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by Madeline Johnson

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Create Your Dream Wedding

Style-Architects, the creative company who designed and styled the wedding spread found in this issue of Lavender Magazine, is a boutique lifestyle services agency dedicated to wedding and special occasion planning, and fashion and wardrobe styling. Rachelle Mazumdar, director of weddings and special events at Style-Architects, has been planning special events for over eight years. Here, she shares with us her insights and exclusive wedding planning tips.

ESTABLISH A VISION

According to Mazumdar, the first step newly engaged couples should take in the planning process is to establish a wedding day vision. Developing a vision early on is important to ensure that all the wedding elements are cohesive. Sometimes couples make the mistake of incorporating elements that aren't stylistically consistent with their vision. For example, a couple wouldn't want to include preppy/nautical clothing in an edgy-warehouse space like Aria. "Developing a vision sets the stage for the whole wedding," says Mazumdar. "One of the roles I play throughout the planning process is help curating the random inspirational images that couples bring to their initial consultation."

SET THE BUDGET

All couples hope for a flawless wedding with top-notch finishes. However, couples often overestimate what they can get for their money. "Often times, couples over-commit early on in the process for the expensive items, such as venue or fashion, and find that they don't have enough money left over to complete their vision. They end up with a great venue with stripped down finishes," says Mazumdar. She encourages couples to sit down and allocate money early on in the

planning process. This includes checking with various vendors to ensure that desired price points are realistic. Mazumdar also suggests utilizing someone who understands the industry, like a planner, to help with budget allocation.

CHOOSE A VENUE THAT SUITS YOU AND THE BUDGET

A venue plays an extremely important role in achieving the wedding day look every



Rachelle Mazumdar, Director of Weddings + Events, Style-Architects

couple wants. Not only should the venue fit in with the style of the overall wedding, but it should also be budget-friendly. Mazumdar shares some tips on how to pick the right venue without completely emptying the couple's wallet. "When looking at venues, I encourage couples to request a sample banquet event order (BEO) before signing on the dotted line." Many couples just assume there is one fee associated with a venue, which is the rental cost. However, a BEO itemizes every little cost that a couple would need to pay. For venues which require you to work with an off-site catering company, be sure to request a BEO from them as well. "Often times, rentals and staffing are not included in the food cost as it is with on-site caterers; therefore, off-site can appear less expensive. However, staffing and rentals can easily run several thousands of dollars."

RENTAL ROCK

Many couples are unaware of the various elements that are available to rent in order to complete their wedding day dreams. Whether couples want vintage farm tables, sleek and contemporary pieces, or an assortment of eclectic dining room chairs, nobody wants to run around town looking for (and splurging on) the perfect items that will only be used once. Whether its furniture, linens, dishware, or décor, rental companies are a great way for couples to achieve the look they want at a fraction of the price of buying.

FEELING CAMERA-READY IS A MUST

The photographer is one of the most important vendors involved in a couple's wedding day. After all, photographs are one of the only wedding day items that will last a lifetime. While there are so many talented wedding photographers in the industry, it is more important to find one that the couple meshes well with on a personal level. "You spend the entire day with your photographer, so pick someone you could see becoming a friend," says Mazumdar. If couples don't feel comfortable with their photographer, it will show in their photos.

GET THE BIGGEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

Although everyone wishes they could splurge on every wedding décor element, the budget doesn't always agree. Mazumdar identifies a few key décor items that are

definitely worth a little penny stretching. Most venues have traditional banquet chairs that can really take away from the look a couple is trying to achieve. Couples that rent outside chairs (such as vintage dining chairs, wooden garden chairs, ghost chairs or chiavaris) can really transform a room from a boring banquet space to a perfectly polished reception. Lighting is another asset that can turn a wedding reception from "so-so" to simply stunning. Mazumdar encourages couples to invest in additional lighting because it really enhances the space as well as draw attention to the décor elements once the natural light fades. "It's really a shame how guests can no longer see the beautiful florals and linens at the reception once the lights dim and the dancing begins," says Mazumdar. Whether couples prefer a muted lighting palette or a more dramatic hue, bringing in an expert lighting vendor can add that "wow" factor to the reception space.

GIVE IT A BRAND

A big trend Mazumdar sees in today's weddings is personal branding. Couples are shying away from themed weddings and steering more towards a wedding that incorporates elements that are custom expressions of them. Because Style-Architects is part of a larger branding company, Mazumdar understands the important role branding plays in weddings today. "Branding is so much more than taking a monogram and sticking it on the invitation, the cake, and guest favors," says Mazumdar. "It's more of a personal expression of the couple and the couple's style." If one design (such as a monogram) is utilized on every décor element, the uniqueness and impact diminishes. One suggestion for couples is that branding doesn't have to be so literal. Couples can be creative with branding by taking bits and pieces of a design element and incorporating them throughout the rest of the wedding. For instance, a pattern of vintage lace from a veil can be repeated on a corner of the menu card. Or, if stripes are a design feature on the invitation, a white on white fondant stripe could be used on the wedding cake.

"At Style-Architects we love celebrating love of all kinds. We strive to make sure your guests see your personality as a couple shine through in every detail," says Mazumdar. ■

