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Helping clients find the dress of their dreams for weddings and other special occasions

BY NANCY P. MCGINNIS Correspondent

Renee Adams recalls the days, as a young girl, when she dreamed of owning a bridal shop. But the inspiration to launch Dreams Bridal Boutique last fall came from how she herself felt as a bride to be, shopping three years ago for one of the most important days of her life

"It was awful— crowded and impersonal." She cringes at the recollection.

"It's true that you can try on dresses elsewhere, or even buy one on the internet." she said. But what she strives to offer in her own boutique is more than a shopping transaction: "It's really about the experience."

With this in mind, she opened Dreams Bridal Boutique and Tuxedo Center in early October, 2014, in the space once occupied by Fashion Bug on Western Avenue in Augusta. In addition to brides-to-be, her clientele includes bridesmaids, mothers of the bride and groom, and flower girls. She also offers prom dresses and other special occasion formal attire and tuxedo rentals.

Adams has created a spacious, clean, bright and inviting venue where every customer is warmly welcomed. She is also happy to set up appointments so that brides, mothers, grandmothers and other bridal party/family members can enjoy Adams' genuine hospitality and her undivided attention and guidance in a stress-free atmosphere.

A romantic at heart, Adams readily admits "I've forever wanted all women to embrace their inner goddess, to love the sparkle and glitter in life."

She also possesses a natural knack for helping each individual discover the most flattering style and shade to wear. Dreams Bridal Boutique features gowns by Stella York, Sophia Tolli, David Tutera, and the Romance Collection by Allure. The selection for bridesmaids, mothers and flower girls includes offerings from Montage, Yvonne D, Joan Calabrese, Allure and Sorella Vita. But Adams notes that most of her customers shop by shape and style rather than seeking a particular designer.

"Come in with an open mind," she suggests. Often, she observes, customers who think they know exactly what they want end up with something different. And if a dress is almost but not quite perfect, there may be options to modify a neckline, or to add straps or sleeves, for example. Often a shade of blush, mocha, cocoa, ivory, or even gold sets off the bride's complexion better than white.

Adams knows that the prospect of shopping for a special occasion can be intimidating along with the price – her

"Most of us have something we don't like about ourselves, but the people in our lives who love us don't see us that way. When you come dress shopping, remember that the man who put the ring on your finger loves you exactly as you are!"

RENEE ADAMS, OWNER, DREAMS BRIDAL BOUTIOUE AND TUXEDO CENTER

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Nancu P. McGinnis photos

Renee welcomes you: In a Western Avenue storefront space transformed into a welcoming oasis of elegance, Renee Adams is ready to help the prospective bride, or anyone dressing up for a special occasion, to find just the right thing to

At right, Renee Adams was inspired by her own customer experience as a bride-to-be three years ago to open her own bridal boutique, where she throws her heart and soul into helping every customer feel as special as they deserve to feel. Photos of her own wedding grace the walls.

prices for wedding gowns range from \$450 to \$2200. It can also be nerve wracking to think of being the center of attention

"Most of us have something we don't like about ourselves, but the people in our lives who love us don't see us that way. When you come dress shopping, remember that the man who put the ring on your finger loves you exactly as you are!"

Thanks in part to word of mouth, and rave reviews on the Dreams Bridal Boutique Facebook page, customers are coming not only from the central Maine area, but as far away as Boothbay, Rockland and southern Maine.

In the first few months that her boutique has been open for business, Adams has helped 16 brides find the

gown of their dreams. Four of them actually walked out with their dress, but typically 90% of customers order a gown after trying on various possibilities and narrowing down the options here.

"For the most successful, and least stressful experience, bridesto-be should be seeing me at least 10 months before the big day," recommends Adams. A special order can take six months, and it's wise to allow plenty of time for alterations to assure a perfect

That said, Adams is willing to do whatever is necessary to make her customers happy. She

More DREAMS, PAGE 3

Dreams

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

recounts how she was getting ready to open her new business, days before the Cony High School semi-formal.

"I had four girls, close to tears, at my door. They had ordered their dresses online. One dress never arrived. The others didn't fit, or were nothing like the picture on the website!

"Of course I helped them. I felt their pain," she said, adding that shopping for a gown online is a risky endeavor at

"It's important to use a reputable site with a secure checkout. I do understand wanting a good deal and not having a ton of money to spend on a homecoming dress or prom attire, or wanting to save on your wedding expenses. But keep in mind, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is."

Luckily for Maine brides, and anyone in need of attire to look their best for a special occasion, Renee Adams is ready and waiting to welcome you to Dreams Bridal Boutique.

DREAMS Bridal Boutique and Tuxedo Center, 56 Western Ave, Suite 3, Augusta, can be reached at 480 -1446, online at dreamsbridalme. com or on Facebook. The shop is open weekdays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays until 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.



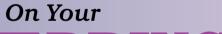
Nancu P. McGinnis photos Gowns in varying flattering shades of white feature a range of silhouettes, fabrics and



With gowns for bridesmaids, mothers and flower girls, as well as formalwear for men, Dreams Bridal Boutique offers one-stop shopping for the entire bridal party.



Adams stays on top of new trends, such as print gowns for prom or the wedding party. Dreams Bridal Boutique offers not only gowns, but also important accessories such as these David Tutera shoes. Adams points out that the baby blue soles (reflected in the mirrored display surface below) count as the "something blue" for brides following the traditional custom.



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who will be forgiving of any

bound to recover gracefully

Work on confidence. Wed-

ding fears may stem from

inadequate self-confidence.

Give yourself a pep talk and

surround vourself with positive

people. Keep the worry-warts

from any mishaps.

hiccups along the way. You're

Flowers can create an atmosphere best suited to the bridal couple

BY VALERIE TUCKER Correspondent

Florists have precious little time after the winter holidays for rest and relaxation. Couples planning their weddings are scheduling appointments to review endless possibilities for bouquets, arrangements. table centerpieces while considering budget limits. For every bride who loves the nature theme, there's another who prefers the classic bouquet of white and ivory. The elegant bouquet of roses and calla lilies remains a timeless combination of white and green.

Three central Maine florists agree that most couples prefer personalized themes with individual touches, no matter what's popular on television or in magazines.

Aurilla Holt, owner of Berry & Berry Floral, with shops in Hallowell and Gardiner, has seen floral trends come and go in her many years of experience in planning weddings. The woven halo of flowers crowning the bride is a beautiful alternative to the traditional veil, and she says it has been making a comeback. Many bouquet orders feature more of a free-falling cascade, instead of the one-sized identical arrangements. Traditional accessories, including the boutonnieres, reflect the couple's personal style.

"One couple put flowers into empty shotgun shells filled with water," she said. "That was part of the outdoor theme that also included camouflage.

Nearly every couple has some floral theme in mind, and all florists help plan floral displays and accessories to fit into the budget. Whether traditional, country, lavish, contemporary, Victorian romance or chic simplicity, brides usually have their preferences, said Gary Hopkins. He and his wife Elizabeth own Hopkins Flowers in Manchester. He started working with his father in the family business, and these days, he is planning weddings for adults he remembers meeting as

Gary Hopkins, owner of Hopkins Flowers in Manchester, created a stunning floral archway for his son Todd and daughter-in-law Molly on their wedding day at the Augusta Country Club. Colors and styles can be tailored for each wedding, Hopkins said, and seasonal fresh flowers provide a budget-friendly display.

children when he worked in the family's shop many years

He and his staff offer examples and suggestions to help couples fine-tune ideas. Even when they arrive with a specific floral plan, they may fall in love with an entirely different color scheme.

"Everything's possible," he

He remembers creating arrangements for a bridal party that drove from his shop to the top of Cadillac Mountain in Acadia National Park for a sunrise wedding. He's also created a quick

More FLOWERS, PAGE 5



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Jacqui Orio and her father Al exchange a tender moment before he escorted her down the aisle on a beautiful summer day. Aurilla Holt, owner of the Berry & Berry Floral shops in Hallowell and Gardiner, crafted both the bride's halo of flowers and the bouquet, creating a soft unstructured look that was both elegant and traditional.

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207.626.7777 aleavitt@spectrumgenerations.org www.catering.spectrumgenerations.org "One couple put flowers into empty shotgun shells filled with water. That was part of the outdoor theme that also included camouflage."

> **AURILLA HOLT, OWNER BERRY & BERRY FLORAL**



Contributed photo

Skowhegan Fleuriste coordinates a color theme for the entire bridal party, whether it's low-key charm, Victorian romance or vintage country. Head florist Darcy Crocker has two decades of experience and helps customers create memorable floral palettes on their special day.

Flowers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

bouquet for a bride planning

to be married an hour later. Skowhegan Fleuriste co-owners Matt and Mike DuBois and Michael Hunt bought the well-known flower shop shortly after they purchased The Bankery in 2008. Now the combined businesses offer one-stop shopping, with wide selections of cakes, men's formal wear and floral arrangements. Head florist Darcy Crocker has been in the business for 20 years, starting in her grandmother's flower shop, Traditions in Flowers, in Madison before coming to Skowhegan Fleuriste. All of the owners are also Certified Professional Florists, accredited by the Maine Florist Association. Matt DuBois said the staff

designers create floral arches, aisle runners and other accents and accessories that add warmth and color. Children often are in wedding parties, he said, and the flower girls traditionally have worn Baby's Breath crowns.

Now he's seeing brides also planning to wear flowers in their hair

"This seems to be a start of a new trend," he said.

His customers present opportunities for creative challenges when decorating with flowers. Blossoms have to be fresh and vibrant and properly placed and secured.

"We decorate lots of arbors on lakeside docks and beaches or mountain resorts," DuBois

Weddings can feature locally-grown flowers in season. Freshly-picked flowers for summer weddings can be added to free-form bouquets and centerpieces. Mixing larger and small blossoms in complementary colors, with some spiky flowers and trailing vines for variation, can replace the bouquet of a single type of flower.

Although the latest floral trends are fun for couples to consider, most of his customers seem to be less concerned about current fashions and more about making their wedding day special for themselves and their guests.

"Though we recognize trends exist, every wedding we do is very individual to our clients' taste and budget," he said.

Tame wedding day nerves

When couples tie the knot, many changes are in store, many compromises will be made and many lasting memories will be created. But in the weeks and months before their big days, couples can easily get caught up in the whirlwind of wedding planning, never taking inventory of their feelings until their wedding days have arrived.

Come their wedding days, couples should not be surprised if some nerves set in. A survey from the anxiety self-help resource The Fear Source indicated 71 percent of brides-to-be suffered from some type of nerves during the lead-up to their weddings. Ninety-two percent of brides experienced nerves on the day of the wedding or the evening before, while 66 percent report ed that it affected their daily lives prior to their weddings or hampered their performance and enjoyment during the day

According to Psych Central, a modern online voice for mental health information, emotional support and advocacy, pre-wedding jitters are common and can be the subconscious telling a person that something needs to be remedied. Wedding nerves do not mean a wedding is doomed; it iust means certain issues may need to be worked through. The following are some ways to tame wedding day nerves.

Keep an open dialogue. Speak with your future spouse about the things that may be causing your anxiety. Maybe vou have doubts on financial choices or where you will be living after the wedding. Communicating openly and honestly is one of the foundations of a strong relationship. Slow down and breathe.

Wedding planning involves making many decisions, and sometimes couples move at breakneck speeds. Make slowing down a priority. Try to enjoy a quiet dinner with just the two of you. When enjoying peaceful moments, take deep breaths, which can be calming and revitalizing. If need be, consider signing up for a yoga or tai chi class to force you to slow down.

Address performance anxiety. It's easy to build up the big



everything goes according to

plan. But it's impossible to plan

for each and every outcome on

vour wedding dav. Focus on

everything that can go right,

what might go wrong. Also, re-

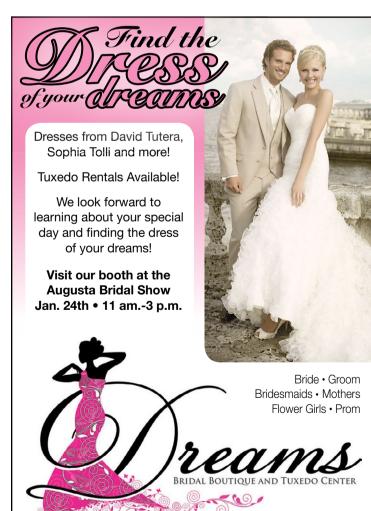
alize that your guests are your

friends and family members

rather than worrying about

at arms' length for the time being. Recruit more help. Weddings are huge undertakings, so it's no surprise that couples sometimes feel overwhelmed. Ask reliable relatives or friends to double-check all of the last-minute details. This way you don't feel it is all on your day in your mind and hope that

> Wedding days nerves are to be expected and often have little to do with the decision to get married. Planning such a big event can be nerve-wracking, but there are ways to combat any anxiety that builds up as the big day draws near.



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Cowboy, gothic, fairy tale or Victorian — no matter your style, your wedding can reflect it

BY VALERIE TUCKER Correspondent

Wedding planners are expect ed to be adept and adaptable when couples come to them with ideas for their big day. Although many brides and grooms still prefer the traditional white gown and formal tuxedo, many are looking for a theme that reflects their personalities and interests.

Kristen Hussev Austin, a fourth generation owner of Hussey's General Store in Windsor, said outdoorsy and country themes have been consistent winners with her customers. She's also had requests for camouflage and Harley Davidson attire.

"We have a lot of items here in the store that fit nicely into those themes," she said. "Couples decorate barns with our hav bales for seating."

Cowboy weddings offer endless selections of accessories, including burlap-wrapped favors, log wooden tables. embroidered table runners and Mason jars for the traditional toasts. The bride and groom and possibly the wedding party, might decide to wear cowboy boots and hats, she said. She has also had a few offbeat requests, including Halloween and Gothic themes. And couples who share a passion for hunting might decide to dress in camouflage.

Most couples who seek help from a wedding planner have some ideas and a theme in mind, but they are open to suggestions. Rockport-based Maine Coast Weddings and Augusta-based Strictly Formal co-owners Kristin Falla and Linda Lewis agreed that today's trends are more casual and outdoorsy.

Falla said she has helped plan nautical-themed weddings that include maps as place cards, netting on the walls and colors that reflect Maine's unique coastal ambiance. Lewis said she helped one bride plan a fairy tale theme, including a dazzling red wedding dress.

"The groom wore a matching red tie, and the entire event was just gorgeous," she said.

Patricia Buck, owner of Patricia Buck Bridal, carries at least 2,000 dresses in stock in her Augusta store and said she has

seen trends come and go. The casual wedding is popular, she said, but the country look has been a steady trend, too.

"I did have one bride who wanted white cowboy boots," she said. "Even though I might not carry everything the couple requires for their theme. I can connect them with suppliers who have the accessories that they're looking for."

Buck's Disney collection offers a selection of bridal gowns that complement the Disney fairy tale theme, with style choices called Ariel, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White and Jasmine. She also carries plus-size gowns for the bride and bridal party. Some accessories, like shoes, might have to be dyed to match outfits, and Buck says she tells brides to order shoes first to see that they fit properly before she

The vocabulary of themed weddings can be ambiguous, so couples should explain what they mean by words like casual, country, rustic, outdoorsy, contemporary, traditional and western. Choosing among the vast numbers of colors can be equally daunting. Color unifies a wedding, creating a theme that connects wedding party attire, accessories, invitations, decorations and flowers. Couples can be discouraged when starting to plan color schemes and tones. Many websites like theknot.com and brides. com offer suggestions and user-friendly color wheels for choices of complementary and contrasting hues.

One familiar wedding color and tradition followed an unusual historic event. Queen Victoria set a fashion trend in 1840, according to Smithsonian Magazine, when she married Prince Albert. Much to the public's consternation, she didn't wear the ornate jewelry and the heavy velvet robes trimmed with ermine. She wore a white satin dress and matching shoes, with a modest selection of jewelry. After that, white was the fashion standard, even though the weddings might have been smaller and less elaborate.

Today's wedding themes might be a more adventurous version of the Victorian color



Photo above courtesy of www.newweddingdecor.net

palette. Gowns and accessories are lush jewel-toned shades of pink, green, gold, blue, burgundy and copper. Winter weddings are perfect for a Victorian-themed wedding. Churches and other popular wedding venues usually are decked out in holiday colors by the first of December, a boon for couples who have a tight budget for

Contributed photo Right, Becky Butler's wedding took on the fairy tale theme with this stunning red wedding dress.



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Bride's Name: Groom's Name: Engaged On: Wedding Date: Ceremony Location: Reception Location: Comments/Notes:

A wedding checklist is a very simple tool that is very easy to use, but it does a lot for you. The main goal of the wedding checklist is to make sure that you get everything that you need for your wedding. These wedding planning tools can give you the piece of mind that you need to really enjoy your wedding to the fullest. Use the wedding planner checklist on the next three pages to guarantee you've covered all the necessary details to ensure that you have the perfect wedding. And check out the advertisers in this section for all your wedding needs.

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___ Send Out Invitations

Arrange for Rental of Items

___ Shop for Bridal Party Gifts

___ Select Wedding Music

___ Schedule Alterations

and Flower Girl

___ Confirm With Formal Wear Shop

____ Schedule Fittings for the Bridesmaids

and Address for Thank You Cards

___ Address Labels With Couple's New Names

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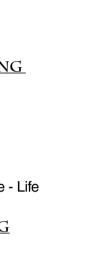
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___ Confirm Order With Florist Order

2 WEEKS BEFORE THE WEDDING ___ Call any Non-RSVP Guests

- ___ Give Caterer Final Head Count ___ Give Band or DJ List of Songs
- Confirm Rehearsal Plans

STREET

Tavern

___ Pick Up Marriage License ___ Complete Floor and Seating Plan ___ Confirm All Rental and Floral Delivery Dates and Times Confirm Arrival Time for All Attendants ___ Check Parking Arrangements ___ Obtain any Legal Information 1 WEEK BEFORE THE WEDDING ___ Confirm Honeymoon Reservations ____ Adjust Seating Arrangements/Adjustments ___ Organize Wedding Day Attire ___ Confirm Reservations for Out-of-Town Guests ___ Pack for Honeymoon ___ Pick Up Passports ___ Gather All Necessary Travel Documents

___ Pick Up Formal Wear



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WEDDING PLANNING CHECKLIST

1 DAY BEFORE THE WEDDING

- Get Manicure and Pedicure
- Pack Wedding Day Emergency Kit
- Double Check List of Things to Do
- Put Wedding Attire and Accessories Together
- Pamper Yourself
- Give Rings to Best Man
- Go To Bed Early

WEDDING DAY

- Get Hair and Makeup Done
- Be Sure to Eat Breakfast/Lunch
- Have Someone Check Reception Site
- Dress for Wedding
- ___ Have Candid Photos Taken With Family

AFTER THE HONEYMOON

- Have Your Wedding Gown Preserved
- Write Thank-You Notes
- Change Name

NOTES:









Organization tips for couples planning a wedding

Couples planning a wedding quickly realize just how challenging a task that planning can be. From paring down the guest list to arranging the music to choosing a menu for the reception, couples must make several decisions when planning

Staying organized when planning a wedding is no small task, as the planning can be spread out over several months or even more than a year, making it difficult to keep track of what's has and hasn't been done. The following are a few organization tips that should help couples keep on track when planning a wedding.

- Write things down. Whether you write things down the old-fashioned way in a notebook or jot down notes in a tablet, write down your plans as you go. Write down important phone numbers, vendor information and all the other details you'll want instant access to. It's important that such notes are taken in something that's portable, allowing you to jot down notes immediately as opposed to forcing you to remember until you arrive home.
- Create a to-do list. A to-do list is another great way to stay organized when planning your wedding. As you make certain decisions, simply strike those tasks from the list. This way you will know which tasks you've polished off and which ones you still need to work on. Use this handy checklist as you plan your day.
- Create a wedding calendar. Keep a calendar devoted specifically to the wedding. Include appointments with vendors and information regarding payment schedules and other deadlines on this calendar. If you set any deadlines for yourself, such as when you prefer to choose a band for the reception, jot these deadlines down on the wedding calendar as well.
- Take a digital camera along when shopping for your wedding. Many couples want to explore their options before making any decisions with regard to attire, floral bouquets and other aspects of the wedding. But it can be difficult to remember all of the things you might have seen throughout the process. Bring a digital camera along when shopping so you won't have to rely strictly on memory when making your final decisions. As you take pictures, upload them to your computer so when the time comes to make a decision, those photos are easily
- Delegate certain tasks. Even couples that consider themselves taskmasters can benefit from delegating some tasks when planning a wedding. This can save you some time and make it easier to keep track of everything. When delegating, ask friends or family to handle those tasks that don't require a personal touch. For example, ask a best man or maid of honor to arrange for guest transportation to and from the airport. It's not too much responsibility, but it's one less thing for busy couples to worry about.

wedding day best

Weddings are a chance for couples tying the knot to be the center of attention. All eyes will be glued to the bride and groom on this special day, which makes it even more important for couples to look their collective best.

Brides might garner most of the attention on a couple's wedding day, but dashing grooms also will get their share of attention. As a result, grooms must be just as diligent as their blushing brides with regard to grooming and appearance on their wedding days. To look picture-perfect. grooms may want to include these grooming tips in their wedding day preparation.

Schedule a haircut with a professional stylist roughly a week before the wedding to get your hair shaped and trimmed. Although trendy hairstyles may show off creativity, keep in mind that photos last forever, and it's often better to stick with a classic cut. A barber or stylist may suggest styles that best suit your face shape and hair texture. Above all, the haircut should be neat. Resist the urge to wash your hair every day before the wedding. Allow some natural oils to build up and make your hair shine in a healthy way.

Shaving

Shaving is another thing grooms must consider. If you have a beard, make sure it is clean, combed and trimmed. Men who shave the day of their weddings may find their skin is sensitive and irritated, which can lead to redness. Unless your facial hair grows especially fast, shave the evening before. This is a good time to splurge on a professional shave with a straight razor at a barber shop. A hot shave from a professional will produce a close shave with the least amount of irritation when done correctly.

Hands

Grooms also may want to book a manicure. Keep in mind that salons will do men's nonpolish manicures and pedicures, and they can be well worth the investment. Photos of entwined hands or close-ups of the ring exchange will have guests zeroing in on your fingers. Have hands look their best with clean, shaped fingernails and trimmed cuticles.

Get plenty of sleep the night



prior to the wedding. Being well rested will help reduce puffy eyes, dark circles and sallow skin. It will also put you in a more positive mood, which can help you enjoy the day even

The day of the wedding, shower using water and a mild soap. Avoid any skin irritation by patting your face and body dry, rather than rubbing it with the towel. Moisturize your skin to avoid dry patches. Stores sell many moisturizers geared toward men's needs, often in unscented or more masculine fragrances.

Reducing shine is key for wedding day photos. Rely on face and hair products that will not add unnecessary sheen to your skin or hair to avoid making you look greasy. Matte hair waxes and sprays will tame tresses. Also, ask your fiancé to pick you up a package of blotting tissues if you are prone to oily skin. These absorbent, typically rice-paper sheets will remove oil from your face and keep sheen to a

Make sure your teeth have been thoroughly brushed and that you have used a minty mouthwash so you're primed for that first kiss. Many grooms also opt for whitening treatments prior to the wedding so they have a dazzling smile.

On their wedding days, grooms will likely be photographed more than any other time in their lives. That means putting extra effort into personal grooming to look

Grooms: Look your | Make a second wedding stand out

ried do so with the intention of spending the rest of their lives together. Few couples exchange rings thinking divorce or the loss of a spouse is in their future, but some marriages do end. Happily, that reality does not prevent many people from seeking happily ever after once again.

A recent study from the Pew Research Center found that many people who were married before are deciding to take the plunge a second time. Four in 10 new marriages in the United States now include one partner who was married before. Roughly 42 million American adults have gotten married a second time up from 22 million in 1980.

The Pew study also discovered that more men than women are likely to get remarried. Around 65 percent of previously married men have a desire to remarry, compared to 43 percent of previously married women.

Men and women about to get married for a second time can consider the following tips to help make the day one to remember

Recognize that a second wedding is in no way less important than the first. Couples should remember that this is still the first wedding for the two of them as a couple and it should be seen as just as special as any other wedding celebration. It's easy for men and women marrying for a second time to be hard on

thinking ahead to the gifts that were given and the money spent by guests for their first marriage. But a new relationship and love is worthy of a good party. Friends and family who are supportive of you shouldn't have reservations about helping you celebrate.

Don't feel boxed in by oldschool etiquette. Rules have relaxed with regard to weddings. Many couples put their personal imprints on their weddings and do not feel the need to conform to outdated expectations. You don't have to skip all of the frills of a first wedding the second time around or head to the local courthouse and pass on another big wedding. Do what feels comfortable to you, whether that means throwing a big party or hosting a smaller affair. Let past experience serve as

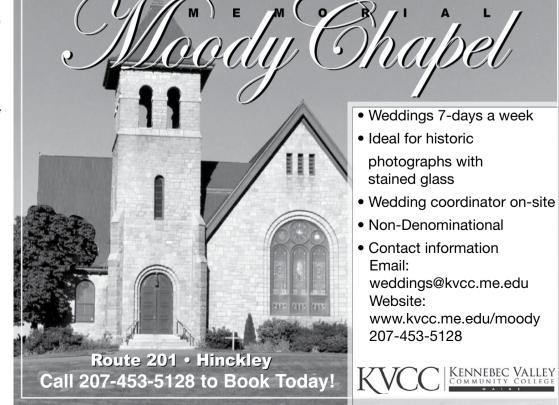
vour guide. You've been married before and can use that to your advantage. It's likely you know what worked for the wedding the first time around and which things you probably could have changed or done without. Maybe you were stressed about having everything go perfectly or feeling like you had to put on a show for guests. As a more mature person this time around, you no doubt realize that sharing this special time with the ones you love is the most important wedding component of all.

Be open-minded with your wardrobe. Let the formality of



the event and the time of day when you're getting married influence what you will be wearing instead of perceived etiquette or family notions. It's acceptable to wear white again if you so desire. Plus, more mature couples have a sense of what makes them look good, rather than opting for trendy outfits.

Above all, have fun. Couples know what to expect the second time around, so stress usually doesn't stem from the unknown. You may feel more relaxed at a second wedding, so let that ensure you have a great night.



Inspiration boards bring wedding plans to life



Making the wedding of your dreams a reality may require some creativity. It can be challenging to organize all of the creative ideas swimming around in your head, but inspiration boards may be able to help.

Inspiration boards, sometimes referred to as idea boards, are commonly used by interior designers, artists, writers, and even wedding planners. Such boards can serve a great purpose when starting a new project, especially if all of your creative ideas seem to lack cohesion. Sometimes seeing things together, rather than in bits and pieces on their own, can fuel even more creativity.

Inspiration boards can include magazine clippings, photographs, fabric swatches, quotes or literary passages, and color swatches. As the idea board grows, you may find a common denominator among your inspirational elements. This can help determine a theme for your wedding or jumpstart other planning.

While poster boards may be more traditional idea boards, creative ideas also can be compiled in binders or scrapbooks, which work especially well at keeping all items organized and concise. Plus, they're portable, which means you can take a scrapbook to a meeting with a wedding

for the wedding. Later, when photographers, florists and other vendors have been booked, you can attach receipts or agreements to the inspiration board for future reference. This keeps all of your important wedding information in one place rather than requiring you to search through different folders or files for important documents. In addition, if friends or family members ask for advice on vendors and planning their own weddings in the future, you can readily access your inspiration board.

vendor and show him or her your concepts

To start building your own board or book, take clippings of photos or articles that resonate with you. As you visit bridal shops and other stores, take fabric swatches and pictures of particular looks. Attend bridal shows and take home promotional materials. Remember, inspiration may not always come from bridal-related resources. Anything you come across in your daily life — such as window-shopping at a furniture store or passing an art exhibit — may inspire some creativity.

Inspiration boards are used by top design professionals and can be a handy resource for couples planning their weddings.

Did you know?

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Historically. June has been the most popular month for getting married. But some numbers now indicate that July and even October have begun to edge out June as the most popular months to tie the knot

The June wedding tradition

may be traced back to the ancient Romans. Romans honored Juno, the goddess of marriage and childbirth, and the month of June was named after her, so it is fitting that weddings take place in her namesake month. As centuries passed, June remained a popular month to get married. June was a prime time for people to come out after a long winter and take communal baths in the fifteenth century. In addition, June weddings meant children conceived after betrothal would be born close to or during the following spring. This helped assure youngsters' survival during the rough and often lean months of winter. Spring births would not conflict with workers' demanding schedules during the autumn harvest, either. Even when weddings began shifting from pragmatic business transactions to romantic affairs, June remained popular.





Wedding veils complete bridal look

The perfect dress is on the wish list of many a bride-to-be, but no bridal ensemble is truly complete until the bride chooses her veil.

Veils have been worn by brides at their weddings for centuries. Veils can be traced back to the Middle East, where veils helped protect against the weather while also preserving the modesty of the bride. In **Ancient Greece and Ancient** Rome, veils were used as protection against evil spirits.

According to popular wedding website The Knot.com, until Vatican II, all Catholic women were required to have their heads covered in church, including during their wedding ceremonies. Veils were worn for this purpose, but they also symbolized trust in the groom and his love and companionship. Some Christians also see the veil as a visual representation of submission to the Church and to God. Others think of the veil as another beautiful accompaniment to their bridal gown, without attaching any additional meaning to the veil itself.

Veils come in various lengths and can complement the style of a wedding gown. They also tend to add glamour to brides' looks. Here are the types of

veils from shortest to longest. Blusher: Blushers cover the

face, though some extend only to mid-cheek on the bride. Flyaway: Flyaways cover just the back of the head. Shorter veils may work better on petite

Shoulder: Shoulder veils are about 20 inches in length and will hit at the bride's shoulders or just below.

Waist: Waist-length veils cascade down to the middle of the bride's waist.

Fingertip: These veils extend down 38 to 42 inches, brushing against the bride's fingertips.

Waltz/Knee: For a dramatic look, many brides may opt for waltz-length veils, which fall to the back of the knees.

Chapel/Floor: Veils that extend to the floor may be referred to as "chapel" or "floor-length" veils. Such veils cascade slightly behind the

Veils can complete brides' wedding day looks. Shorter veils may be comfortable to wear throughout the day and evening, but brides may want to consider detachable veils if they are selecting lengthier

Did you know?

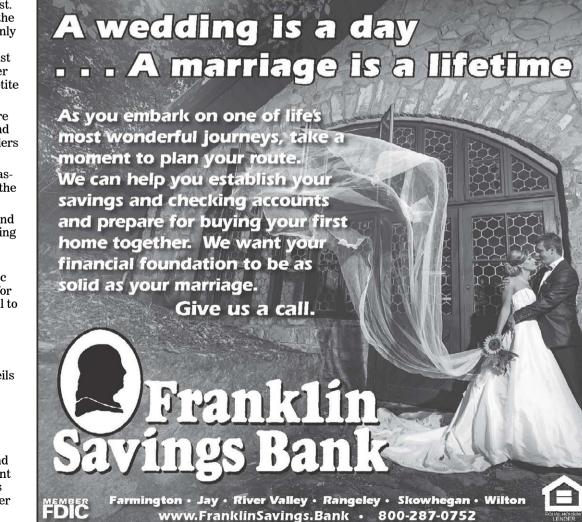
The modern bridal shower may trace its origins to the 1890s. "The Old Farmer's Almanac" says the first bridal shower hostess filled a paper parasol with small presents and turned it over the head of the bride-to-be. Soon the concept caught on, and many other women began "showering" future brides in such a manner. Naturally, as presents became larger and heavier, the tradition of literally showering the bride with gifts was modified — but the name has stuck.

Bridal showers are designed to equip couples with many of the necessities to start their new life together. This custom is believed to have evolved from an old dowry system, in which a bride was expected to bring valuables to the marriage. The dowry was originally intended as compensation for the burden of supporting



a wife placed on the groom. Some parents of the bride were not rich enough to afford an ample dowry, so friends and family members would offer small gifts to help offset this financial

Today, both the bride and groom are equal partners in the marriage, bringing together their collective wealth. However, showers are still held regardless of the financial need of the bride as a way to offer good wishes before she embarks on her



Wedding rings are symbolic gestures of commitment

Couples adhere to many traditions on their wedding days, including the exchange of wedding rings. Wedding rings symbolize the union of two people and their pledge to remain faithful to each

No one is exactly sure just when the tradition of exchanging wedding rings originated, but some say it can be traced back to ancient Egypt, when the oldest recorded exchange of wedding rings was made. Reeds growing along the Nile were twisted and braided into rings and given during betrothal ceremonies. The round ring symbolized eternity, and the hole within the center meant a gateway to things unknown. Since reeds were not very durable, soon ivory, leather and bone were used to create wedding rings.

As new lands were explored and territories expanded, traditions from one culture were adopted and modified by other cultures. The same is true with wedding rings. According to the Diamond Source, wedding rings were adopted by Romans and incorporated into Western wedding ceremonies. Romans' rings were highly decorated, and some historians believe wedding rings were given to represent ownership over brides instead of symbolizing love. These rings were made of iron and called "Anulus Pronubus," or "betrothal ring."

Rings have been simplified since those days and ultimately made of many materials. Throughout history, wedding rings were worn on various fingers and even both hands, whereas many married people in Western cultures now wear their wedding rings on the left hand and on the fourth

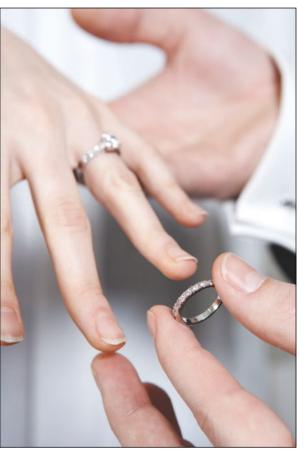
finger. Romans once believed that this finger contained a vein, called the "Vena Amoris," that ran directly to the heart. Though that is not true, the tradition has prevailed.

Other legends say that, when blessing a Christian marriage, priests would bind the marriage by saying, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," simultaneously touching the ring to the recipient's thumb, index finger and middle finger, before slipping it on the fourth finger while saying, "Amen."

Another theory on ring placement is that wedding rings are worn on the ring finger because that finger isn't used as much as the rest of the hand, ensuring delicate ring materials won't be damaged.

Ross Simmons Jewelry states that gold is still the most popular metal choice for wedding rings, but couples are opting for some other metals that are more durable. Platinum is popular not only because it is long-wearing, but it also tends to be the most expensive. It's also a dense metal and can feel heavy in hand. Tungsten carbide is another durable metal that has grown in popularity in recent years. These rings cannot be cut and resoldered, which means it's important to size the rings correctly the first time. Titanium is both lightweight and durable, and it's popular because it is hypo-allergenic, making it practical for those with allergies to other metals.

Wedding rings continue to serve as symbols of a couple's vows and union. Much like the marriage itself, they are designed to last the test of time.



_Special Supplement · Kennebec Journal · Morning Sentinel

Undergarments can make or break wedding looks

As guests' eyes are trained on couples come their wedding days, it is no surprise that both the bride and groom want to look flawless on their big days. Men and women will spend thousands of dollars on clothing, hairstyling, makeup, teeth whitening, fitness classes, and more to ensure they look their best. While couples may be particularly concerned with their wedding day appearance, what they wear under their clothing — particularly for women — can impact how clothes fit and look.

Choosing the right bra or supportive undergarments can play a crucial role in how a gown fits and whether or not brides achieve that picture-perfect look. Wearing the wrong undergarments can negatively affect a bride's appearance and make her extremely uncomfortable. According to a study done by Swiss lingerie company Triumph, a large number of women are choosing their bras incorrectly. The international survey of 10,000 women found that 64 percent of them are wearing the wrong size bras. If women are wearing the wrong undergarments for everyday looks, it stands to reason that their wedding choices may not be spot on, either.

Undergarments should be purchased and brought to all fittings as soon as a gown is selected. In fact, it often is a good idea to ask the bridal store employees to suggest a bra or corset that will complement the gown and remain invisible beneath the dress. Some shops will make bras available when trying on gowns. Brides are not obligated to purchase undergarments where they purchase their gowns, but take note of the brand and style and find a similar one elsewhere that fits with your budget if you don't want to buy at the store.

Pay attention to the gown's fabric and how dense it is. Certain shapewear, including bras, that have a lot of boning in them to shape and support the body can show under bridal dresses without a lot of layers. Always try on the bra with the gown to gauge the finished look.

You may opt for simpler and plain lingerie styles so that you will be guaranteed a seamless appearance. Nude-colored bras tend to be less noticeable than white. You always can purchase something with more pizazz to change into for the wedding night. Some dresses with plunging necklines or backless designs may necessitate other options. Sew-in bra cups are another option that can lend invisible support.

Women with more ample busts may want to select gowns that will allow for bras with supportive straps to be worn. This way there is no worry about strapless bras or other style lingerie slipping down. In addition to bras, other types of

shapewear can enhance certain areas of the body or downplay

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perceived flaws. Shapewear can

Choose boy shorts or thong-style

cuts for a seamless finish. Shapers

can smooth out bulges on the back.

legs and hips, too. There also are

special shorts that have some pad-

ding in the rear to create a more

Bras and other shapewear can

make a world of difference in how

Invest in some quality pieces that will highlight wardrobes to their

wedding attire looks and feels.

smooth and pull in stomachs.

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Rehearsal dinner how-to



Many couples find their wedding rehearsal dinners to be relaxing respites from the whirlwind of wedding planning. Such dinners enable the happy couple to slow down and enjoy themselves in a relatively casual gathering with their closest friends and family members.

Rehearsal dinners typically take place in the night or two before the wedding. The couple, members of their wedding party, the parents of the bride and groom and others involved in the wedding typically attend this dinner. The couple generally takes the time at the dinner to thank everyone for their contributions to the wedding and to offer some small gifts of appreciation. No rules govern rehearsal dinners, so couples have the freedom to plan the dinners as they see fit.

Rehearsal dinners often come immediately after the ceremony rehearsal, when the wedding party and the officiant go over the timing and details of the wedding. Make arrangements with the ceremony site and officiant prior to making dinner reservations.

Parents of the groom traditionally host the rehearsal dinner, so they will be integral in planning the event. That means couples should keep an open and gracious mind. Remember, the rehearsal dinner doesn't have to be a lavish affair, and it can be customized to any budget or

the wedding. This will help to tame nerves and enable the wedding party to loosen up and enjoy themselves even more. Some people may be more inclined to socialize and have fun when they're not worried about putting on airs. Restaurants that have special meaning to the couple often

Some couples feel that hosting

rehearsal dinners in casual set-

tings can make the dinner more

comfortable for members of the

wedding, who can use the dinner

as an opportunity to mingle and

get to know one another before

make for great places to hold rehearsal dinners. The bride

and groom can suggest their ideas, but ultimately it is the person handling the bill who has the final say. Couples who want greater control over the rehearsal dinner festivities can suggest hosting it themselves.

Despite its name, the rehearsal dinner doesn't actually have to be a dinner, as couples can opt for meals at a different time of the day, like brunch or lunch. An earlier occasion gives guests plenty of time to get home and rest up for the festivities of the wedding to come.

Toasts are expected at the rehearsal dinner, but they tend to be spontaneous, off-the-cuff remarks. A couple with a good sense of humor might not mind being roasted at their rehearsal dinners. The bride and groom should expect to say a few words of thanks to all in attendance. but remarks need not be too formal

Rehearsal dinners may even feature a little entertainment. Tech-savvy parents may put together a presentation with videos or photographs that chronicles the couple's lives separately and their life together.

Rehearsal dinners provide an opportunity for couples and their families to spend time together before the larger festivities of the wedding pull them in multiple directions. Plus, they set a fun tone for the wedding

Did you know?

Pets play important roles in their owners' lives and are increasingly included in more activities, such as vacations. dining out and even weddings. The National Association of Professional Pet Sitters says more couples are customizing their wedding celebrations and bridal parties to include pets. Dogs and cats are turning up in wedding photos as well as trips down the aisle. Some pets even serve as ring bearers. Before giving your pet a job for the wedding, consider his personality and temperament. How does the pet react around crowds? A dog or cat accustomed to a quiet



home may behave differently when placed in a room full of excited people. In addition, confirm that pets are allowed inside your ceremony space. Certain venues may not allow animals that are not service dogs. Make sure to inform guests that an animal will be present, so those with allergies can take precautions. If it isn't practical to have animals in the ceremony, give them a primary spot in wedding or engagement photos.





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