

# Top wedding trends — from pre-planning to the big day

BY LYNDA TWARDOWSKI

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Dreaming of a traditional wedding? Most engaged couples are. But when it comes time to sit down and plan the big event, those in search of a stand-out ceremony and celebration sometimes find it fun — and necessary — to trade old traditions for new trends.

## Wedding Weekends

Modern life has made a simple afternoon merger of the boy and girl next door a rarity. More and more, couples — and their families — are spread out all over the nation. To make a wedding worth the trip for out-of-towners, many couples buck the bride or groom's hometown and marry in a middle-ground vacation destination or honeymoon spot instead, then extend their wedding day into a weekend affair. A large dinner party the night before the big day, brunch the morning after and fun area activities for guests to enjoy during their stay are usually on the itinerary. One to consider? Black Star Farms in Suttons Bay is one favorite spot for northern Michigan unions; it offers guest accommodations, reception sites and a location in close proximity to recreation trails, golf and area shopping.

## Far and Away

No matter where a wedding is held, some guests inevitably will be coming in from out of town. And while maps, accommodations options and gift registry information can be stuffed in with mailed invitations, some couples are choosing to post them online on a special wedding Web pages, such as those offered by [www.virtuallymarried.com](http://www.virtuallymarried.com). Often, many couples use the pages as more than just an organized information hub, posting pictures of themselves, their love story and links to their gift registries, as well as online polls for burning wedding questions such as what tie the groom should wear.

## And the Bride Wore...

White wedding gowns are as old a tradition as marriage itself. While it's still the most common color on the aisle, lots of brides are thinking pinks

and silver and gold and lilac, says Gerry Lynn Belfy, store manager of Petoskey Bridal Salon in Petoskey. Although few brides covet as much color as rocker Gwen Stefani of No Doubt wore on her wedding gown, which was splashed with fuchsia, Belfy said more brides than ever before are asking for a hint of color.

Whether as accents or as a subtle all-over shade, she says silver, gold, café and candlelight ivories are popular shades.

"It's just a trend, something new that's different from your average, everyday white," she said. "Not all brides look their best in white white."

## Tony and Tina's Happy Highball

While an open bar almost always guarantees guest satisfaction, some couples are going for the proverbial (Cuervo) gold by adding a cigar and port bar or dessert and espresso bar to the mix. Many also stir in a personal touch with a signature drink — Cosmopolitans and Kir Royales are popular picks — or request their bar service to design and serve a specialty drink created just for them.

## If You Could Bottle Happiness

Whether given as gifts to the wedding party or used at the reception, wines and champagnes featuring labels personalized for the bride and groom are increasingly popu-

lar features in northern Michigan's wine country and elsewhere. Jennifer Cooper, wine tasting rooms manager for Chateau Chantal, says many couples request cases of their private label sparkling wine, Celebrate!, upon which the winery affixes a specially designed label — usually featuring a picture of the couple — for a personalized touch to their celebration. Each case, which comes with 12 bottles, costs \$144, plus \$1 per personalized label.

"It's another opportunity to make your wedding unique," she said.

## He Loves Me

Although roses are pricey, 72 percent of Americans associate them with the ideal wedding, according to a recent public opinion poll conducted by FTD. Nevertheless, in the push for simplicity and savings, the poll found that flowers like lilies, tulips and daisies are gaining ground in bridal bouquet and arrangement choices. What does that mean for the fate of the flower girl? Rather than scattering rose petals down the aisle, she can carry "kissing ball" — a Styrofoam ball covered in flowers, which hangs on a ribbon from her wrist.

## Aisle See You at the Top

Whether or not Dad is in the picture, some brides want to give their moms more than just the ceremonial flower before

the vows; many are choosing to have Mom escort them down the aisle along with or instead of Dad. Some brides are forgoing the "giveaway" altogether and walking to down the aisle arm in arm with their groom. Another trend? Many couples are choosing to face the congregation rather than the ceremony's officiator so the guests can actually see the vows exchanged, rather than just the backs of the couple.

## All There in Black and White

Formal family photographs will always have a place in the documentation of the big day, but a black-and-white photography style — candid images taken of the couple,

wedding and guests in action — is all the rage these days. Elizabeth Price, photographer and owner of Priceless Photography in Traverse City says she the bulk of her clients request the candid style because they want images that capture their big day naturally and artistically.

"There's just a feeling you get with black and white documentary," Price said. "It brings out the couple as they are because they're not focused on the photographer, they're focused on the moment."

**Lynda Twardowski is a local freelance writer.**



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