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Ceremony & receptions

Choosing Your Reception Style

by Autumn Rheas Carpenter

WEDDING RECEPTIONS SHOULD REFLECT THE SPIRIT AND STYLE OF THE COUPLE'S WEDDING. A BREEZY BEACH AFFAIR, COMPLETE WITH TIKI TORCHES AND HULA SKIRTS MIGHT BE JUST THE RECEPTION THEME YOU'RE SEEKING. HOWEVER, A BLACK TIE EVENT, COIFFED IN THE FINEST TABLE LINENS AND SPARKLING CHAMPAGNE GLASSES MIGHT BE A BETTER FIT. THE CHOICES ARE UNLIMITED AND COUPLES SHOULD FULLY RESEARCH THEIR OPTIONS.



Hotels, catering halls, country clubs, and restaurants are some of the most popular sites for receptions. Other sites often used for wedding receptions include clubhouses operated by organizations including athletic clubs, ethnic clubs, service organizations, university unions and even museums. These venues range in capacity from intimate parties to grand affairs. These various facilities also range in style from extremely casual to the utmost formal.

With trends always changing, the couple's personalities should ultimately determine their reception-style choice. “Their personalities will definitely influence their reception venue choice, from traditional to contemporary,” said Tanya Posavatz, owner of Clink Weddings. “Also, if they are one of the first of their peer group to get married, their wedding

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tends to be more traditional, whereas those who are the last to get married often want something more unique.”

Trends constantly vary, but local wedding consultants explain that receptions have become more comfortable, yet remain stylized. There is currently a trend toward family-style dinners, according to Michelle Hope Lawrence of Michelle Hope Events. “Guests are seated around a table and large platters are placed in the center. Everyone can interact with each other and sample whatever food they like,” she said. “Another big trend is parties with movement. Guests travel through different environments throughout the evening. During the cocktail hour, after the ceremony, guests are greeted with a bright tone, which includes live jazz music and a yellow décor pallet. The main ballroom opens for dinner where the space is quieter with a wash of comforting red, piano accom-

paniment and candle lighting. As dinner ends, curtains are drawn to show off a velvet lounge and disco shimmering in silver purple and blue. Guests follow the newlyweds into the “club” bliss for after-dinner drinks, dessert and dancing.”

The current reception trend is called “relaxed elegance.” “Most of my brides still want a semi-formal party, but they don't want it stuffy,” said Posavatz. “They want their guests to have fun.”

“When a couple is deciding where to hold their reception, they must discuss whether they like the more traditional ballroom feel (everyone in one room), or if they like the idea of people circulating,” continued Posavatz. “Other issues they should discuss are if they want an outdoor area (especially if some of their guests are smokers) and how far reception locations will be from the ceremony and the out-of-town guests’ hotels.”

The physical comfort of the venue is a key element to discuss. If your wedding is to be held outdoors, the possibility of rain, wind, humidity or heat must be factored in. You will also need to have a backup plan in case of inclement weather. Indoor venues need to be checked to make sure they have adequate heating or air-conditioning, changing rooms for the wedding party, restrooms and kitchen facilities.

Couples should not be afraid to ask questions. Posavatz offered some important examples such as “What is the capacity seated with a dance floor, for buffet service and for plated service? How much time do I get and does that include set-up and clean up? Am I obligated to use vendors on your list or may I choose my own?”

Lawrence added, “Is there a possibility there will be another event right before or right after mine? Are there charges for bringing in your own décor? Is the fee all-inclusive?”

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