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# Where to splurge/where to save on wedding costs

By VANESSA M. RELLES-ROSE  
Special to The Valley Wedding

If you are newly engaged, congratulations! You have a lot of decisions to make: where, when, who you will invite, how formal, and so on. If you are like most brides-to-be in this economy, your budget is front and center in your decision making. There will be some things you will want to splurge on, and you should. In turn, you can save in other areas that are less important to you. Every bride will have her priorities, whether it's the dress, the champagne, a certain venue or a fabulous cake. The following are a few suggestions on where to splurge, and where to save.

**Splurge on your photographer.** Your wedding day may feel like a blur to you. You may not even taste your food. But you will always have your photos to look back on and remind you of your special day. I have talked to a lot of brides, and without fail they all say you get what you pay for when it comes to photography. No one regrets spending more on a quality photographer. This doesn't mean choose the most expensive. It means do your research, and expect to pay a little more. Look at portfolios. Are the photos of good quality and are they in a style that you like? If you are interested in photojournalism or special photo treatments, make sure your photographer offers those, and they have examples to show you. What do they offer? If beautiful, leather-bound albums are important

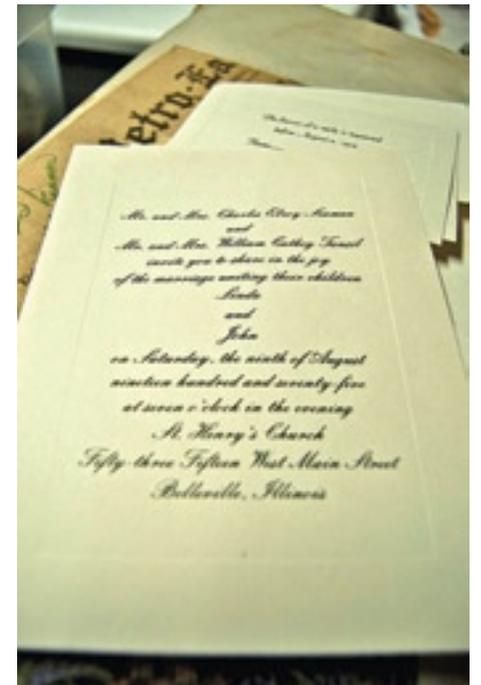


*Splurge on your bouquet, but have your florist make your bride's maids' bouquets as well, but choose a smaller, simpler, arrangement.*

to you, make sure they are included. Always get recommendations from friends and family when possible.

**Save on your videographer.** Your photos will hang throughout your home, but you will rarely watch your wedding video. Save \$1,000 on a videographer and have a friend or family member film your wedding. Or a friend of a friend who will do it in exchange for a free meal and drinks.

**Splurge on your wedding bouquet.** This doesn't mean spend a fortune on the most expensive flowers, but do go with a professional florist with a good reputation. Flowers have a huge range in price, and a good florist will create something beautiful within your budget. For example, roses are expensive, and in February they are prohibitively expensive. Locally available, seasonal flowers will be much more rea-



*Splurge on the thing or things that are most important to you: if you want great invitations, spend to buy them.*

sonably priced. A good florist will make suggestions to stretch your dollar. Everyone will look at your bouquet as you walk down the aisle, and it will appear in most of your photos as well. Have your florist make your bride's maids' bouquets as well, but choose a smaller, simpler arrangement.

**Save on table arrangements.** A florist can work within your budget to create beautiful, simple table arrangements. Or

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you can make your own if you have access to your reception venue ahead of time. Look for ideas in wedding magazines or on Web sites like [www.theknot.com](http://www.theknot.com). Vases can be rented, or purchased from stores like Michael's at reasonable prices. Tea lights are very inexpensive, and several on each table add elegance to the centerpiece.

**Splurge on your wedding dress.** Most bridal boutiques have dresses for every budget. Whatever your budget, try on a lot of dresses. If you find "the one" on your first or second try, that's wonderful, but still try on more. And try on different styles that you never thought you'd like. Everyone will be looking at you on your wedding day, and you will be photographed more than at any other time in your life. You should feel comfortable and beautiful. Take your time with this decision. Don't feel rushed. Enjoy the spotlight. Enjoy having someone dress you. Feel like a princess. You will have a lot of stresses over the course of planning your wedding; don't let this be one of them.

**Save on your accessories – your jewelry, your shoes, your hair accessories and your handbag.** Don't buy them at a bridal boutique. Borrow jewelry if possible, from your mother, grandmother, aunt, sister or friend. If you can't borrow it, go to the antique fair held every second Sunday under the freeway on 21st Street between X and W streets. They have beautiful vintage jewelry for reasonable prices that are usually negotiable. Go to Claire's in the mall for inexpensive costume jewelry and a little bag to keep your lipstick and face powder.

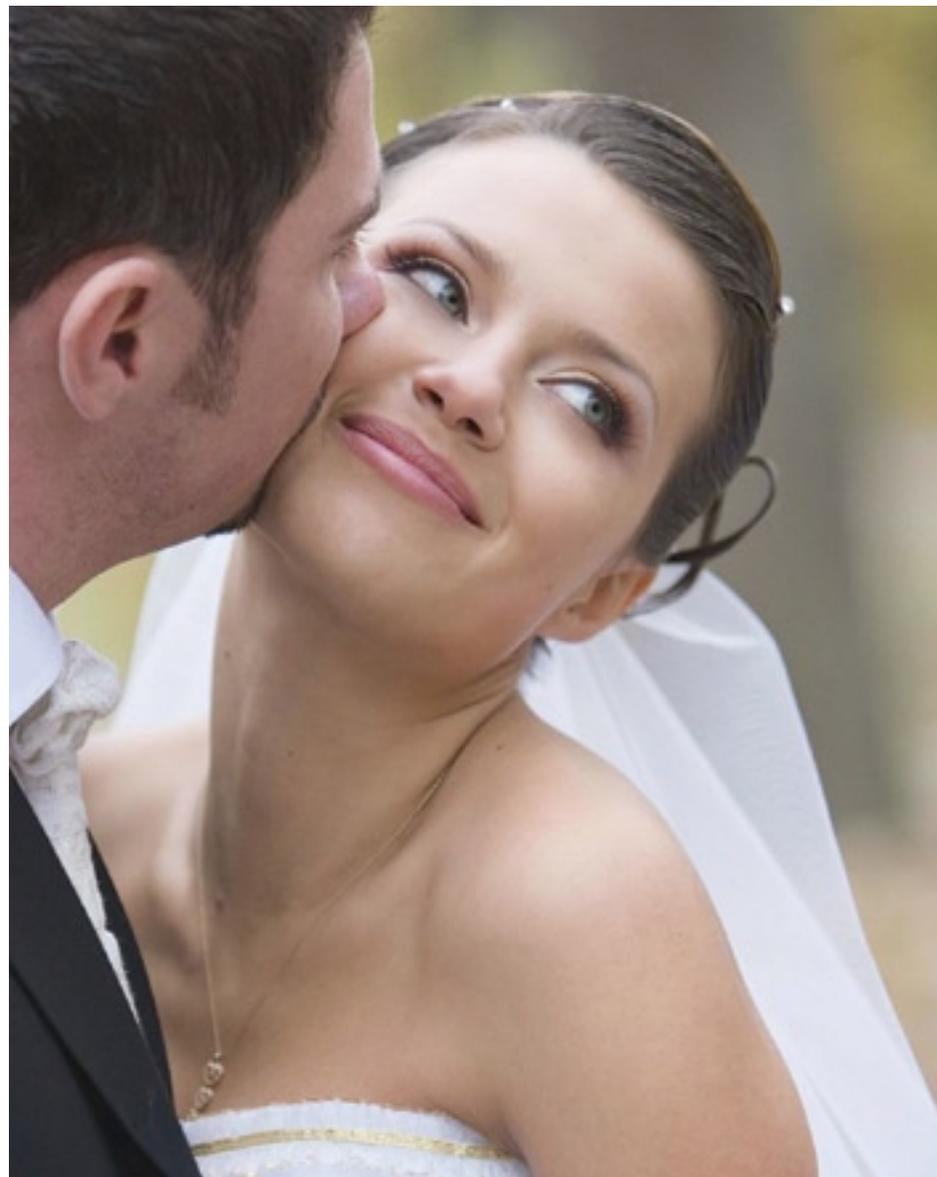
Buy your shoes on sale at Macy's, Nordstrom Rack, or any of the smaller shoe stores in the mall.

**Splurge on cake tasting!** If you don't know about this, you are in for a treat. Bakeries from low end to high end will schedule appointments for you to taste their cakes. Order an espresso drink, sit down and enjoy.

**Save at a high-end bakery by ordering a small tiered cake to be displayed at your reception and photographed.** Order a sheet cake in the same flavor to be cut behind the scenes and served to your guests in addition to the "show" cake. If a high-end bakery cake is not important to you, order a beautiful grocery store cake and save a ton.

**Splurge on the thing or things that are most important to you.** Depending on your budget, that may be one thing, or several things on a sliding scale. Save wherever possible. It may take more research on your part, but it will be well worth it. Always get recommendations from people you trust, whenever possible. Great wedding professionals will work within your budget, so keep that in mind when selecting who you will work with. If they push you to spend more than you want to, look elsewhere (with the possible exception of your photographer – see above). Most importantly, never forget the purpose of all this hard work – a celebration to mark the beginning of your new life with your fiancé.

*Vanessa M. Relles-Rose is a writer living in Sacramento. She held her wedding in Sacramento in 2003.*



*Never forget the purpose of all this hard work – a celebration to mark the beginning of your new life.*

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Something new

# Picking the perfect engagement/wedding rings

## Special to The Valley Wedding

It could be one of the most memorable moments in your life. You pull an engagement ring out of your pocket and ask the love of your life to be your wife. You desperately want her to say yes and fall in love with her ring too, right? But how do you make sure that happens? Guys who successfully navigated this step in their relationship share some tips.

### Use a fake ring

Mike Vietti wanted his fiancée's engagement ring to be a complete surprise but had no idea what she would like. So

he decided to use a fake one for his proposal and take her shopping later.

"I thought it was brilliant," said Emily Vietti. "I love surprises, but I couldn't imagine wearing something for the rest of my life I didn't love. It was the perfect solution."

### Consider her taste and style

Make sure the ring fits her existing jewelry collection, said Kevin Saghy. "I realized all of my fiancée's jewelry is very clean and simple, like one large pearl on a string or a clean trail of diamonds on a necklace, so I chose a three-

stone engagement ring that looks simple but impressive. It has gone over really well."

### Get a little help from her friends

"My wife found a drawing of the kind of ring she would like and gave it to a friend to hold – under the condition that the friend would not tell her when she gave it to me," said Andrew Brown. "She was totally surprised the day the exact ring she wanted was given to her."

### Shop together

Randy Holmes was overwhelmed by the number of options he faced when he started to shop for his fiancée's ring, so he asked her to join him. "It was great to have Lauren involved," he said. "It was romantic and took a lot of pressure off."

### Do your homework

Erik Mason did a "ton of research" on diamonds before he even set foot in a jewelry store. "I think most guys believe as long as they're familiar with the four Cs, they're all set," he said. "I was surprised to find that was only half the story you should be thinking about."

Mason spent almost five months learning about the four Cs – color, cut, clarity and carat weight – and how that translated to his budget and girlfriend's taste. He used online resources, visited retailers and flipped through fashion magazines to get a sense of what she liked.



When buying diamond rings, it is all about the four Cs – color, cut, clarity and carat weight.

"I got a great learning experience and another connection to our marriage through a spectacular piece of symbolism I truly understand inside and out," he said.

The Gemological Institute of America, the world's foremost authority on gems and jewelry and the creator of the four Cs, provides independent assessment of diamond quality in its grading reports. It is also a helpful resource to learn more about diamonds. Visit [www.gia.edu](http://www.gia.edu) or call (800) 421-7250.

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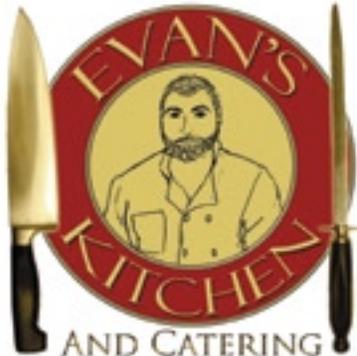
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# Something borrowed Wedding advice from friends and experts

## Special to The Valley Wedding

### Advice from friends and neighbors

Advice from those who have been through the process can be helpful to brides and grooms just starting to plan their weddings. Here is a bit of wisdom from Sacramento residents and local readers:

*Mary Puccetti* – It's OK to still do the money dance. Actually, our DJ was the one who suggested it. It's whatever people want to give.

*Jennifer Smith Naramore* – 1. Plan as far in advance as possible; 2. Research first *then* set a budget and stick to it; 3. Only pay cash; don't use credit cards or borrow money. You don't want to return from your honeymoon to a stack of bills you can't pay, because you blew it all on your wedding; Savor the day, it goes by very quickly.

### Advice from wedding pros

The average wedding these days costs \$29,334, according to The Knot Real Weddings Survey. So how can you cut costs and still have a beautiful wedding? Experts say simple things, such as swapping flowers for balloons, can quickly add up.

"Creatively displaying colorful balloons can transform a space for a fraction of what you'd spend on large floral displays," explained Charli Penn, managing editor of WeddingChannel.com. "You can also skip the elaborate bridesmaid flowers. Have maids carry a beautiful

posy instead – a small, rounded bouquet consisting of one type of flower."

Penn offers these additional tips:

### Host a family-style reception

Instead of presenting your dinner course by course, serve a communal meal. Use a fixed menu and have a large portion of each dish at every table. Comfort foods, such as mini-burgers, macaroni and cheese and pizza, are served best family style.

### Elope, then party

Throw a post-elopement bash in lieu of a traditional reception and you stand to save thousands.

Your party can follow whatever dress code or theme you'd like, and the memories can still be magical.

### Register for your honeymoon

Now that you've emptied your pockets on the wedding, how can you afford a honeymoon? Register for activities or money toward your flight or hotel with a company like Traveler's Joy or Starwood, which offer couples the chance to put a little honeymoon fun ahead of new flatware. To set up a honeymoon registry, visit [WeddingChannel.com/registry](http://WeddingChannel.com/registry).

For more tips and information, visit [www.weddingchannel.com](http://www.weddingchannel.com).

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# Choosing invitations

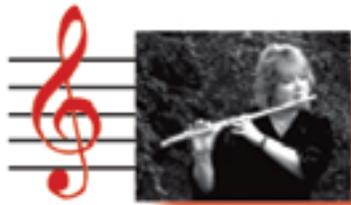
By RAHUL RUNGTA  
Special to The Valley Wedding

Your wedding invitations are the first impression your guests will have of your up and coming wedding. It is important that your wedding invitations correctly portray to your guests the style of wedding they will be attending. For example, if your wedding is going to be a formal affair, your wedding invitations should also be formal, not just in their design but the wording as well. Formal wedding invitation wording needs to adhere to the upmost of etiquette. The font style of your wedding invitations should also follow the formal style. You can achieve this by selecting from cursive-style script fonts. A formal wedding invitation should be very simple in design.

Another good example in wedding styles is the beach wedding; this gives you much more flexibility with your wedding invitation and wording. Generally a beach wedding is a casual affair, and beach wedding invitations should also be casual. Take your inspirations for your beach wedding invitations from the ocean itself and consider using images of shells or even hearts drawn in the sand.

There is a lot of thought that needs to go into your wedding invitations before you can even start shopping. Once you have decided on the style of wedding invitations you are going to have you then need to think about how much you are going to spend. Do you have a budget or are you going for luxurious handmade wedding invitations? The cost of wedding invitations can vary greatly from one or two dollars each to over twenty dollars each. Now when you consider how many you are going to need, that can really add up. Think how many guests are you inviting and how many of them can go on one invitation? Usually there is no need to send each individual person a wedding invitation you will only need one per family or household. In addition to the cost of the wedding invitations themselves there is also the postage. Keep in mind if you do not choose a standard size invitation, your postage may require more than one stamp.

Once you know the style of wedding invitations you want, your budget, and the amount of invitations you are going to need, you are ready to start shopping. If you have plenty of time before your wedding, you will have more time to shop for your wedding invitations. Buying your wedding invitations online can save you a fortune. Many online companies charge less than half the price of their bricks and mortar competitors and often have a more innovative approach to design. Shopping for your wedding invitations online also allows you to cast your net wide and look at wedding invitation designs from all over the world. Using the Internet can save you a lot of time and frustration to as you don't have to be concerned about logistics and parking. You can order a variety of wedding invitation and stationery samples without even leaving home and have them delivered direct to your door. Then when you have chosen your favorite wedding invitations all you have to do is place the order from your computer then sit back and relax while all the work is done for you.



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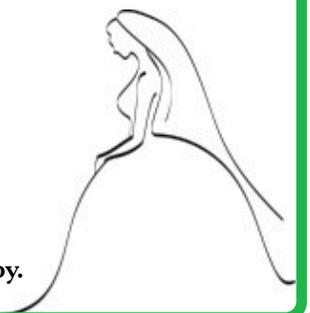
*And pamper your friends! Do something different. Invite a massage therapist to the bridal shower; both the bride & guests will enjoy a relaxing, thirty minute massage to complement all the fun activities of this special day.*

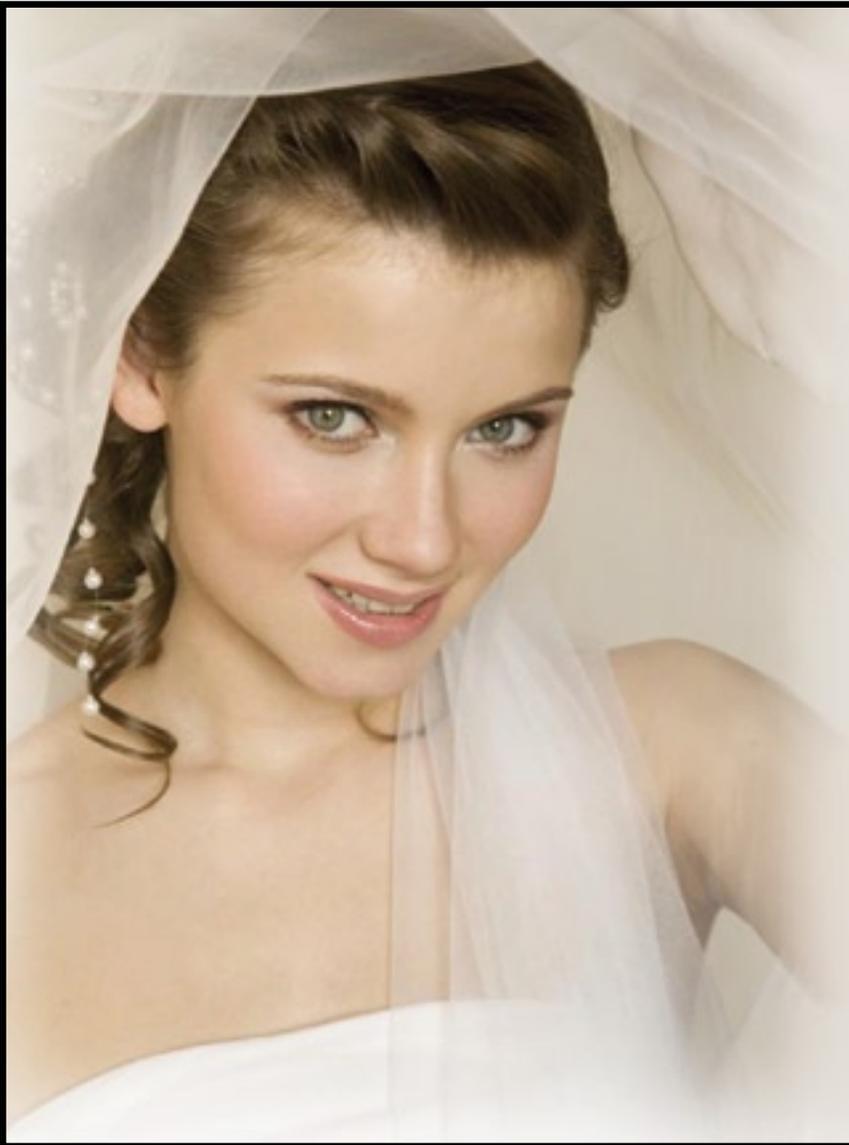
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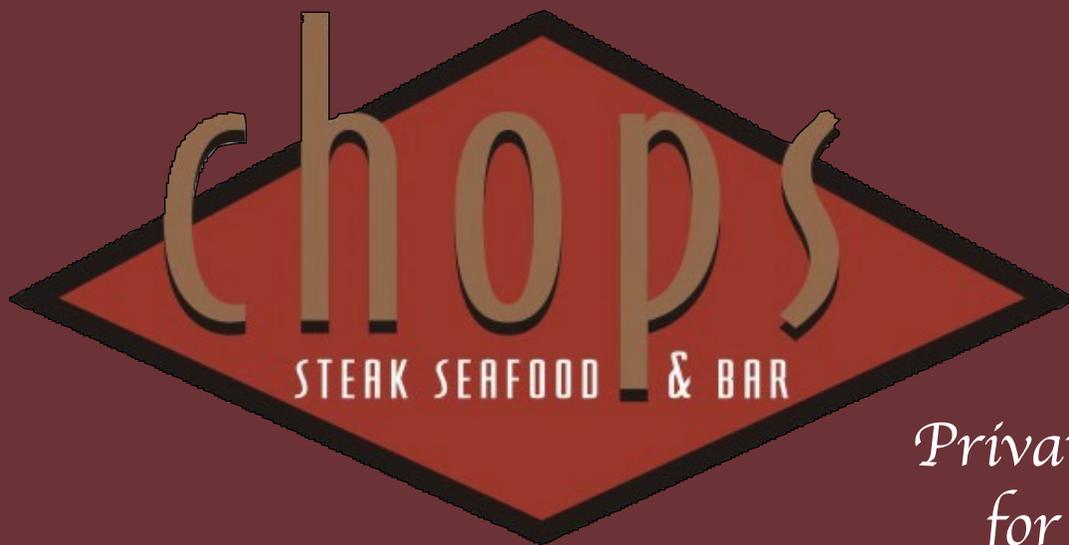
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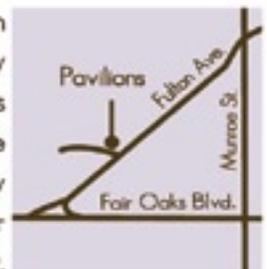


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