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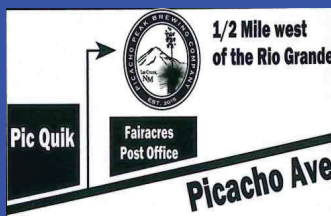
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CONTENTS

- 4 2020 Wedding Trends
- 6 Wedding and reception venues
- 8 Wine, wedding and song
- 10 Choosing an officiant
- 12 Ceremony options
- 13 Timeline for wedding planning
- 14 Engagement rings and wedding bands
- 16 Showcasing the Wedding Family
- 17 Remembering your guests
- 18 Color your wedding with meaning
- 19 Choose a gown for your body type
- 20 Personalizing your wedding
- 21 Something old, something new
- 22 How to get a marriage license
- 22 Tips for gifting wedding attendants
- 24 Don't forget thank-you notes
- 26 Steps to change your name



PHOTOS BY TAYLORD PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY



THE LAS CRUCES Bulletin		
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2020 Wedding Trends



The trend is to do what you want

By Elva K. Österreich

PHOTO BY TAYLOR'D PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

Outdoor weddings have always been a thing in New Mexico. We have such amazing and magnificent weather and venues here in the southern part of the state. But outdoor celebrations are still growing, with folks choosing to wed on ranches, at White Sands or at one of the numerous wineries of the area.

Garden parties and enchanted gardens are fun in the spring and fall. In the mountains, there are gardens in Cloudcroft and magnificent vistas visible from the Organ Mountains as the couple can walk, or meander, along to their connection.

Wedding photographer Michele Foster-Colvin, owner of Michele Foster-Colvin Fine Art Photography said everything is a trend. People feel more comfortable doing whatever they want.

"It's not so much trends anymore as anything goes," she said. "Weddings have become very individual to what the couple wants. You are seeing the

groom be more involved, the groom's personality is being injected into the wedding, it's not just what the bride wants."

Foster-Colvin said destination weddings are still a big thing, and now the destinations are taking care to take care of the couple.

"I'm seeing a lot of all-inclusive venues," she said. "They provide ceremonies and receptions, complete. Just show up with your clothes."

The ability to pull up a website and find everything you could need for a wedding seems to be becoming a trend, she said.

"It's one-stop shopping, with the venue providing an entire team," she said.

For example, Heart of the Desert, The Lodge in Cloudcroft and just about any place in Las Vegas, Nevada, will have a wedding coordinator on staff and recommended vendors on their websites.

"Pinterest has a lot of brides looking for favors

and decorations,” she said. “I’ve seen that a lot. Where brides want something fancy but don’t want to spend a lot.”

For example, Foster-Colvin shot a wedding where a couple of old doors that were open and framed with flowers welcomed the guests, and skeleton keys that were bottle openers were the favors for the guests to take home.

Another couple had their first date in a sunflower field and chose a sunflower theme for their wedding. They filled a wheelbarrow with sunflower seed packets with a sign that said “Take One and Watch Love Grow” as favors for the guests.

Some other cute Pinterest ideas include:

- Little jars with popcorn in them that say, “Thanks for Popping by!”
- Heart-shaped measuring spoons.
- Little personalized pots with cactuses/flowers in them.
- Handmade soaps.
- A pile of pails with a sign that says, “After the reception, grab a pail ...use it to take some flowers home with you.”
- Monogrammed handkerchiefs “for happy tears.”
- Mini champagne bottles.

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Wedding *and* reception Venues

Choosing a venue, considering the list

By Elva K. Österreich

PHOTO BY TAYLOR'D PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

Wedding venues are tricky, because you must take so many things under consideration. It could be a better idea to make some other decisions before picking a venue so the right one will show itself. First, decide on your budget, and don't put a down payment on a place you love before having the full picture in front of you.

Making choices about numbers of guests, theme, colors, music and time of day are all important to consider as you move forward to your wedding day. You don't want to be venue-poor when you still have many other things to come out of your budget, from a dress, to a wedding cake and so much more.

Kendra Bednorz, events coordinator at Heart of the Desert, has been working there for almost a year. The venue, located on US Highway 54/70 between Tularosa and Alamogordo, has had 15 weddings since last June.

She said most of the people who choose Heart of the Desert for their wedding have local ties. They might be from Las Cruces or Cloudcroft or have family in the area. Sometimes they come back be-

cause they served in the military and were stationed in the area and fell in love with it.

The big day itself is Bednorz's favorite part of her job, seeing it all come together.

"Don't sweat the small stuff," is her advice to couples planning their weddings. "Things will come together the way they are supposed to. Don't jump at the first [venue]. Make sure it speaks to you. You want it to be your place."

Here are some items to take into consideration as you choose a venue:

- How far away is it from the church, or can you do the whole thing there? You don't want guests to get lost or have large delays in time due to long drives.
- What are your catering options, both food and bar? Can you bring in your own caterer or does the venue have to provide the food/beverage? Often it is more expensive if you need to use the onsite caterer, but it can also be more convenient. Is alcohol permitted? Who manages that?
- What's the realistic capacity? You want your guests to be comfortable and not squashed like

sardines, yet you don't want it to be so large that it looks like a bunch of people didn't show up.

- How is the parking? You don't want people walking a mile to find a place to park.
- What's the bathroom situation? Are there enough? Is it close by?
- Is there a ready room or will you need to come completely dressed?
- Does the venue provide tables, chairs, linens? If not, this is an additional expense and delivery/set-up piece that will need to be planned for and managed.
- Are there audio/visual capabilities? You want to make sure your guests can hear you stating your nuptials and you may want to show a video.
- If you are considering an outdoor wedding, think about weather back-up plans.
- Will your colors/theme work here? If your colors are silver and purple and the venue is gold and green, they are not going to complement each other. Sometimes, a neutral backdrop is the best, so you can make it your own.

List provided by Heart of the Desert: <https://www.heartofthedesert.com/wedding-planning-steps/>.

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Wine, wedding and song

By Jess Williams

When considering a venue for a wedding, don't forget to look at southern New Mexico's many wineries.

With many sporting both indoor and outdoor event spaces, wineries offer couples and their guests unique views, service and space for capturing their special day in close proximity to nature and vineyards.

Southern New Mexico's temperate weather – particularly in the autumn months – lends itself to venues that offer both indoor and outdoor amenities.

Wineries are popular wedding venues because of the unique spaces they offer and – in many cases – the astonishing views from down in the fertile valley looking up and out to the mountains and New Mexico's signature azure skies.

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Winery owners are no strangers to special events, and they can help with everything from the event set-up to the rehearsal and reception.

Gordon Steel, owner of Rio Grande Winery south of Mesilla, said he works with about 25 couples a year to stage their weddings and receptions. He said he and his fellow winery owners take great pains to create settings that lend themselves to memorable events.

“You think about it, a winery is a place to relax and let go of what’s going on in your life for a little while,” Steel said. “When you set up a good place to enjoy a glass of wine, it makes sense that the same space would work for larger gatherings, whether it’s a wedding, a baby shower or a bridal shower. It’s a place to relax and be in nature. It’s an atmosphere no walled-in reception hall can match.”

One factor to consider when choosing the right winery for a venue is the anticipated crowd size. Some wineries can accommodate hundreds of people, while others are more constrained by space and lend themselves to more intimate ceremonies.

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Choosing *an* officiant

What to expect during your service

By Jess Williams

There are many important decisions to make when choosing an officiant for a wedding. Depending on whether the ceremony will be a lavish traditional church wedding or a simple courthouse elopement – or anything in between – the choice of the right officiant can be key.

Many officiants are church pastors who have graduated from Divinity School and have served alongside senior clergy for years to learn the nuances of the ceremonies most commonly associated with their respective faith or belief system. Many additional officiants are ordained through a far less rigorous or structured process, and many are even ordained online through organizations such as the Universal Life Church.

“For me, the officiant is of minor consequence, because the reality of marriage rests in the hearts of the

people being married. That being said, an officiant is necessary to bear witness to the vows being entered into,” said the Rev. Dr. Frank Zamora of Las Cruces, who has performed hundreds of weddings over the course of several decades in Las Cruces.

Under the law, he said, any person who can prove s/he has been ordained is empowered to officiate weddings, as are judges and sea captains.

Traditional church weddings are normally entrusted to the pastor of the church in question, and many faiths require that the couple engage in extensive counseling and reflection in the months and weeks leading up to the ceremony. Church weddings typically feature within the ceremony a healthy dose of the church’s teachings about love, marriage and devotion to the Divine.

Themed weddings and destination weddings require advance planning with the officiant to ensure

that the ceremony fits the wishes of the couple. These weddings can also incorporate religious symbolism and scripture, so choosing an officiant with the appropriate background is critical. Less formal weddings – or those where no religious content is wanted – can afford an opportunity to choose an officiant who is more “free-wheeling” and who can tailor the ceremony specifically to the couple’s wishes.

The Doña Ana County Clerk’s Office provides a list of active officiants and their contact information free of charge to couples applying for wedding licenses.

Las Vegas, Nevada, is one of a handful of counties in the United States where officiants must be registered in the Clark County Clerk’s Office at least six months prior to being able to officiate in Clark County. Couples planning destination weddings should research in advance the laws of their destination to ensure the validity of their chosen officiant, as well as full compliance with all applicable deadlines and restrictions.

Las Cruces Bulletin editor Jess Williams has been ordained through Universal Life Church since Jan. 5, 2005, and he has officiated more than 1,000 weddings.

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Ceremony options

Wine, sand or candles?

By Jess Williams

Wedding ceremonies typically center on the exchanges of vows and rings, but many couples opt for additional ceremonies to add depth and meaning to their special day. Most hobby and marriage/party stores carry the basic supplies needed for any ceremony. The three most common ceremonies are as follows.

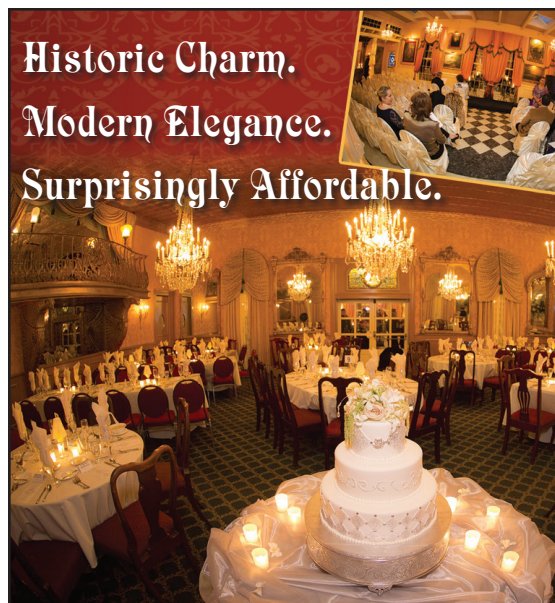
Ceremony of Wine

The couple buys a special, sealable box that will hold a bottle of good wine and love letters from



each partner to the other. During the ceremony, the couple places the bottle and their letters to one another into the box while the officiant speaks of the significance of the first anniversary and the lessons learned during the first year of marriage.

The officiant announces that the box will be re-opened on that first anniversary, and the couple will share the wine as they read their letters to one another for the very first time. When the wine is gone, they will place a new bottle and new letters into the box and seal it again to open on their second and subsequent anniversaries.



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Ceremony of Sand

The couple buys three glass vessels, two of which are small and the third of which is big enough to hold the contents of both small vessels. Into the small vessels are poured grains of sand, typically representing the two primary wedding colors. One color represents the groom's life before marriage, and the other represents the bride's.

During the ceremony, the bride and groom alternate pouring the grains of sand from their respective vessels into the larger vessel, while the officiant describes the symbolism of the grains of sand mixing and forming a new pattern that – once joined – can never be undone. The sand represents the marriage, and the couple is advised by the officiant to place the large vessel prominently in their home to remind of the love surrounding them on their wedding day.

Unity Candle Ceremony

The couple purchases three candles, two small and one large. The two small candles represent each of their lives leading up their wedding day. At the appropriate time, the bride and groom each light their candles and then – together – they light the Unity Candle that represents their new life together.

During the ceremony, the officiant describes the symbolism of the lights and flame, as well as the coming together of the flames to create a new, warm light that represents two paths – two hearts! – merging into one.

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TIMELINE FOR WEDDING PLANNING

Two years to 12 months before the wedding

- ☐ Set a date
- ☐ Determine budget and discuss
- ☐ Shop for and choose ceremony, reception locations
- ☐ Determine the need for a wedding planning professional

Twelve to nine months before the wedding

- ☐ Select wedding attendants
- ☐ Select wedding officiant
- ☐ Determine wedding colors and themes
- ☐ Shop for and choose wedding dress and accessories
- ☐ Shop for and choose bridal party clothes, accessories
- ☐ Determine guest list
- ☐ Choose professionals such as a photographer, videographer, disc jockey, caterer, musicians and florist

Six to nine months before the wedding

- ☐ Select flowers for bouquets, centerpieces, altar displays, corsages, etc.
- ☐ Reserve wedding-day transportation
- ☐ Make honeymoon travel accommodations
- ☐ Reserve accommodations for out-of-town wedding guests
- ☐ Register for wedding gifts

Four to six months before the wedding

- ☐ Select tuxedos for groom, groomsmen, fathers of bride and groom
- ☐ Select wedding cake
- ☐ Purchase rings

- ☐ Choose and order invitations and other printed material
- ☐ Advise employers, schedule vacation time accordingly

Two to four months before the wedding

- ☐ Select reception accessories
- ☐ Mail invitations two months in advance
- ☐ Purchase attendant gifts
- ☐ Write or select wedding vows and meet with officiant to review ceremony
- ☐ Make bar/beverage arrangements

One month before the wedding

- ☐ Final fittings for all attire
- ☐ Confirm all reservations
- ☐ Make appointments for massage, hair, makeup and manicure
- ☐ Obtain all legal documents and apply for marriage license

One week before the wedding

- ☐ Confirm head count with catering hall
- ☐ Begin packing for wedding day and honeymoon

Night before the wedding

- ☐ Rehearsal dinner
- ☐ Give out wedding attendant gifts
- ☐ Lay out wedding attire
- ☐ Get a good night's sleep



Engagement rings and wedding bands: the sparkle and promise of forever



By Mike Cook

Mind your C's and Q's. That's the advice long-time jeweler Keith Austin gives customers shopping for wedding bands and engagement rings.

The C's are color, clarity, cut and carat (you could add a fifth C for cost); the Q's are quality and quantity.

It's hard to imagine anyone who knows more about rings than Austin, who has been a jeweler in Las Cruces for 40 years. He opened Austin's Fine Jewelers almost 32 years ago, moving it to its present location at 230 E. Idaho Ave. in 1997. The store includes Austin's Ring Museum, which houses about 40 percent of Austin's personal collection of nearly 10,000 rings from around the world, some dating to ancient times.

Austin said many of his customers are young men shopping for engagement rings for their girlfriends. "They have no clue about jewelry," he said. So, Austin gives each one a small magnifying glass and encourages them to closely examine the rings they are interested in, paying attention to things like inclusions (natural "birthmarks"), coloring (completely colorless diamonds are rare; most have some hint of brown or yellow) and the quality of the cut.

Customers often pay more attention to a diamond's size (one carat equals 200 milligrams in weight) than any other factor, Austin said, and that's where the Q's come in, with Austin suggesting as much attention be paid to quality (back to the four

C's) as to quantity (carat weight).

Why choose a diamond for an engagement ring to begin with? It's tradition, for one thing. Copywriter Mary Frances Gerety (1916-99) came up with the slogan "A diamond is forever" for DeBeers diamond company in 1947. Diamonds are also the hardest known gemstone, Austin said, and they come in a wide range of colors. Austin himself wears a large orange diamond on his right hand.

The second hardest stone is a sapphire, Austin said, which can be the traditional blue or one of a wide range of other colors, including padparadscha, a rare pinkish orange. Rubies are actually red sapphires. All colors except blue or red are called fancy or parti-colored sapphires.

"Don't just look at the price tag," is also Austin's advice when choosing an engagement ring. The final choice should be a piece of jewelry the wearer is proud of, that wears well through the years and can be handed down as a treasured family heirloom.

Here are some other facts and anecdotes about engagement and wedding rings, collected from a number of sources:

- Stone cuts include round, princess, emerald (rectangular), cushion, marquise (curved sides, pointed tips), oval, radiant (70 facets, to increase the sparkle), pear, asscher (octagonal, with 58 facets) and heart.
- Engagement rings have existed since antiquity.



Austin said the first ones may have been made of reed grass tied around a finger (hence the expression, “tying the knot”), which then dried and hardened.

- Engagement and wedding rings are typically worn on the fourth finger of the left hand because of the long-held belief that it contains a vein (the vena amoris) that leads directly to the heart. (In truth, all fingers have similar vein structures.) Throughout history, Austin said, engagement and wedding rings have been worn on all different fingers.

- Men started wearing wedding rings in larger numbers during and after World War II, Austin said. Jewelers convinced soldiers going overseas that a wedding ring was a good way to remember the wives to whom they hopefully would be returning.
- The ring bearer’s pillow symbolizes the promise or dreams about marital bliss coming true. A small child is typically asked to carry the pillow to symbolize innocence and the future.

Blended family flourishes following showcase wedding

By Jess Williams



Kira Diaz and Seth Shaffer were about three years from starting any serious planning to get married when Kira got a phone call on Jan. 20, 2019. The caller informed her that she had won a free wedding package with all the trimmings, and the ceremony would be performed in seven days.

With about 100 people – many of whom were invited family and friends, while others were complete strangers – attending, their wedding was held at the Las Cruces Convention Center as the centerpiece of the 2019 Bridal Showcase Event.

Kira wore a traditional gown and enjoyed free hair and make-up. Seth was outfitted in a suit, and they were feted with a reception after the ceremony.

The couple honeymooned in June in Saint Louis to visit with family, and then traveled to Chicago to attend their first-ever Pokemon Go Fest. Upon returning to Las Cruces, they took their annual July hike.

By August, they began planning a new business borne from Kira's love of crafts and furniture make-overs. When it opens, it will be called "Revamp & Flourish." They're aiming for a spring opening.

Having lived together before winning the contest, Seth and Kira already considered themselves a blended family.

"We were already happily living together, so we didn't have a big move or anything, and we still live in the same house," Kira said. "The only thing about it happening so fast is sometimes we'll forget

we're married. Like, I'll introduce him as my boyfriend sometimes."

Since the wedding, Kira landed a job with Mesilla Valley Transportation, and Seth continues his work as a certified nurse aid (CNA), which he's been doing since 2012. He still has plans to become a registered nurse.

"I married into a full family, with a daughter, 12, and a son, 11," Kira said, adding that she

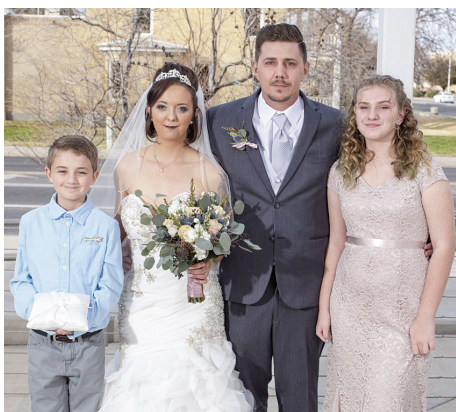
has a good co-parenting relationship with their biological mother. "I also love them as my own," she said.

Very recently, Kira and Seth learned that they're expecting, and the baby is due in September. Although neither Seth nor Kira is leaning toward a favored gender, she said that her stepdaughter, Mikhaila, is hoping for a boy, so that she can remain the only girl in the family.

Being married hasn't changed the basics of Seth and Kira's relationship. They still enjoy family activities, the occasional movie and watching YouTube videos together, as well as getting outdoors.

Las Cruces Bulletin editor Jess Williams has been officiating the Bridal Showcase weddings for the last five years.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SHAFFER FAMILY



Remembering your guests

There are alternatives to guestbooks

By Jennifer Gruger

The options for traditional guestbooks as well as “alternative guestbook” kits are plentiful. The ideas here are intended to get you thinking about ways your guests can expand beyond the traditional autograph, as well as to give you and your partner a chance to express your personalities in fun ways.

- Do you have a favorite shared hobby? Skiing or snowboarding for example? Polish up an old set of antique skis or a retired snowboard and get your names and the wedding date engraved or printed. Set it out for your guests to sign with permanent marker.
- Turn your guest-book table into a photo-booth with a Polaroid camera (you can still buy them!) Have the guests sign the photos and provide a clever display with clothespins or binder clips.
- Instead of the typical photo of the two of you with lots of white frame around it to sign – commission a local artist to do a drawing or painting or graphical rendition and use a print of that to personalize it further.
- Love hosting game night? Have each of your guests put a note on a Jenga block so you can enjoy the memories each time you play.
- If you are opting for a small intimate event with just a few very special guests, make a place card for each guest with a favorite memory or a short bit about why they are important to your union with your forever person. Complete the circle by providing an additional card for them to share back.
- If you are opting for a Christmas time event, consider an ornament-making table during the reception. There is no limit to the DIY options, but make sure each guest signs their ornament and provide a tree to hang it on. Watch as the tree grows full of love and support throughout the night. As a bonus, you’ll have holiday treasures to remember every anniversary!



PHOTO BY TAYLOR'D PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY

And don't forget your little guests! Instead of letting the bigs sign them in, provide a handprint station for the littles to leave their mark as well. Provide an appropriate surface, and then frame it later.

One last word of advice, whatever you decide to do, remember that not every guest will feel comfortable doing even the most traditional thing, so don't count on that to remember everyone who was there. Make time together to go to every table and visit with each and every guest if you can.

Tularosa resident Jennifer Gruger has been ordained through the Universal Life Church since 2005.



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- **White:** Often associated with modesty and elegance, humility and reverence, and pure beauty. White roses, gardenias, lilies, baby's breath, chrysanthemums.
- **Lavender:** Femininity, refinement and grace. Waxflower, statice (sea lavender), snapdragons, lavender matsumoto asters, lavender stock.
- **Blue:** Peace, calm and serenity. Hydrangea, delphinium, iris, larkspur, blue stock.
- **Pink:** Happiness, gentility and grace. Pink rosebuds, long-stemmed roses, camellia, carnations, blushing lilies, tulips, pink stargazer lilies.
- **Yellow:** Happiness, joyful new beginnings. Daffodils, chrysanthemums, lilies, gerbera daisies, alstroemeria, cymbidium orchids, tulips.
- **Purple:** Royalty and dignity. Violets, alstroemeria, purple carnations and tulips.
- **Orange:** Passion and confidence. Orange Asiatic lilies, gerbera daisies, carnations, rust chrysanthemums, fiery lilies, birds of paradise.
- **Green:** Nature, optimism and renewal, and can complement every other bloom. Green carnations, button-spray chrysanthemums, green viburnum, cymbidium orchids.





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Choose a gown for your body type

Bridal gowns come in many styles, materials, colors, lengths and prices. Below are some dress styles, and how they mesh with various body types. Professionals at bridal shops are experts at helping women find that perfect fit.

A-Line: A fitted bodice that flares out to the hem creating an A shape. This flatters women who are larger and want to hide their tummy.

Ball Gown: A fitted top and a full skirt. This is ideal for women who want an elegant look and may want to hide below-the-waist problem areas.

Basque Waist: The waistline begins below the waist, forming a U or V shape. It's slenderizing and a good choice for brides with wide hips.

Draped A-Line: Similar in design to the traditional A-Line, the draped version has layered folds along the skirt. It is not for women who are short or thick, but works well on thin or long-legged women.



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Empire: Cropped body, high waist, slightly flared skirt; it's generally not a good choice for brides that large-busted.

Fit and flare: An hourglass style that highlights a trim waistline. It is good for women, tall and short, who have curves and want to show them off.

Mini-Skirt: The hem is above the knee, and typically has a train, either short or long. Good choice for showing off legs.

Princess: A fitted top and a flared, vertically seamed skirt. This type is flattering for tall, slender women.

Shirtwaist: A woman's blouse or bodice styled like a tailored shirt, a blouse with buttons down the front.

Slip Dress: Also called a sheath, this style features fabric that continues down the body from the shoulders to the ankles for a close-fitting look. This is a good choice for small or informal weddings, and it looks best on tall, trim women.



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Personalizing your Wedding

By Jennifer Gruger

The first thing to do when you sit down to really begin to plan your wedding is to accept the fact that you are not going to be able to do every cool, trendy thing available in the world of weddings right now! It can really be overwhelming to consider all the available options from the ‘Save the Date’ cards and invitations to table settings to party favors. It will be tempting to pick a theme based on what is currently available on the market. While convenient, this may not leave you with the memories you are hoping for.

Ask yourselves “How do we want our wedding to reflect us?” What is important to each of you. Are there things you’ve seen at other weddings you favor? Are there family, cultural or spiritual traditions you would like to incorporate? Is there a color palette that really speaks to both of you?

Here is a short list of suggested ways to personalize your wedding:

- Is sustainability important to you? Commit to zero waste or a reduced carbon footprint by hiring vendors who also prioritize sustainability. Source locally grown food and floral arrangements.
- If you plan to gift the wedding party, pick something that will be used regularly and will always remind them of the special day. A bride

who loves butterflies might gift a simple pendant with that motif to the ladies. The groom could select a sterling silver belt buckle for the gentlemen to honor his silversmith grandfather.

- Accessorize the bride’s bouquet with a family heirloom, “something borrowed” maybe.
- Instead of investing in party favors, donate to a charity that is important to both of you. Reference this gesture in the program or create a small sign to display near the guestbook.
- Enter the ceremony to a favorite lively song that friends, and family will recognize as “you guys.” If you want to keep the entrance more traditional, do this during the final processional instead. Your guests will love to watch the two of you dancing your way down the aisle as newlyweds followed by your wedding party. Maybe even ask them to choreograph their exit! Give them the song ahead of time and let them work out the dance moves.

Remember that both of you matter. Gone are the days where the wedding day was all about the bride. Both partners spirits and personalities should be represented in every detail possible.

Tularosa resident Jennifer Gruger has been ordained through Universal Life Church since 2005.

‘Something old, something new’

bridal traditions just may be true

By Mike Cook

Can you imagine a bride planning her wedding without someone reciting the Old English rhyme, “Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue?”

Next time you hear it, remind everyone that there is actually one more line: “A sixpence in your shoe.”

It’s all about starting out married life with good luck: “something old” for continuity, “something new” to look forward to, “something borrowed” bringing good fortune from an object loaned by a happily married friend or relative and “something blue” for the fidelity represented by that color and because, when the rhyme was created, blue was believed to ward off the evil eye. The sixpence, a silver British coin, represents prosperity. (If you have a sixpence to spare, the bride should carry it in her left shoe.)

The hope and expectation of fertility and the health of the new couple’s children was also built into the rhyme, which may date to an 1871 short story, “Marriage Superstitions, and the Miseries of a Bride Elect,” in St James’ Magazine.

An Indian couple married on Christmas Day 1925 were married for almost 91 years – the longest marriage we could locate online – before the husband died in 2016. They were last reported living in Bradford, West Yorkshire, about 200 miles north-west of London, so these old English traditions may mean something after all.

Here are some good, old American wedding traditions, gathered from a host of online sources:

- Wedding invitations should be hand addressed to emphasize the importance and personal nature of the event.
- Rice is thrown at the bride and groom as they depart the wedding ceremony because it symbolizes rain, a sign of prosperity, fertility and good fortune. (By the way, people who falsely claim that the rice is bad for birds are called wedding meddlers.)
- The bride usually gets the first bite of the



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wedding cake, fed to her by the groom, while she feeds him the second piece. This symbolizes sharing and support for each other.

- The groom traditionally carries the bride over the threshold of the husband’s home because the spirit of the house was believed to reside there, and the new bride didn’t want to begin life in her new home by stepping on that spirit.
- Brides wore veils to ward off evil spirits. In the time of arranged marriages, it may also have served to keep the groom from seeing a bride he might not find appealing until after the ceremony was completed. In Victorian England, the weight, length and quality of the veil showed the bride’s status.
- A much newer wedding tradition is first-look wedding photos, which allows the bride and groom to see each other hours before the wedding so the long process of wedding photos can be taken care of beforehand.

How to get a marriage license

- Before your ceremony, go to the Doña Ana County Clerk's office, 845 N. Motel Blvd., or visit donaanacounty.org/clerk/marriage, to fill out a marriage application information form. The clerk's office is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday.
- You'll need Social Security numbers and photo identification for both parties. The fee is \$25 in cash. No cards, no checks, no exceptions.
- Both applicants must appear in person. If one party can't be there, the authorization to issue the license must be provided by a district judge.
- Once you have the license, you are cleared to perform the ceremony, have witnesses sign it and return it to the county clerk's office within 90 days of your wedding day.



Tips for gifting wedding attendants



Thanking the people closest to you for helping with your wedding is important. A gift of appreciation is both a token of appreciation and remembrance of your special day.

- **PRICE:** Consider what you've asked them to spend when deciding what's appropriate to spend on a gift. Did your maid of honor buy a plane ticket and a bridesmaid gown? If so, \$75-\$150 for her gift alone would be about right. Include this cost in your budget at the outset, so you can treat your attendants right.
- **TIMING:** Bridesmaids gifts are typically given at the rehearsal dinner, but shop for them much earlier so you are not stressed to find the perfect gift on deadline.
- **WHAT TO GIVE:** Consider personalizing gifts for each attendant instead of getting them all the same thing. The personal touch can make a difference. Aim for something useful and timeless, like personalized charm bracelets or a set of wine glasses that can be used for years to come.
- **HELPFUL TIP:** Use the "Would I want it?" test to decide if a gift is fitting. Would you like it? Would you use it? If the answer is yes, you're on the right track.

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Don't forget thank-you notes

Hand-written thank-you notes are still the warmest way to show true appreciation for people who took time to attend your wedding and bring you a gift.

- It is worth the effort to assign someone – an attendant or relative – to identify gifts and make a list of who gave what. The bride and groom will be too busy with the wedding, so be sure to delegate.
- This is an easy task to forget. Schedule a reminder on your phone or planner to jog your memory post-honeymoon. Use your invitation list to get the addresses you'll need, then mail them.
- Personalize each note, acknowledging the specific gift and how you'll use it. Each gift contributes to a fresh start on the journey of marriage, and for that, you are grateful.



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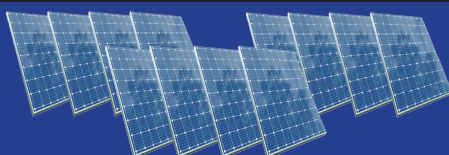
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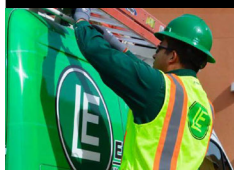
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Steps to change your name

To change your name or not? Some do, some don't, some hyphenate. If you decide to change your name, there are some important steps to take. This list will get you started.

- Visit the US Social Security Administration office, 2141 Summit Court, to fill out an application to change your name. You'll need your marriage license, proof of identity and proof of citizenship. You should receive your card within 10 business days. Alternatively, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf, fill out the form, mail it along with the documents requested to prove your identity, and your new card will arrive, along with your documents.
- Next, go to the Department of Motor Vehicles for a new license. Bring your marriage license
- and your new Social Security card. The fee is \$18 for a four-year license and \$34 for an eight-year license.
- Store up some patience and take time to list all your personal accounts, from Netflix and PayPal to your bank accounts and cell-phone providers. Follow each institution's procedure for changing a name. Often this includes mailing or faxing copies of your marriage certificate or other documents. At the bank, bring your driver's license and marriage license and get new debit cards and checks. Note: There may be fees associated with ordering new cards and checks.
- Remember to take time to update your will, power of attorney or advance directive with your new name and status.

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Advertisers' Index

PHOTOS BY TAYLOR D. PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEOGRAPHY



AAA Travel	23
Affordable Plumbing	26
Allen Theatres	23
Amador Hospitality	24
Antiques & Crafts Market	25
Barb's Flowerland	18
Charles Schwab Jackie Edwards	12
Double Eagle Restaurant	12
Doña Ana Pest Control	27
Edward Jones Larae Harguess	27
Estate Sale Discoveries	25
Hacienda de Mesilla	5
Hear on Earth	26
Insta Copy Imaging	17
La Posta de Mesilla	5
Las Cruces Convention Center	7
Las Cruces Home Builders Association	11
LE Electric Inc.	25
Le Rendez-Vous Café & French Pastry	12
Let Them Eat Cake	18
Malooly's Flooring Company	26
NMSU Conference Services	28
Pecan Grill & Brewery	23
Rio Grande Vineyard & Winery	8
Skyview Satellite	25
Sleep Lab of Las Cruces	26
Steinborn & Associates Real Estate	26
The Grapevine Plaza & Event Center	2
Thunderbird de la Mesilla	27
Uniglobe Above & Beyond	23
Yellow Bird Solar	25



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