

# TOP TEN TRADITIONS TO BREAK AT YOUR WEDDING (Without Breaking the Bank)

## 1. TRADE A CAKE FOR A DESSERT BAR AT HALF THE PRICE.

When I first starting budgeting for my wedding, I was astonished at how much wedding cakes cost. Don't get me wrong, they were all creative, beautiful ideas, but at the heart of it, you're paying \$10 to give each guest one slice of cake. Expand your sweet horizons with a dessert bar. We got several types of cookies, ice cream and toppings, pies, mini cakes, fruit and fondue and more, displayed just as prettily as a cake. In the end, the wide variety still cost less than the cake. And don't worry, superstitious types – you can still have a piece of a smaller cake to go in the freezer for your one-year anniversary.

## 2. SELL YOUR DRESS BACK.

At bridal shows, the one thing that always mystified me was preservation services. Give them your dress, and they'll seal it up all pretty in a box for you to store in the attic by the Christmas decorations for years to come. I've never even seen my mother's wedding dress but in pictures, even though she still has it. Give your dress a new life after you've had your fun, and sell your dress to a consignment store, or through a site like trendsy.com. You'll get a little cash back, as well as the knowledge that your dress will make another bride's day all the more special.

## 3. FAUX FLOWERS ARE TRES CHIC.

In budgeting, right after catering is flowers. Very expensive and very fickle, flowers are still a lovely way to decorate a church, venue and the hands and lapels of your bridal party. Why not use fake? In keeping with my above comments on the preservation service, your false flowers will never grow old, brown and brittle in a box. You can also experiment with different materials. I made flowers for my bridesmaids and groomsmen out of felt and book pages, which looked great and were personal to us. You can also use your faux flowers to create your centerpieces weeks before the actual day.

## 4. LET YOUR BRIDESMAIDS BE BEAUTIFUL IN THEIR OWN WAYS.

Once you pick your colors, you'll want to pick your bridesmaids' outfits. But, if you're like me, your bridal party are all different heights, weights, skin tones, hair colors and unlikely to all look good in the exact same clothes. Give your bridesmaids and groomsmen a selection of colors or hues from your palette, and then let them shop for their perfect outfit. Have them send you pictures of what they find so you can approve, and to unify them, consider a matching accessory that you provide, like shoes, shawls or jewelry.

## 5. OFF-SEASON IS NOW IN-SEASON.

Timing is everything, and no place is that truer than when planning your wedding day. That said, choose ANY OTHER SEASON than summer. I know the concept of an outdoor summer wedding seems ideal, but there are a ton of factors that add stress to a summer wedding, like availability of venues and vendors, scheduling around guests graduations, recitals and vacations, and the added expenses of a summer honeymoon. In terms of budgeting, the simple act of picking ANY OTHER DAY than a Saturday takes dramatically reduces your bill. We picked a Friday wedding in January, and saved thousands on our venue, photographer and honeymoon.

## 6. TAKE YOUR REGISTRIES SERIOUSLY.

Don't fill it up with things you don't need, but don't put too few – you'll hate yourself for the first, and your guests will hate you for the later. A few months after we started making our registries, we came to the stunning realization that we already had most everything we needed, and if we got too much more, we wouldn't have room for us in our new home. If you are at the stage of your life where you don't need more stuff, figure out what you do need for your future. We made an online travel registry for a honeymoon trip to Florida, which we couldn't have afforded on our own. I recommend Wanderable, which you customize to allow your guests contribute to specific parts of your trip, like dinner, lodging or travel.

## 7. DESIGN YOUR OWN INVITES, OR LET MMWW DO IT FOR YOU!

The days of vellum inserts and gold embossing are done, frugal ingenuity is in. Use sites like Pinterest to look for creative and interesting designs for invites, and let your personal love story fuel the design. For my own wedding invites, my husband and I created the idea of a heist to "Steal the Date Away." We donned in black to steal a painting of our wedding day, and used the pictures from it to tell a story in our save the dates and invitations. Even if you aren't a designer, you can still save money by making postcard save the dates, forgoing expensive papers, and, of course, hiring MMWW to design them for you. Make them fun and personalized, without the expense.

## 8. WHEN YOU GOOGLE, DON'T SAY "WEDDING."

Using the word "wedding" in an internet search is like shouting, "I'm willing to spend hundreds of dollars extra for absolutely no reason!" Every single part of your wedding can be made cheaper by looking for the items you want without including the words wedding, bridal or marriage in your search phrase. "Wedding" shoes are \$150, shoes are \$50. I found my glittery shoes at JCPenney and sparkly fur shawl at Charming Charlie, all for less than \$50, which never would have happened with a "wedding" search.

## 9. "SOMETHING BORROWED" IS "SOMETHING NEW" TO YOU.

Old and new, borrowed and blue is as traditional as it gets, but borrowing from those who have gone before you is the best way both to honor them and to save money on those things you don't need after you say "I do." I wore the wedding crown from my nana's wedding and added a new veil, and a friend of a friend lent us his beautiful cream-colored Packard, as well as his chauffeur services for the day. These are small things, but they can add up, big time.

## 10. KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN.

The biggest advice I can give is to share your plans with those around you, and don't be afraid to ask for help. It can feel sometimes like to have to do everything yourself, but opening up will not only let others feel involved in your special day, but help you realize you don't have to go it alone. Create a Facebook group for your wedding party, especially if you have out-of-town bridesmaids or groomsmen, like I did. Bounce ideas off your partner and keep them involved as much as they'd like, maybe even more. Most of my ideas only came to fruition because I had the help of others.