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FEBRUARY 2024



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# Registry Item Trends

The first bridal registry was said to have been created in 1924 at Marshall Field's in Chicago.

The idea, then as now, was to provide a list of things like china, silverware and crystal to make wedding gift buying easier for friends and family. Back then, a registry was created in person and kept in a special notebook. Today, much of this is handled online. But that's not the only way that the bridal registry has changed. The latest trends include some very high-tech items.

## SMART CHOICES

Couples register for a wide variety of things to complete their new household. Perhaps the hottest recent trend involves smart appliances. Coffee pots, refrigerators, vacuums, and even toasters are now outfitted with technology that allows them to connect via Wi-Fi or Bluetooth to your phone. This allows you to control them remotely and to set certain scheduled actions. Turn the air-conditioning or heat on before you arrive, or off while you are away. Have a hot cup of joe waiting when you wake up. There's even a toaster with more than 60 settings, following intelligent algorithms to heat things your precise desires.

## GOING PLACES

You'll probably start dreaming of the next getaway not long after returning from your honeymoon. Arrive in style with all-new luggage that fits the modern lifestyle and aesthetic. Hard-sided bags now have built-in phone chargers, for instance. New compartmentalization options make organizing and packing a breeze. If you're more adventurous or love to camp, be sure to mark down backpacks and duffel bags in the registry.

## AT HOME

Maybe you're more of a homebody. Gift registries can help you quickly build a warm and inviting atmosphere for one another. Registry standbys like sheets and towels make timeless gifts, the more comfy the better. The latest trend is high-tech fabrics that are both sustainable and longer lasting than the products of yesteryear.

Just remember to make pattern and color choices that will fit into your life on a longer-term basis. Neutrals are always in fashion.

## OTHER IDEAS

Round out your registry with items that will make your first years together more carefree. Soundbars help bring your home theater to life. Convection toaster ovens bring the food to your table in the blink of an eye. Espresso machines will make getting out of bed something to look forward to.



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# Take It Outside

There's something special about an outdoor wedding, especially if you're planning a gorgeous, romantic destination event.

But even if you are planning on having your nuptials in the backyard, there are certain benchmark elements that you'll need to have in place to pull it all off. Here's a checklist to make your spring outdoor wedding a stress-free success:

## COMMUNICATION PLAN

There needs to be a central communication hub so that check-ins and changes can be communicated, whether that's a group text, a Facebook event page, wedding website or online meeting space. Vendors, guests, friends and members of the wedding party should be able to quickly and easily get in contact if they have questions or concerns. This will become particularly important if there is a major change in plans, but can be helpful in even small situations — such as when someone is running late.

If you don't hire a wedding planner, designate a family member or friend to monitor the agreed-upon communication hub.

## KNOW THE RULES

Be aware of local noise and crowd regulations. There may be local statutes or venue guidelines when it comes to how loudly and how long a band or DJ can play music.

You also need to make sure you don't block traffic, or create other issues for people who live in or are traveling through the area. Make sure you know where and when people are allowed to park. You don't want to end up with unforeseen issues with neighbors or business owners because of overflow traffic.

If you're worried about having enough space for all of your guests to park, contact nearby churches or schools — and then direct people there.

## HYDRATION AND SHADE

Spring brings warmer temps, and that creates the need for shade and hydration. Dancing and drinking alcoholic beverages also tend to make people thirsty during your reception. Older guests may be particularly susceptible to stress from heat.

## ALTERNATE LOCATION

The biggest risk with outdoor events of any kind, of course, is bad weather. Your wedding will be planned out months in advance, meaning there's no way to check the forecast for rain. Create a backup plan just in case. Tour suitable alternate venues or look for outdoor sites that have nearby buildings so everything can be quickly transferred.



# Wedding Favors

Wedding favors are your way of saying thank you to everyone who was a part of your special event.

The average cost of these gifts, according to The Knot wedding website, is several hundred dollars. Still, that's worth it. They let guests know that you care, while providing them with a small special memory of their own from the big day. Here are a few gift ideas:

## GO GREEN

Giving plants as a wedding favor is hip and eco-friendly, and they're especially attractive if your wedding is being held in an outdoor setting. Match with local flora or fauna, and you're literally allowing your friends and family to take a piece of your wedding home with them. Once it's home, their plant will become a living memory. Succulents are on trend, and also easy to care for. Stop by a local nursery to ask for specifics, keeping in mind that some native plants may not transfer well when brought back home.

## GET GOING

Destination weddings offer a great opportunity to match the event with a travel theme. Pick fun items like luggage tags, maps and travel snacks, then arrange them in attractive totes. Or go hyper-local, giving your guests things that are only found in the area where you're getting married. That might be a special food, handmade good, or art object. Having a beach wedding? Don't forget the sunscreen!

## TIME TO INDULGE

Trendy items this year include coffee mugs and miniature candles. For the more offbeat, consider heart-shaped tea bags or mini-pizza cutters. Edible wedding favors like small chocolates, jars of honey or cupcakes can both surprise and delight. If you're already indulging in plenty of flowers, add floral-inspired lollipops in flavors like champagne and roses, lemon and thyme, and rosemary and mint. One memorable offering even has seeds infused into the sticks, so they can be planted afterward.

## FUN AND GAMES

Add flair with personalized items like napkins, plastic cups, shot glasses, wine glass charms and miniature bottles of liquor, beer, wine and non-alcoholic beverages with your names and the wedding date. Other personalized options include koozies, matchboxes, playing cards and mugs which can be made with messages, names, dates or even pictures. Everyone can enjoy them right away at the reception, or bring things home as a special memento from your nuptials.



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# Honoring Friends & Family

Sometimes, we have friends and family who won't make it to the ceremony because they've passed on.

However, you can still pay homage to them and make sure they're there in spirit, if not in person.

## DISPLAYING PHOTOS

Include favorite photos to remember your friends and family. Talk with your venue or wedding planner about arranging the photos artfully in a place where you can see them and honor the memories of your loved ones during your ceremony.

## A MOMENT OF SILENCE OR A SPECIAL SONG

During your reception, have the emcee or the maid of honor or another special guest call for a moment of silence for your loved ones.

People can choose that time to hold up pictures, read a list of names, or even a quote from a religious book or other special passage. If silence doesn't feel right, you can play a special song and have the band or DJ announce that it is in honor of your loved ones.

## MEMORY TABLES

Have special places at your reception or ceremony where you fill tables with special photos of friends and family, along with mementos

and a sign to explain. You can also include a memory book for your guests to share their favorite memories.

## PROVIDE SPECIAL FAVORS

If your loved ones had special food, flowers or other favorite items, make it part of your favors. Include a sign to explain or have someone explain during the reception.

## MAKE A DONATION

Instead of favors, make a donation to a charity that was close to the heart of your loved one. Have a sign that announces the donation and invites your guests to do the same. You can also invite your guests to donate instead of giving you gifts, especially if you're combining two fully functional households and already have more than you can handle.

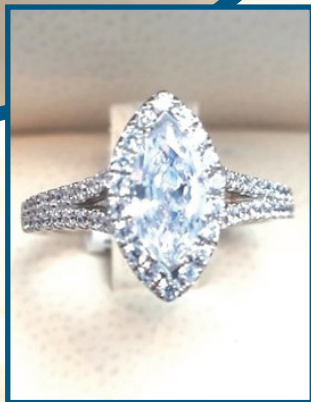
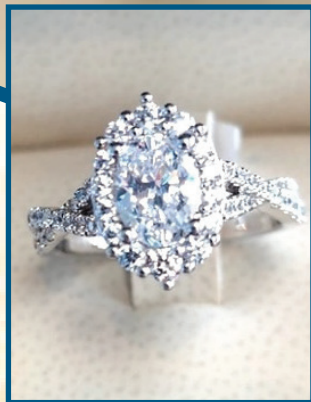
## DEDICATE AN EMPTY CHAIR

Have an empty chair in a conspicuous spot, such as in the front row, that is dedicated to the loved ones that can't be with you in person. You can mark that chair with a candle, flowers or another special marker.





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# The Latest in Cakes

The cake is a small, but critical, part of any wedding reception.

Towering confections, bitesized cupcakes, doughnuts, all have had their day. These are some of the recent top wedding cake trends.

## MAXIMALIST DELIGHTS

Big cakes are still all the way in.

“Maximalism is still having a moment and I think we’ll see this expressed through grand wedding cakes with intricate details and impressive heights,” cake artist Kelly Gray told Brides. “I think this is a beautiful way for couples to create a celebratory moment with their wedding guests and to incorporate details from their décor or theme.”

## ICING IKEBANA

These tilted, bending cakes bring a whimsical flair to your wedding day. These cakes feature longer-stemmed blooms atop the cake that seem as if they are growing naturally out of the sponge. These cakes are perfectly imperfect, are a little wild and are very much en vogue.

## PRESSED FLOWERS FINERY

These pressed blooms add color, texture and a touch of nature to the cake. Your baker can even choose edible blooms that go with your wedding’s palette. Ask them to pair it with fresh fruit for an explosion of natural flavor. Fall fruits to consider are pears, apples, pomegranates and figs. In later fall, citrus comes into play, too, and dried or candied fruits can add to the windowpane effect of the flowers.

## CUSTOM FLAVORS

While the confection gets most of the attention, the cake still has to taste good. Many bakers are going beyond the traditional wedding cake flavor and tailoring their cakes to the theme, décor, palette and even venue of the wedding.



## CAKES GO REMOTE

Think you can’t get a cake from a baker thousands of miles away? Think again. The pandemic taught us the ways. Couples planning destination weddings or those who just want a particular artist can have tasting cakes shipped overnight and hold online design meetings.

“Not only does it allow couples to sample their cake at home and mull things over, but oftentimes they’re able to create an inclusive tasting experience for family and friends to get involved in the process,” says cake artist Gray in Brides.



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# The Tradition of Rice

We've seen it time and time again: Spouses kiss and are presented as a couple, then exit toward a waiting vehicle as guests throw celebratory rice in the air. But why?

Here's a look at the long tradition of rice in weddings — and some newer alternative practices:

## HOW IT BEGAN

Rice was originally chosen because it symbolizes prosperity and fertility, according to Brides magazine. It's tossed as a sign of well wishes for the future. The tradition dates back at least to ancient Celts, who threw rice and other grains both as a newlywed blessing and to appease various gods, according to Brides. Not everyone followed along, however. Ancient Romans were said to toss wheat, Moroccans threw figs or dried dates, and Indians celebrated with flower petals.

## GETTING READY

Make or buy small packages of rice for your guests before the ceremony. Ushers can distribute the packets, or you can attach them to chairs or the wedding program. Ask ushers and other helpers to let guests know when the time is right.

You might also consider listing the proper time to throw rice in the program. Most couples choose the moment they initially walk out of the venue, but others may want to do it during a special photo.

## MODERN CONTROVERSY

More recently, fears have arisen that leftover grains might cause



harm to wildlife long after the ceremony is over. Some government officials have even banned the practice.

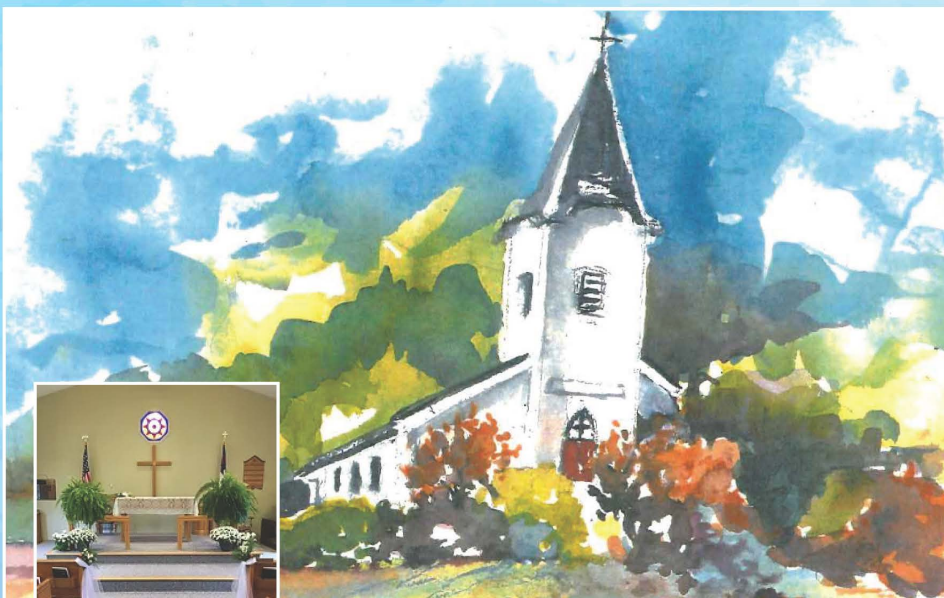
Brides magazine reported, however, that subsequent testing has shown no immediate danger to animals. Rice can pose a slip hazard, however, so someone should be on hand to sweep up once the happy couple has left the venue.

## INSTEAD OF RICE

There are plenty of reasons beyond worries over wildlife to opt for something else instead of rice. Some people are looking for greener options, while others are planning to have children and therefore feel uncomfortable about rice's age-old symbolism of fertility. Then there are the inherent safety issues. Some options to consider go back to alternative traditions from places around the world like flower petals.

Others now use birdseed, herbs, or biodegradable confetti. Some choose not to throw anything at all. Instead, have friends and family ring small bells or wave colorful ribbons.

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# More Venue Ideas

A venue is one of the first wedding items you should check off your list.

And because it sets the tone for so much of the ceremony or reception, it's an important one. Here are some venues you may not have considered for your big day.

## LOCAL PARKS

City, state and national parks often offer some stunning backdrops for your wedding, your reception or both. Visit the park several times before your big day, if you can, and make note of how busy the park is and the position of the sun. You don't want your guests squinting to see you in the afternoon glare, nor do you want them peering into the gloom of a forest glade.

Also make notes about the park's facilities. Is there plenty of parking? Bathroom access? Does it also have sports fields or other activities that may be in use the day of your wedding?

Once you have a few potential spots picked out, reach out to the city, state or federal department responsible for that park. Make sure they allow weddings, fill out any necessary paperwork, pay the fees and make sure you get a copy of the rules (there are going to be rules).

Look for any restrictions on the number of guests, chairs, toilets, cleanup and more.

## WINERIES AND BREWERIES

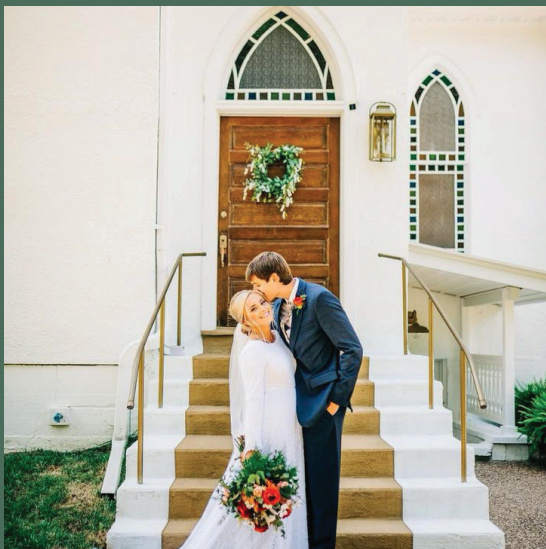
These venues may have an event space that they are happy to let you use for your ceremony, your reception or both. For a fee, of course, but you may also get plenty of booze to use, too. Either location lends itself to plenty of décor ideas, menus and, of course, cocktails. Also ask if the grounds will be available to you for photo shoots before your big day. Vineyards, in particular, have a striking natural backdrop that your photographer will be happy to make use of.

Just like with any other venue, ensure you know the local rules for holding a wedding at the winery or brewery; the event planner at the venue should be able to help you. Also talk to your vendors about the setup at the location and, if possible, meet them there beforehand.

## GARDENS

Botanical gardens, arboretums and other natural settings make stunning venues, even in the fall. The key to pulling off these weddings is to let the natural landscape carry most the weight of décor and florals. Talk to your florist about more subtle arrangements to make the most of your setting. Because many of these spaces are exclusively outdoors, you should have a Plan B should the weather go south. Ask the venue what they suggest; they may have a pavilion or other space that can give you shelter.





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