsmen's hair. Men are generally more casual about haircuts than women, but they should be sure to get a trim two weeks before the wedding to add the finishing touch to their wedding finery.

### A Groom's Glossary

**Tails:** The ultimate formal attire, which should only be worn after 6 p.m., this ensemble features a winged-collar tuxedo shirt, ascot or bow tie, vest, tuxedo trousers and tailcoat. The full-dress ensemble comes in black, midnight blue, or grey, with a white shirt and matching or all white accessories.

**Tuxedo:** Either single or double-breasted, this formal suit has satin shawl or notched lapels. Matching pants sport a satin stripe down the pant-legs. Tailored in silk, mohair, wool or blend, in black, grey, ivory or white, tuxedos come in a range of styles sure to suit any taste.

**Vest:** This is often referred to as a waistcoat and comes in single- or double-breasted styles easily worn with nearly any tuxedo ensemble. With the open back vest, a band goes around the neck and another is fastened across the back. Tails, strollers, white-tie and director's suits require a different style of vest.

**White tie:** Worn only to the most formal evening weddings, this ensemble consists of a black tailcoat and black tuxedo trousers with a white bow tie, winged-collar shirt and white vest.



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# Elevating the Guest Experience

by Sheriah Gibson, Owner of *Posh Occasions by Sheriah*  
Certified Wedding Planner and Event Designer

If we learned anything from the past few years, it is the importance of showing love to our family and friends. Roll out the red carpet for your guests so they share in the celebrity treatment on your big day! From small, intentional elements to large, jaw-dropping items, there are several ways to elevate the guest experience (some without breaking the bank). As planners, our skill sets are best used to go the extra mile for your special crew of people championing your love.

Here are a few of the top ways to elevate the experience and wow your guests:

## 1. Be intentional about your welcome.

Your welcome to your guest is much more than a well-designed welcome bag at the room block hotel(s). Amplify the greeting to your family and friends by starting the fun early and hosting a uniquely-themed welcome party. This creates a designated time for the newlyweds to greet every traveler and reduces wedding day pressure to make lengthy rounds. This will set the scene for a joyful experience for all.

## 2. Little things matter.

Planning your wedding day with an experienced planner will allow you to focus on elements your family and friends will appreciate; your planner will facilitate the execution and logistics. Communication is key to the experience, so be sure to feature the details. For instance, what shoes to wear for an outdoor garden wedding, where to expect parking at a downtown venue, and how to submit their must-play song for the DJ or band. As a planner, I watch as guests appreciate the small elements like the restroom amenities basket or the bottled water for an outdoor ceremony — simple, small things truly go a long way!

## 3. Entertainment is more than just good music.

Having the right performances available for your wedding allows you to create a one-of-a-kind experience for your guests. For this category, you will want to connect back to your personalities and the overall feel for the big day. Imagine having fireworks, singers, live illustrations to complement great tunes from the DJ or band — it makes for the best nights!

## 4. Don't let them leave hungry.

Keeping your guests well fed throughout the event will pay off in the long run. Take your food to the next level by offering interactive stations, bite-size food pairings, and individual boards. Late night snacks and custom cocktails are also the perfect way to refuel the crew before the after party. I have seen everything from food trucks and fast food as passed appetizers to tasty sweet treats and cake to go. Your family and friends will thank you, I promise!

Ultimately, your wedding should reflect your personalities and highlight your priority to making this a day fun for all. Remember, it belongs to you! It will be your day to be remembered for years to come, so make the memories the best possible.





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# Wedding Day Emergency Kit

by Samantha Phaturros, *Director of Catering & Events, NorthRiver Yacht Club*

Be prepared to handle last minute surprises on your wedding day by stocking two kits — One for the Bridal Suite and the other for the Groom's Suite.

## Cleaners

- Windex or Glass Wipes
- Shout
- Chalk – a great spot treatment for your dress!

## Toiletries

- Flushable Wipes
- Makeup Remover Wipes
- Lidocaine Spray – your feet will thank you later!
- Allergy Medicine
- Ibuprofen or Advil
- Liquid IV – for those HOT Alabama days
- Tums or Antacid
- Bandages – do yourself a favor and buy the Blister Band-Aids!
- Contact Solution
- Q-Tips
- Cotton Balls
- Fashion Tape
- Razor
- Shaving Cream
- Lotion
- Body Spray/Perfume
- Spray Deodorant
- Dry Shampoo
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Mouthwash
- Floss Picks
- Sunscreen
- Clear Nail Polish – this works great for keeping rhinestone/sequin shoes from snagging your dress
- Menstrual Products

## Touch-Up Items

- Bobby Pins
- Hair Brush
- Comb
- Clear Hair Ties
- Lip Balm
- Moisturizer
- Nail Clippers

- Nail File
- Tweezers
- Mirror
- Wedding Day Timeline
- Photo List
- Vendor Contacts
- Bug Spray
- Breath Mints
- Cash
- Lint Roller
- Sewing Kit
- Portable Phone Charger
- Safety Pins
- Straight Pins
- Scissors
- Floral Shears
- Fishing Line
- Static Guard
- Steamer
- Super Glue
- Packing Tape
- Scotch Tape
- Ring Box
- Hair Dryer
- Towel
- Crochet Hook – for those stubborn buttons
- Setting Spray
- Hair Spray
- Earrings
- Earring Backs
- Undergarments
- Socks

## For the Groom Suite

- Disposable Toothbrush
- Shaving Cream
- Razors
- Black Socks
- Spot Cleaner
- Mints
- Hairbrush
- Shoe Polish
- Cuff Links
- White Undershirts



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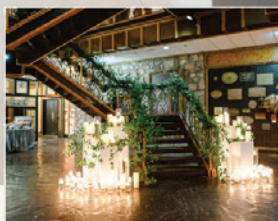
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# Addressing Formal Invitations Today

by Andrea Watson, *The Fine Hand: Calligraphy, Etc.*



Every issue of the Tuscaloosa Bridal Directory contains an excellent guide on “How to address invitations.” It is, however, necessarily brief, and inevitably questions arise as individual cases present themselves. Though formal wedding invitations maintain a sense of tradition, life in twenty-first century America has given rise to many changes in family life and nomenclature. Your guest list will have many variants from the usual *Mr. and Mrs.* As a calligrapher I have made a study over the years of correct traditional forms and contemporary practices. Following are a few special cases that should help you avoid common errors.

When a married woman retains her maiden name, the invitation should have her name first, followed by the word *and* and the name of her spouse. The *and* indicates that this is a married couple:

*Ms. Mary Elizabeth Jones and Mr. Steven Smith*

Married couples using professional honorifics who share the same last name:

**Both are doctors:**

*Drs. Kathryn Anne and William Edward Coates*

or

*The Doctors Coates*

**If she is a doctor and he is not:**

*Dr. Kathryn Anne Coates and*

*Mr. William Edward Coates*

**If she retains her maiden name:**

*Dr. Kathryn Anne Turner and*

*Mr. William Edward Coates*

Unmarried persons whose invitation will be sent to one address should have their names on separate lines:

*Dr. Kathryn Anne Turner*

*Mr. Steven James Smith*

Using *Mrs.* with a woman’s given name is poor form. Whether married, widowed, or divorced, a woman should be *Ms. Mary Smith* or *Mrs. John Smith*. The *Mrs.* comes with the man’s name. If a divorced woman retains her ex-husband’s surname and wishes to continue to use the honorific *Mrs.* it should be followed by her maiden surname and her former husband’s surname. If Mary and John Smith divorce, she may correctly be *Ms. Mary Smith* or *Mrs. Jones Smith*, but *never Mrs. Mary Smith*.

When using first names, it’s ladies first: *Mary and John Smith*. This isn’t merely etiquette, it logically keeps the man’s name together.

When children are invited you will need to know their ages and sexes to list them properly. Age is a factor in deciding whether they should be sent separate invitations. The contemporary custom of giving surnames to girls as well as boys creates confusion. Note that double envelope sets make this somewhat easier, as children’s names can be listed on the inner envelope. Single envelopes can’t support more than two lines for names, so unless the children are of the same sex, separate invitations become a necessity.

There are bound to be other special cases that are real stumpers. An experienced calligrapher can help you sort these out while maintaining good form.





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## Wedding Expenses—Who Pays?

*The bride's family is entirely responsible for the wedding ceremony. The groom's family may offer to share in the cost of the reception, and the bride's family may accept, if they wish. By tradition, wedding costs are divided as follows:*

### The Bride (or family) pays for:

- Invitations and Announcements
- The Bridal Outfit and Trousseau
- Bridal Photographs/Video
- All Costs of the Reception
- Flowers for the Church, Attendants and Reception
- Music at the Church and Reception
- Sexton, Organist and Choir Fees
- Bridesmaids' Luncheon

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- A Limousine for the Bride and Cars for Transportation
- Groom's Wedding Band
- Groom's Gift
- Gifts for the Bride's Attendants
- Lodging (if necessary) for Out-of-town Bridesmaids
- Bride's Personal Stationery

### The Groom (or family) pays for:

- Bride's Engagement and Wedding Rings
- Marriage License
- Clergyman's Fee (\$150–\$300, inquire)
- Bride's Flowers
- Boutonnieres, Ties for Men of Wedding Party
- Wedding Gift for the Bride

- Complete Wedding Trip or Honeymoon Expenses
- Gifts for Best Man and Ushers
- Lodging (if necessary) for Out-of-town Ushers

### Optional Expenses:

- Bride's Bouquet, usually gift of the groom, may be purchased by the bride's family
- Corsages for mothers and grandmothers are usually provided by the groom, may be purchased by the bride for her mother and grandmother
- Bachelor Dinner is usually given by groom or family, but may be given by the bride's family or friends
- Rehearsal Dinner is usually given by the groom or family, but may be given by the bride's family or friends
- Attendants' Dresses are usually bought by each girl, but the bride may provide them, if she wishes



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# Changing Your Name After the Wedding

## STEP 1: SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE

You will need to take: your birth certificate, a proof of identification, like your driver's license or passport, along with a certified copy of your marriage license and a completed SS-5 form.

Once you have changed your name with the Social Security Administration, you will receive your new card in the mail in a couple of weeks, and they will notify the IRS of your name change. Best part—this step is free!

## STEP 2: IRS

Next, you will need to fill out the IRS 8822 form. This will update your name in their system, and you can update your address as well if you have moved into a new home with your spouse. Print, fill out and mail in this form and you are ready for the next step!

## STEP 3: DMV

Once you have received your new social security card in the mail, you are ready to go to the DMV. Apart from waiting in the inevitable long line, this part of the process is a piece of cake. Take your old license, new social security card and a certified copy of your marriage license to get a new driver's license.

## STEP 4: BANK ACCOUNT

Once you receive your new driver's license in the mail, you can change over your name on your bank account. Go to your bank with your new driver's license and a certified copy of your marriage license to change your name on your accounts. Now is a good time to make a joint account with your spouse, and don't forget to order a new debit card and checks with your new last name on them.

## STEP 5: EVERYTHING ELSE

Now that your name is updated with the SSA, the IRS, the DMV, and your bank, you are ready to do everything else! Luckily, these steps do not require you to go anywhere or bring any forms. Take a day and knock these out, and you will be good to go.

- Employer/payroll
- Landlord or mortgage company
- Insurance companies (health, auto, home)
- Title and registration
- Utility bills
- Credit cards
- Doctor's offices
- Voter registration
- Passport
- Post office
- Email and social media accounts





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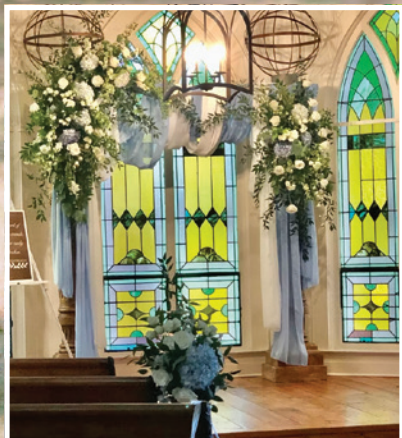


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# The Perfect Wedding Toast



**S**erious, humorous, or poignant, toasts are an integral part of almost every wedding celebration. Every toast is different, and on such a special occasion, many will be eager to share their sentiments. You're not alone if you fear public speaking, but at your best friend's wedding, you're bound to want to say a few words in her (or his) honor. If you're truly prepared to speak in front of people, you'll find it's much easier to let the words flow.

Here are some tips to help you get ready:

The best toasts are those that are heartfelt. So start by pouring your heart out. List everything you want people to know about your friends. (Remember to talk about both the bride *and* the groom in your toast.)

Start with the best qualities. Include memories of good times together—especially the first time they spoke of their beloved. Scribble some thoughts about what makes them a great couple and your wish for their future.

You have two audiences. One is the bride and groom, and you can make them happy by not saying anything that would cause them embarrassment. Your other audience is the assembly of friends and family. Stories of drunken revels and bad relationships may be appropriate at the bachelor(ette) party, but *not* at the wedding reception!

A toast is a speech. It should have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and make sense throughout. When you stand up to speak, it's best to have a single card with a few notes written down to help you remember the key points. Rehearse before the big day.

Many wedding toasters aim for lyricism in song or rhyming poetry. That's a great idea, if it's you. But a direct, from-the-heart talk works well also. Be sincere and be yourself.

One of the classic rules of public speaking is to open with a joke. One of the classic rules of wedding toasting is to end by tugging on the heartstrings. If you can't be sentimental at a wedding, where can you be? On the other hand, while a couple of well-placed jokes can win the crowd, you're not there to do a stand-up routine.

A toast should last no longer than three minutes, which translates to no more than five double-spaced pages. Rehearse your toasts with a stopwatch. If it's five minutes or under, don't worry, since under the glare of the spotlight, you may speak faster.

At the Rehearsal Dinner, the first toast is made by the dinner's host, usually the groom's father, during the main course. The toast is often met by a "return toast" from the bride's father. Then it's open season—the mothers of the bride and groom, the best man and maid/matron of honor, other wedding attendants, family, and close friends.

The Groom's Toast: Keep it short. Be sincere. Thank everyone for coming, including your parents and hers. Share a brief personal (not too personal) story of experiences shared with your bride, but don't tell embarrassing stories or go on and on. Turn to your bride and look her in the eye, tell her how proud you are to be her husband, how happy you are today, and how much you love her!





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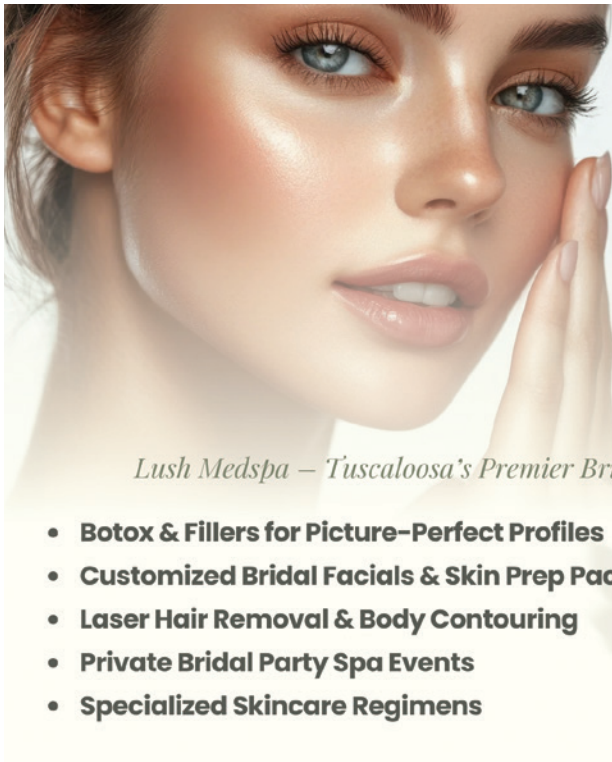


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# TUSCALOOSA bride

Ashton Nichole Frost  
& Oakley Benjamin Gilbreath

SEPTEMBER 20, 2025

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~ ASHTON FROST GILBREATH



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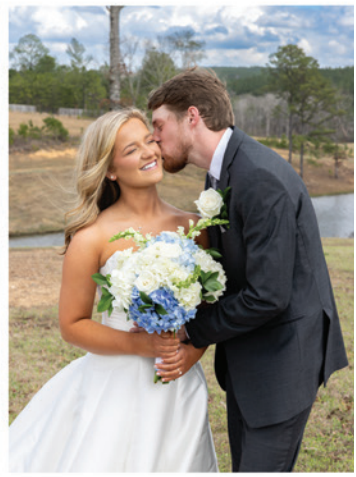
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## Groom's Checklist

### THREE TO TWELVE MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- Set budget and division of financial obligations
- Buy engagement ring
- Choose best man and ushers (one usher per 50 guests)
- Set appointment with clergyman
- Furnish family guest list to fiancée
- Plan honeymoon with fiancée (check passports and visas, if necessary)
- Order bride's flowers
- Order mother's flowers
- Plan correct formal attire with fiancée and groomsmen
- Make reservations for rehearsal dinner
- Take dance lessons
- Order groom's cake
- Reserve limousine and/or special transportation

### TWO MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- Select your wardrobe for honeymoon
- Select wedding rings with fiancée
- Choose gifts for ushers and best man
- Select bride's gift

### ONE MONTH BEFORE WEDDING

- Arrange all needed insurance and review legal/medical/religious documents
- Arrange lodging and transportation for out-of-town guests
- Have medical examination and blood test

### TWO WEEKS TO ONE DAY BEFORE WEDDING DAY

- Get marriage license
- Provide final guest count for rehearsal dinner to caterer or restaurant
- Arrange for clergyman's fee
- Plan bachelor dinner or party with best man
- Pick up wedding bands
- Pack for honeymoon

### Best Man's Checklist

- Take charge of ushers
- Be responsible for wedding rings
- Be responsible for clergyman's fee
- Be responsible for license
- Check on all travel arrangements for honeymoon
- Prepare to toast bride and groom

## Setting Your Budget

There are many details to investigate before signing any contractual agreements for your wedding services. Once you've checked off the items listed below and made your decisions, get in writing everything you expect.

	BUDGET	EST.COST
Stationery	\$ _____	_____
Invitations		_____
Announcements		_____
Thank You Notes		_____
Reply Cards		_____
Monogrammed Napkins		_____
Photography	\$ _____	_____
Formal Portraits		_____
Engagement		_____
Wedding		_____
Wedding Album		_____
Parent's Album		_____
Extra Prints		_____
Videography	\$ _____	_____
Reception	\$ _____	_____
Food		_____
Beverage		_____
Wedding Cake		_____
Groom's Cake		_____
Gratuities and Taxes		_____
Valet Parking		_____
Officer		_____
Music \$ _____	_____	_____
Wedding		_____
Reception		_____
Soloist		_____
Bridal Attire	\$ _____	_____
Dress		_____
Headpiece and Veil		_____
Undergarments		_____
Jewelry		_____
Shoes	_____	_____
Trousseau		_____
Garter		_____
Preservation-Gown		_____
Hair / Makeup		_____
Nails		_____
Wedding Consultant	\$ _____	_____
Transportation	\$ _____	_____
Limousines		_____
Carriage, etc.		_____
Parking		_____

	BUDGET	EST.COST
Wedding Parties	\$ _____	_____
Bridal Luncheon		_____
Rehearsal Dinner		_____
Out-of-town Guests		_____
Fees	\$ _____	_____
Church/Synagogue		_____
Officiant		_____
Assistants (cantors, altar boys)		_____
Gifts	\$ _____	_____
Maid of Honor		_____
Best Man		_____
Bridesmaids		_____
Groomsmen		_____
Other	_____	_____
Flowers	\$ _____	_____
Ceremony		_____
Bridal Bouquet		_____
Attendants'		_____
(male, female)		_____
Mothers' Corsages		_____
Reception		_____
Miscellaneous	\$ _____	_____
Hotel Accommodations		_____
(for out-of-town guests)		_____
Honeymoon	\$ _____	_____
Transportation		_____
Accommodations		_____
Daily Allowance		_____
Total Budget	\$ _____	_____
Total Est. Cost	\$ _____	_____

### Typical Breakdown of Wedding Expenses

Reception Costs	30%
Clothes and Gifts	30%
Ceremony Costs	11%
Photography	11%
Invitations & Stationery	6%
Miscellaneous	12%

# Wedding Planner

## THREE TO TWELVE MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- Determine budget with parents / number of guests
- Create a website for your wedding
- Type of wedding (very formal, formal, semi-formal)
- Date, time and place for ceremony
- Visit officiating clergy for consultation
- Choose bridal consultant if desired
- Type of reception
- Reserve facility for reception
- Wedding dress
- Bridal attendants
- Attendants' dresses and mothers' gowns
- Start compiling guest list
- Wedding invitations and announcements / calligrapher if desired
- Thank you and personal stationery
- Choose photographer and videographer
- Register for gifts
- Buy a wedding album, gift and guest record file
- Find a new home and plan furnishings
- Start your make-up lessons, skin care, hairstyling program
- Start workout program with personal trainer
- Ceremony and reception music
- Take dance lessons
- Meet with florist
- Make appointment for pre-marital examination
- Consult caterer
- Discuss honeymoon with groom
- Reserve a block of hotel rooms for out-of-town guests

## TWO MONTHS BEFORE WEDDING

- Check state requirements for marriage license
- Order bride's cake
- Address and mail invitations
- Develop system for organizing RSVPs
- Wedding gown fittings
- Attendants' gown fittings
- Shop for trousseau
- Coordinate men's formalwear attire
- Select attendants' and groom's gifts

# Wedding Planner

## ONE MONTH BEFORE WEDDING

- Begin dental treatments to whiten teeth
- Have programs printed
- Set appointment to have make-up and hairstyling
- Check with groom regarding wedding ring(s)
- Final fitting of wedding dress and all gowns
- Make sure musicians/DJ have playlists
- Send portrait to newspapers
- Complete arrangements for reception
- Arrange transportation for out-of-town guests
- Arrange for moving (if necessary)
- Arrange for party rental equipment
- Arrange transportation to ceremony and reception
- Arrange for your joint or new checking accounts
- Have all charge accounts changed / change of address to post office
- Acknowledge each gift as it arrives
- Arrange for yoga class to help with stress from the above
- Pick up marriage license

## TWO WEEKS TO ONE DAY BEFORE WEDDING DAY

- Arrange final seating for the rehearsal/reception
- Write toasts for rehearsal dinner
- Check all gowns and accessories / break in wedding shoes at home
- Complete trousseau and going away clothes
- Write checks to vendors, put in envelope and give to event planner to distribute
- Give caterer final estimate of attendance at reception
- Discuss specific shots with photographer
- Make arrangements with Best Man to return tuxedo rentals
- Attend bridesmaid's luncheon and present gifts
- Deliver welcome bags to hotel
- Arrange any last minute transportation
- Put all wedding clothes in one place
- Provide any readers scripture for readings
- Arrange wedding day time schedule with event planner
- Get lots of beauty rest

## WEDDING DAY

- Relax – Have a leisurely breakfast
- Take time to bathe and dress leisurely
- Make-up by an artist, manicure, hair styled
- Leave all details to those responsible... *This is your day. Enjoy!*

# Directory of Services

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## Adjusting to Differences

by Dick Hastings, M. Div., EDUCARE

**A**n old marital adage suggests, *marriage is like a phone call in the middle of the night; first you get the ring, then you wake up!* How true. After the wedding is over and the ceremonial birdseed has disappeared, husband and wife *awaken* to the *contrasting* differences between them. These differences were present all along but may have been easily ignored or minimized. For example, a couple may now discover religious, financial or parenting diversities that clash; opposing family traditions or cultural variances which don't mesh; dissimilarities in communication styles, life experiences and personality idiosyncrasies. The list goes on and on.

In our early years of marriage, my wife and I had a *value* difference we had to quickly navigate. It centered around the celebration of birthdays. In her home, birthdays were very important! Family and guests were invited for a meal, gift giving and cake eating followed, all intended to honor the birthday person. We didn't celebrate like that in my home. So, you can only imagine how disappointed my new bride was when the first year we celebrated her birthday as newlyweds, I gave her a few bucks

and told her to go buy whatever she wanted. I can assure you, after 40 years of marriage I have gotten much better... now I go with her!

It may (or may not) surprise you to know that in first marriages it takes five to seven years to adjust to one another's differences. Tragically, most divorces occur five years and under. In a second marriage, the adjustment period takes eight to eleven years! This second statistic explains, in part, why melding a blended family can be such a challenge. Second marriages face numerous and unique adjustments that couples in first marriages don't encounter.

In either case, adjusting to one another takes time, patience and a whole lot of grace as we learn to embrace the differences. Embracing doesn't mean tolerating inappropriate behavior; it simply means seeing differences not as right or wrong, just different! Celebrating birthdays *is* important however accomplished. Celebrating and adjusting to a partner's uniqueness is equally important as it will help ensure a harmonious, mutually enriching and lasting marriage. And it could also help keep the "middle of the night" phone calls to a minimum!



The logo for Eat My Beats features the letters 'E', 'M', and 'B' in a large, white, stylized font. The letter 'M' is uniquely designed with a circular cutout in the center, through which the interior of a restaurant or event space is visible. The background of the entire advertisement is a vibrant, multi-colored photograph of a restaurant interior with tables set for a party.

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A large, white, textured globe graphic is positioned on the left side of the advertisement, partially overlapping the text.

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*FIVE BAR is now open for lunch Mon-Fri, 11-2. Contact us for bridal luncheons or showers!*

# Wording Your Invitation

by Andrea Watson, *Fine Hand Calligraphy, Etc.*

As a calligrapher I see a great many types and styles of wedding invitations, ranging from exquisitely engraved beauties to DIY specimens. Unfortunately, none of them is immune to error. When ordering invitations from a stationer or creating them yourself, you are the one who bears ultimate responsibility for the finished product. Don't rely on others; make it your business to know proper forms and usage.

Here are a few common errors to avoid, along with some other hints that will make your invitation not only beautiful but correct.

**Honour of your presence/pleasure of your company:** The phrase *honour of your presence* should be used only when the ceremony is held in a house of worship. This excludes even very formal weddings held in elegant hotels or clubs. If it isn't in a house of worship, the correct phrase is *request the pleasure of your company*. This is by far the most common error I see.

**Time expression:** evening begins at 6 p.m. That means that any time between noon and 6 p.m. is afternoon (*e.g.* half after five in the afternoon). Many etiquette mavens say that stating *in the afternoon* or *in the evening* is unnecessary. Their reasoning is that recipients will assume your wedding ceremony is at a reasonable time of day. These phrases sound so delightfully romantic, though, that using one may be irresistible. In that case, take care to apply it accurately.

**State names:** do not abbreviate in the wording of your invitation or follow the state name with a ZIP code. The return address on the envelope flap should also have the state name spelled out in full and should be followed by the ZIP code.

**Capitalization:** avoid unnecessary capitals. Some word-processing programs and online services automatically capitalize the

first word of every line. Take the time to check and manually change these supplied, but often incorrect, capitals.

**Punctuation:** avoid unnecessary commas. In names that are followed by numerals it is not necessary to use a comma before the numeral. Strictly speaking, it is not incorrect to do so, but neither is it necessary, so don't clutter up the name. When a man's name includes Jr. it may be so abbreviated and should be preceded by a comma. If you choose to spell the word out, the comma is not required, nor is capitalization. Thus, Mr. James Richard Gibson, Jr. is correct and so is Mr. James Richard Gibson junior.

**Choice of font:** there are countless fonts available and choosing one for your invitation can be both time-consuming and dizzying. For script fonts, one shortcut is to check the capitals that will be frequently used in your invitation and addresses. Obviously, M is everywhere (Mr. and Mrs.). The capitals in your and your fiancé's names are of paramount importance. Those in your hometown and state will appear in your invitation, return address, and the addresses of many recipients.

This is a very basic set of rules. For complexities, particularly in the case of names of those giving the wedding (*e.g.* divorced parents, the bride and groom themselves, etc.), you should consult a definitive etiquette source, such as *Crane's Wedding Blue Book* or *Emily Post's Wedding Etiquette*. Beware of sites available online; they themselves are often imperfectly edited.





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# Wedding Program Pointers

by Andrea Watson, *The Fine Hand Calligraphy, Etc.*

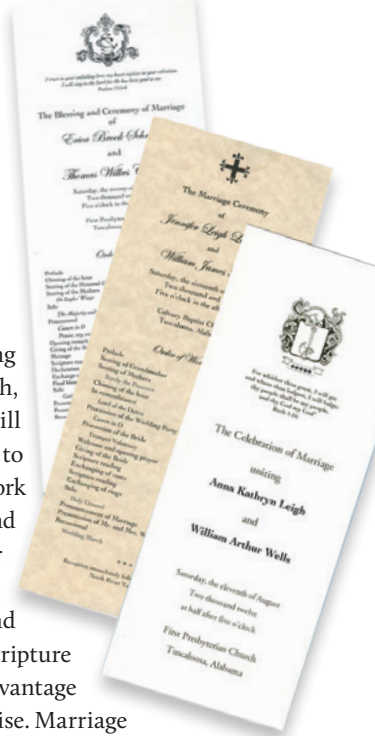
Wedding programs are becoming increasingly popular today. Although they may not be absolutely essential for a traditional wedding ceremony, they are a virtual necessity for ceremonies that combine elements from different religions and cultures or if the bride and groom have written their own vows. Should special songs or prayers be included, a wedding program will enable guests to participate more fully in the service. In any case, an attractively designed and carefully thought-out wedding program that complements your other wedding stationery will serve as a lovely record of the event and its participants.

Essential items to include are (1) the title of the event, (2) the names of the bride and groom, (3) day and date, (4) place, (5) the order of the service which also notes titles of musical selections and soloists if any, as well as citations to sources of readings, (6) officiants, (7) parents and grandparents, (8) members of the wedding, and (9) any helpful translations and explanations of rituals. The first four elements can easily be combined in a title phrase with appropriate line breaks, *e.g.* The Celebration of Marriage / uniting / Anna Kathryn Leigh / and / William Arthur Wells / Saturday, the eleventh of August / Two thousand twelve / at half after five o'clock / First Presbyterian Church / Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Other optional elements that you may wish to include are expressions of thanks to parents, tributes to deceased relatives, a special verse of scripture or poetry, and other useful information, *e.g.* directions to the reception venue and/ or your new names and address following the

phrase *At home*. If your wedding will be in a church, the pastor will likely want to approve any artwork you wish to use and proofread your program to check terminology and the citations to scripture readings. Take advantage of this free expertise. Marriage may be properly called a sacrament in some churches, not in others. Presbyterians have cross bearers; Episcopalians have crucifers. Your clergy will know the correct forms and be happy to help you. Music directors can also provide advice for the accurate listing of musical selections.

It is possible to produce an attractive wedding program yourself at very little cost using your own computer and printer. You should be proficient with word processing or layout software and be absolutely certain that you have the time and patience to do a thorough job. Good design skills and meticulous attention to spelling and punctuation are essential, also. Cutting and assembly require tools and time. If you are unsure of your abilities and resources in any of these areas, seek help from a professional graphic designer or a reputable printer who offers these services. Even when working with a professional, you must still exercise your own best judgment and taste. When it comes to creating a wedding program that will become a treasured keepsake, remember always that there is much elegance in simplicity.



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# Reception Checklist

*When planning your wedding, set a budget and stick with it.  
The following checklist will help you keep track of your expenses.*

## The Location

- Proximity to the ceremony site
- Date availability and discount days to consider
- Rental fee and what it includes
- Time allowed to decorate the space for the day of the wedding
- Using the location for a ceremony as well, if desired
- Whether there will be other receptions that day
- Number of guests the space will accommodate comfortably
- Terms of liability insurance
- Ratio of staff to guests
- Overtime charges
- Postponement/cancellation refund policy
- Gratuities and taxes
- Availability of valet parking
- Clean restroom facilities
- Room for changing
- Means of handicapped access
- The availability of a nursery or babysitter

## Food and Drink

- Meal options, from a seated dinner to a dessert-only reception
- Special meals to accommodate restricted diets
- Price per guest
- Method of payment
- A date for tasting menu and tour of the site with a wedding in progress
- Dessert table policy
- Availability of non-alcoholic beer, wine, and beverages
- Top-shelf wine and alcohol vs. house brands
- Cost of open bar vs. one/two hour cocktail service or host's per-drink tab arrangement

- Possibility of bringing in your alcohol and amount of corking fee
- Supplier of the wedding cake and cutting fee
- On-site wedding coordinator

## Miscellaneous

- Musicians
- Florist
- Photographer
- Videographer
- Cake knife/server
- Food for band, etc.
- Wedding guest book
- Seating plans
- Place cards
- Decorations
- Favors
- List of photos

## Basic Rentals for Off-site locations

- Tent
- Chairs
- Tables
- China
- Cutlery
- Glassware
- Tableskirts
- Dance floor
- Serving trays and dishes
- Linens
- Lighting
- Heaters and/or air conditioners
- Restroom facilities
- Electrical outlets
- Bar equipment



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## Relationships: Surviving the Wedding

**P**lanning and surviving a wedding may be the first in a long line of tests a couple faces in their relationship. Although a wedding is just one day, planning a wedding involves managing expectations, budgeting, balancing family traditions, and learning to communicate with your future in-laws. A couple able to handle the decisions, details, and people that make up a wedding will have better luck dealing with future challenges together. On the contrary, those who aren't equipped to deal with wedding stress may find their relationship strained time and time again as new challenges, like finding a place to live and planning a family, arise.

So how do you survive a wedding without destroying the reason you're getting married in the first place? A couple of key strategies are to communicate honestly with each other, discuss expectations, and always remember why this is important to you.

### Decide who will plan the wedding

Talk to your partner about who will lead the wedding efforts. Will it be the bride, a wedding planner, the mother-of-the-bride, or will you share the responsibility? There is no right or wrong choice. The important thing is to agree on who is doing what and communicate that to everyone involved.

### Discuss your expectations

Even if you decide to let one person plan the wedding, it's still important for both parties to talk about what they want. Even the most laid-back groom will have one or two things he wants to have at his own wedding. Write down what each of you want, attach a priority to each item and then discuss expectations.

### Be open-minded

While the idea that "it's your day" is a great one, it doesn't mean that you discard the opinions of others in favor of getting what you want. A wedding is an event that joins two families. It's not just you and your partner anymore. Your parents and in-laws, and possibly even friends, have a stake in this and an expectation here and there. Hear everyone out and be willing to give in to something they feel strongly about. It may be your wedding but these people will play a key role in your marriage and the rest of your life, so a little good will now might go a long way later.

### Lay problems on the table

Maybe your parents are divorced, your mother-in-law isn't your biggest fan, or there is a "problematic" relative. Whatever the situation, talk to your future spouse about any issues that may cause problems at the wedding so that the two of you can devise a solution to minimize chaos on your big day. The two of you are creating a family, and you have to be able to talk openly about your problems. Good problem solving skills are essential to good relationships.

### Make time for yourselves

Don't lose sight of the reason you're getting married in the first place! Take a break from the wedding plans and enjoy each others company. Spending time together strengthens your relationship, and making time for each other during stressful times will prove to be an invaluable skill for your future life together. So make each other a priority, learn to work together as a team and be open-minded to what lies ahead – being newlyweds is a wonderful phase of life!

*"Dating is fun, but marriage is work, and wedding planning is even more work."  
—Elizabeth Doherty Thomas*



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# Communicating with LUV

by Dick Hastings, M. Div., *EDUCARE*

“**W**hat we’ve got here is failure to communicate...” is a familiar line from the classic movie, *Cool Hand Luke*. I hear similar words from couples in my practice: “We just cannot communicate!” Not surprising. Surveys reveal poor communication to be the single greatest problem in relationships. The following behaviors when practiced can help reduce a couple’s failure to communicate. They are presented in a memorable 3-letter acronym: **LUV**

**Listen.** Before a conversation proceeds, determine who will TALK first and who will LISTEN. Flip a coin if you need to. Sounds odd but failing to do so typically results in two talkers and no listener. That’s called an *argument!* When listening, we must learn to repress our own feelings and opinions and let the talker have the floor. Don’t judge, ridicule or correct the talker’s comments. Just calmly repeat exactly what you heard or paraphrase in your own words. Then, gently ask questions about what you heard and *listen* for underlying feelings of hurt, anger, or fear.

**Understanding.** The GOAL of healthy communication is to better understand one another. Sadly, some couples lose sight of this objective and become so intent on making their point they puncture their partner in the process! Understanding increases when couples create a “safe zone” for expressing their deepest feelings and thoughts without fear of rejection or ridicule. When BOTH parties walk away feeling cared for, accepted, affirmed, and fully understood, effective communication has occurred.

**Validate.** Validating does not mean *agreeing* with what we hear. It means accepting the thoughts and feelings of another as different than ours. Validation is the ability to affirm the talker’s comments (whether right or wrong) rather than immediately rejecting, correcting, or dismissing them. That demands a certain level of maturity. Validating is a sign of respect and keeps the lines of communication open. Often, all the talker really wants is to feel validated.

Maybe what Luke really needed in his life was a little LUV!



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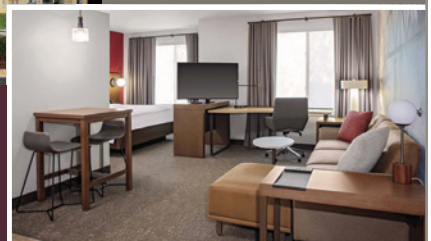
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# How to Cut a Wedding Cake



**T**he most important info is to

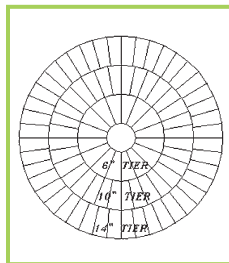
- (1) remove the top tier which is usually saved and
- (2) obviously remove the topper and any other non-edible decorations, then
- (3) start from the top and work your way down the cake.

Finally, if there are more than 3 tiers, remove the tiers before cutting to avoid having the tiers slip off while cutting.

## General Guidelines

The first step is to use the right knife. Always use a sharp, thin knife. The cuts should be made by first inserting the knife straight down into the cake, and then by pulling the knife at an angle toward the outer edge. Before the next cut, wipe the knife clean with a damp cloth.

## Three-Tiered Round Cake

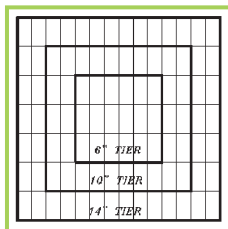


1. Start from the top by removing the 6" tier, which is usually the bride and groom's cake to be saved.
2. Cut a circle about two inches from the outer edge of the 10" tier.
3. Work from this circle and make vertical cuts about one inch apart, until the ring is completely sliced.
4. Use the same starting procedure and cut another two-inch ring, again slicing into one-inch pieces.
5. Repeat the procedure until the tier is completed; then repeat entire process on 14" tier until all the cake has been served.

Source: <http://www.elegantaffair-ca.com/weddingcake.php>

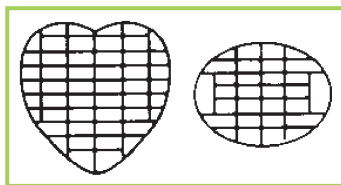
## Three-Tiered Square Cake

1. Start from the top by removing the 6" tier, which is usually the bride and groom's cake to be saved.
2. Work from any side to cut a horizontal line about two inches from the outer edge of the tier.
3. Slice from right to left to make vertical cuts about one inch apart, until the entire row has been sliced.
4. Cut another horizontal line two inches from the new edge, and slice this row.
5. Repeat until the entire tier has been cut.
6. You should produce five rows in the 10" tier.
7. Move to the 14" and repeat the process for seven rows.



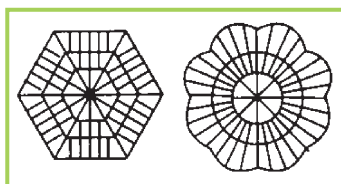
## Heart and Oval Cakes

Heart and oval shaped cakes are cut in a similar fashion as square and rectangular cakes.



## Hexagonal and Petal Cakes

Hexagonal shaped and petal shaped cakes are cut up in the same way as for round cakes.



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# Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa

by Linda Holloway    *Photography by Larry Holloway Photography*

Your first days of your forever should be celebrated in an extraordinary location. Imagine a place where memories are captured under blue skies, reflecting a continuous movement of the Gulf's magnificent emerald waters. Here, sunsets are legendary where the swollen sun dips into the water leaving fingers of golden streaks that even an artist cannot duplicate. You have landed in the perfect atmosphere for romance, spontaneity, and activities. Nature and man have conspired to seduce the senses at Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa.

This renowned resort, located in Miramar Beach, Florida, is touted by newlyweds as the ultimate honeymoon destination—no passport needed. Park your car and travel by the resort's tram shuttle that transports you throughout the surrounding area. Contact the expert concierge in advance for romantic tips such as planning sunset cruises and other

excursions. We chose the King Bed Deluxe Junior Suite with sweeping beachfront views. Call ahead for added upscale amenities to be delivered to your room upon arrival. Our elegant, chic, coastal inspired designed room was comfortable and exceeded our expectations. Make the balcony your private space to plan the future, complete with the music of crashing waves and cawing seagulls.

Activities await below including walking along the sugar-white sands. Request a beach set-up rental for a front seat of sea and sand where often dolphin antics are thrilling. The beachfront pool deck is expansive with lounge chairs for soaking up the sun. The resort has 2 outdoor pools and an indoor pool. Relax in the indoor or outdoor whirlpools. The resort provides beach towels, so there is no need to pack your own. If you both enjoy golfing and tennis, there are 4 championship courses to try, and 15 tennis courts near the resort. Be sure and ask

## *Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa*

Photo courtesy of Hilton Sandestin Beach





about paddle boarding, kayaking, and bikes. Enjoy the tall green chairs on the deck for soaking in the view. For entertainment, take the shuttle to The Village of Baytowne Wharf to explore shops, music venues, and dining.

For couples who want a honeymoon and wedding destination, the resort's dedicated team will assist you in selecting and customizing your ideal package tailored to suit your vision. A unique perk is complimentary one-night accommodations for the wedding couple with a wedding-night amenity. The team can help you imagine your dream wedding. Ask about the elegant indoor spaces, but if your dream is to say "I do," with sand in your toes or along the expansive Sunset Deck, the team can take care of details including indoor backup spaces for inclement weather. The resort's spa salon is perfect for the wedding party.

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Serenity by the sea Spa is an award-winning full-service spa at Hilton Sandestin. The spa spans 4,500 square feet of tranquility. For newlyweds, the separate couples' massage room is where you will find side-by-side massage tables, comfortable chairs, and the glow of a fireplace. Pure romance! You can choose from an array of signature treatments that can completely banish pre-wedding stress. Complement your couples' massage with decadent cuisine and libations.

Dining at Hilton Sandestin is not ordinary. Reserve a table -for-two in advance in the Wine

Room at Seagar's Prime Steaks & Seafood where prime steaks are iconic. Hadashi Sushi Bar is in the hotel's lobby area featuring the finest sushi and a variety of delectable dishes. Sandcastles Restaurant & Lounge serves the best breakfast buffet I have experienced. Miss Betty at the Omelet and Waffle Station took my veggie selections and turned an omelet into a healthy, gourmet dish. There is a long line of traditional breakfast fare to suit everyone's taste. The evening meal featured the freshest delights from the Gulf. My husband ordered the Shrimp and Grits every single night. For lunch, try the pizza. The Coffee Shop serves Starbucks Coffee, fresh pastries, and breakfast sandwiches. Barefoot's Beachside Bar & Grill overlooks the Gulf. This popular spot is casual dining with lunch and dinner menus.

The most difficult part of this slice of paradise is leaving. No worries, you can begin planning your Hilton Sandestin Beach Golf Resort & Spa anniversary trip.

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