

Wedding Bells

SPECIAL SECTION 2011

PLUS SIZE Shopping for larger gowns and tuxes

Vicky Katz Whitaker
Creators.com

Every bride yearns for that "dream gown" for her wedding day, and grooms want the perfect tuxedo.

That search has never been easier for plus-size women and husky men, bridal experts say, but it helps to prepare for the shopping experience.

"Do your research so you're not disappointed when you arrive and there are no samples to fit you," says David's Bridal celebrity stylist Nicole Brewer, former fashion director of Essence magazine and a frequent guest on television shows, including "The View," "Access Hollywood" and "Entertainment Tonight."

Brewer and her fiancé, Damien Gurganious, were contestants on "The Biggest Loser." She dropped more than 100 pounds, going from a size 24 to a size 7 by her wedding day. "Every bride deserves to have many wedding gown options to try on. That's really why I started my search at shops well-known for their offerings in special sizes," she says.

Years ago, few stores stocked wedding gowns larger than size 10, giving many women few options but to choose their gowns by looking at them on hangers. Today national chains -- such as David's Bridal, which stocks gowns up to size 30 -- and a growing number of independent bridal salons carry wide selections of plus-size gowns in-house. That has put plus-size women in the bridal gown mainstream.

Both Brewer and Jeanne Hennessey, another bridal expert, urge plus-size brides to keep an open mind when it comes to gown styles they'll be shown. Hennessey, owner of Lorraine Roy Designer Collections and Bridal Boutique, says to "try on many different styles, including those that you may not have thought you would like."

For plus-size women, there are lots of details to consider; fabric, detailing, silhouette and gown length can make dramatic differences. Top-heavy brides-to-be, Brewer says, should avoid gowns with high



necklines -- such as halters, which make arms appear larger. Simple necklines, A-lines or skirts that flow can balance your shape, and hemline details will "redirect the eye downward," she says.

If you're thick around the middle, look for a gown with waist-creating details "that work to cinch your midline," Brewer suggests. These

include subtle belted looks or sashes, fitted bodices or darting. Empire waist silhouettes create an illusion of a higher waistline and slimmer midsection, she adds. Gowns designed with ruching or wrap styles also can whittle the waist.

Gowns made of fabrics with stretch, which "allow freedom of movement and create the illusion of a lean line," look best if you're bottom-heavy, Brewer adds. Fitted and flare styles, which accentuate the waistline and minimize the lower half of the body, work well for bottom-heavy figures, as do A-line and ball gown shapes. Skip light-reflecting shiny fabrics, sheaths and hemline details that draw unwanted attention, she says.

And if you wear a plus size but are short, look for a gown with vertical details -- for example, top stitching, strategically placed beading or embroidery patterns that "draw the eye up and down, making you appear longer and leaner." Knee-length and tea-length gowns also make you look taller, Brewer adds.

Short or tall, if the groom is heavysset, he should avoid high-fashion, non-classic looks, says Tamara Osheroff, director of formalwear marketing for Men's Wearhouse. "Attention-grabbing accessories, such as top hats, and nontraditional features, such as tails, are not a good look for short, tall or heavysset grooms," she says.

"This season, cummerbunds and fancy shirts are out in terms of style preference. The goal for a groom wanting a unified look is to choose one style that works for all body types, such as the one- or two-button notch lapel tuxedo, which will flatter a heavysset groom and all of his groomsmen. For a unified look

that still sets the groom apart from the rest of his wedding party, color accents, such as a different tie or a pocket square, are simple but effective adjustments," Osheroff adds. Today's fashion dictates that a vest and tie, preferably in black or a darker color, with a point-collar shirt are the best choice for the heavysset man," a combination com-

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BEVERAGES ON A BUDGET

Here's to your pocketbook

Sharon Naylor
Creators.com

From Champagne toasts to wine, beer and frozen drinks, a fabulous reception often features drinks your guests will love. But it comes at quite a price. According to The Wedding Report, the average cost of reception bar service ranges from \$1,897 to \$2,569, depending on the premium level of alcohol provided and the reception location.

Brides and grooms on a budget will be happy to know that they can create an impressive bar list filled with quality wines and cocktails for far less than the national average by following the tips provided here.

"A bar with top-shelf liquors is not a must. Lower-priced versions will do just as well," says Susan Schneider, executive editor of Bridal Guide magazine. "Wise brides and grooms taste-test 'midshelf' drinks either on their own or through an acceptable request to taste liquors and wines at their food tasting visit. Exploring vintages and moderately priced liquors often reveals exceptional tastes and delicious cocktail offerings for guests."

And don't think you have to offer a fully stocked bar. Schneider warns that it's the full open bar, which gives guests access to a wide range of liquors, that accounts for the highest bar tabs. "If you have on hand ingredients for basic drinks -- such as rum, tequila, vodka and red and white wines, plus mixers -- that should be fine," she says. Don't worry about guests being offended if you don't have their favorite brandy at the bar. The trend of the limited bar has been around long enough for guests to be quite used to a tailored list of drinks.

To be even more budget-conscious, make it a rule that no shots are to be served to guests. Also nix any drinks that require many different types of liquor, such as Long Island iced tea, as a smart budget strategy.

"For a really tight budget, keep to just wine, Champagne and sparkling water,"

Schneider says. This collection of drinks works beautifully for an afternoon wedding, when drink consumption is most often lighter than evening and late-night weddings. An alternative to this light-drink plan is wine, beer and sparkling water.

Another trend in stocking your budget-smart bar is serving a signature cocktail, such as a colorful or classic martini. In this scenario, the signature cocktail is often the only drink containing hard liquor available, and the bar also is stocked with beer and wine for those guests who do not like the signature cocktail.

You don't have to skip the Champagne. Because bubbly is often the wedding couple's wish for their first toast, it's become a smart money strategy to pour each guest a single serving of Champagne for the toast and then take it off the





THE PERFECT WEDDING RING -- FOR HIM

She's not the only one who gets bling

Catherine McNulty
Creators.com

It is the perfect symbol for love, no beginning and no end -- the wedding ring. It used to be that a man would spend months, maybe years, searching for that special ring for the love of his life and then just get a simple metal band for his own. Not anymore! With more choices in metal and design than ever before, savvy men can be just as stylish as their ladies.

Up until World War II, most men didn't even wear wedding rings. But when the war broke out, many recently married young men were sent overseas and wanted a reminder of home and what was waiting for them. By the late 1940s, 80 percent of wedding ceremonies had rings for both the bride and the groom. Prior to the Great Depression, only about 15 percent of wedding ceremonies were double-ring ones.

At heart, a wedding ring is a simple metal band. Traditionally, it has been made of gold, but traditions change! Nowadays, men can choose from white gold, palladium, platinum, titanium and tungsten -- just to name the most popular.

White gold tends to be popular with younger men. It is more affordable than many of the other options but mimics the shine of platinum. Because gold is a relatively soft metal, it does scratch easily and lose its shine, but with care and maintenance, it can be restored to its original luster. Palladium is a bit more expensive than white gold but is more brilliantly white and harder-wearing than gold, though it's less heavy than platinum.

For those who can afford it, platinum is still king of the precious metals. Naturally white, platinum is one of the heaviest metals and is perfect for a guy who works with his hands or is on a computer all day. Many men prefer the substantial feel of platinum, but it does need a lot of care and can get scratched. Over time, it can develop an antique-looking patina. Some prefer the aged look, but with proper care and polishing, it is easy to restore the shine.

SNAP!

5 new trends in wedding photos

Sharon Naylor
Creators.com

The photos from your wedding day are timeless works of art. They capture not only the images of your celebration but also the emotional experience of your big day. Today's brides and grooms often request that their photographers capture the natural interactions between them and their loved ones, as well as the expressions on the couple's faces as they first see each other, take their vows, share their first dance and mingle with their friends. A good photographer ensures that those priceless moments will become immortalized in the couple's wedding album rather than be just in their memories.

This concentration on the candid is a big turn from wedding photography of years past. A number of years ago, photographers simply worked through a checklist of stiffly posed lineup photos and clichéd couple's poses. Now the candid style of photography is "in," with professional photographers using their trained eyes and honed instincts to catch those golden moments that occur naturally.

"Current trends in wedding photography that I have

seen include 'getting back to the basics,' simple, clean, elegant, timeless wedding images that won't date themselves in five years," says professional wedding photographer Tanja Lippert. Surveys run by the top bridal sites, such as Brides.com and The Knot, and those run by top bridal blogs concur; natural simplicity is in.

Here are some additional wedding photo trends:

--No lineups. Couples are skipping the post-ceremony marathon of lineup poses -- the bride and groom with the bride's parents, with the groom's parents, with the bridesmaids and so on -- and choosing group photos, for example, ones in which everyone is clinking Champagne glasses or dancing together. The natural smiles in an experiential shot create a more valuable keepsake for the couple.

--No more clichéd shots. On its popular blog, KLinH Evelyn Grace Photography has a post that says: "Frankly, I am getting tired of certain trends that have been around for a while. There is that shot of the wedding party jumping in the air. ... You also have the 'shoe shot.' ... Here is one I'm gonna leave in 2010:

focus on bride and leave the groom blurry and in the background. He seems so lonely."

To pre-empt clichéd poses, look through your photographer's sample albums or slideshows and point out the shots you don't want. Many brides veto that photo of the groomsmen picking her up and holding her sideways, because that shot almost always looks awkward. The groom might wish to skip the photo of his men lifting *him* up. It's important to feel confident in saying "no, I don't like that idea" to your photographer in the moment. This will save valuable time and get you out of picture mode and into your cocktail party as soon as possible.

--Food photographs. Many brides and grooms consider themselves "foodies," experienced and educated in fine cuisine and culinary presentation. They adore cooking reality shows and subscribe to culinary magazines, and they specifically choose delectable, artistic food elements for every course of their reception meals and every display of their cocktail parties. Their chefs have been hand-selected for their artistry, so wedding couples now request greater numbers of magazine-worthy close-up photos of the food presented at their

BRIDAL BROWS

Leave your eyebrows to a professional

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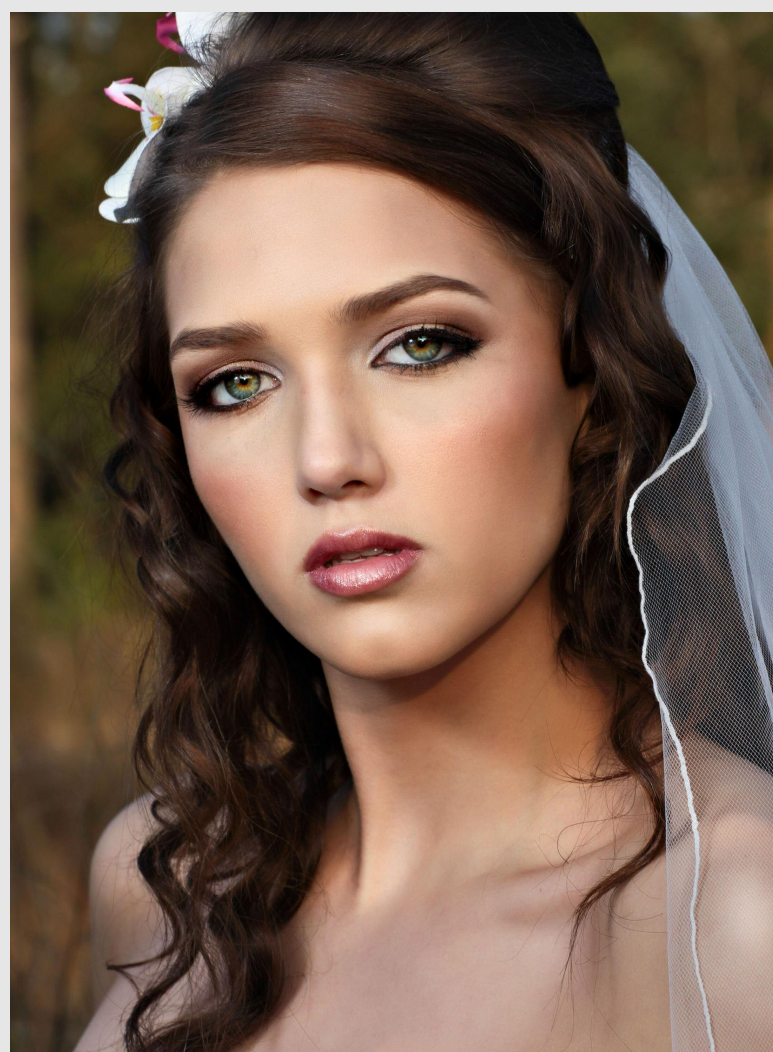
As part of their pre-wedding beauty regimens, countless brides and members of their bridal parties add eyebrow enhancement to their must-do lists. Well-shaped brows make eyes appear bigger and brighter, and beauty experts say that properly styled arches give the effect of an eyelift, as well.

Consulting with a professional brow-shaping specialist is essential to this beauty focus because an expert will assess your unique facial features and eye shape and placement, as well as the natural thickness and shading of your brows. The trained eye and skills of a brow beauty expert will create the ideal arch, width and length and help you grow out over-tweezed eyebrows so they can reach their loveliest appearance by the wedding day. It's a mistake to attempt your own brow shaping, even with a drugstore template kit, as a way to save money. Brow shaping is quite inexpensive, usually between \$30 and \$120, and is well worth the investment for its flattering framing of your eyes on the most important day of your life.

Beauty expert Kristin Daniell advises on when your brow-shaping preparations and sessions should begin: "If you want to start from scratch with your brow shape, let them grow in for about a month to give your stylist more to work with and clear away to create the perfect brow shape. If you just want to maintain your existing shape and clean up the lines and arch, about six weeks before your wedding would be the ideal time to start brow-shaping sessions. To keep your brows groomed, you would want to get them done every two to three weeks. Definitely have a trial brow shaping before your final brow shaping before the big day to make sure your skin does not react."

Skin reactions and torn skin from home-performed waxing are the top wedding beauty disasters, and they've caused redness, breakouts, discoloration and even cuts and scabbing around the bride's eyes.

Even if you're experienced at tweezing or waxing your brows using a home kit, the months before your wedding are not the time to risk any unforeseen reactions or errors. And Daniell also warns about chemical reactions: "Do not use any type of retinol, salicylic/glycolic acids,



Acutane, acne medications, chemical peels or harsh exfoliators for at least three days before and three days after your eyebrow waxing appointment. This may result in removing too much skin, which could cause burns and scarring." You wouldn't commit to a man without dating first; why would you commit to a brow regimen before having a practice run?

Here are some additional tips for ensuring brow beauty on your wedding day:

--Do not get your brows shaped for free at a department store makeup counter. Though some clerks are trained and talented, they are primarily makeup experts. It's best to invest in sessions with a brow specialist.

--Build brow beauty treatments into your wedding budget, giving them the same importance as hair trims and facials for your best wedding day look.

--If you see someone who has beautiful eyebrows, ask her who her brow specialist is. Word-of-mouth referrals are the best resources because you see the actual results rather than photos online.

--Ask your brow specialist to give you a lesson in tweezing away your own strays. Experts will suggest upgraded tweezer brands and angling tips to help you remove strays effectively and attractively.

--Never use chemical hair removers to shape your own brows. Skin near your eyes is very sensitive, and you could cause chemical burns and unintentional brow removal that could take months to grow back in, not to mention the extreme danger of getting chemicals in your eyes.

--Never use cuticle scissors to trim your own longer brow hairs above or below your brow's line. Let your expert handle that.