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Dressing for the day: Wedding gowns and their importance

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A wedding is a solemn occasion. It is also a special event by which two willing hearts and minds unite by an eternal bond of everlasting love. Hence, the apparel of the bride and the groom should be thoughtfully chosen to reflect the significance of the grand occasion. The wedding dress of the bride comes in bright, auspicious colors styled uniquely in conformance with the ceremonial importance as determined by the culture and religion, which sanctifies the marriage.

Features of wedding dress

Wedding dresses come in various colors, forms and styles corresponding to the many cultures and fashions from which they hail. Wedding dresses are characterized by their exquisite grace and charm. Though the term wedding dress usually refers to the bridal gown worn by Western/European brides, all the various kinds of dresses worn by brides worldwide come within the ambit of wedding dress.

Wedding dresses vary with regions, customs, cultures and religions. The Asian, the Indian, the Middle East, the African, the Mediterranean and the American - all have their respective typical wedding dress codes. Whatever may be the type of wedding dress of the bride - a bridal gown, a sari, a kimono, a Salwar Kamiz with wedding veil, it is created to spell elegance and hold the audience and especially the bridegroom spellbound. Wedding dresses are secured from the highly skilled artisans who use the best fabrics and the most intricate embellishments - elaborate patterns and designs to create the choicest dresses of the respective culture. The exquisite wedding dresses thus made serve as a reflection of the culture concerned too.

Considerations in selecting appropriate wedding dress

In weddings, the appearance of the bride and the groom is of prime importance. The wedding dress or the bridal attire requires special mention in this regard since the bride is the cynosure of all eyes at the wedding and therefore her attire commands utmost attention. The wedding dress should be selected with due care with respect to the following considerations:

1. Checking bridal magazines to get a better idea of what fashions are in vogue.
 2. Seeking opinions from select friends on the dress selection and trying to view choices made from their perspective. Also, take those friends with you when you try dresses on.
 3. Thinking over the kind of party to be hosted and the prevailing mood - formal or casual.
- Also, don't forget to use your creativity and maybe create your own custom wedding dress, spark up the wedding, and get all the attention you deserve!

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Top 5 topics to talk about before saying 'I Do'

By STEVE DEBENEDETTI-EMANUEL
Valley Wedding Family Columnist
steve@rivercitycounseling.com

If this is the year that you're finally going to put a ring on her finger, you'll get about five minutes to enjoy your new status before you need to start making seemingly infinite decisions about your wedding. As important and all consuming as this process can be, it's also crucial to set aside time to examine issues you'll face after you say, "I do."

Start by examining how well you communicate and solve problems. If she comes from a family where the arguments were loud, started with the morning coffee and continued all day long, while your family solved problems by ignoring them and hoping they went away on their own, you'll have some work to do. Commit to finding a style in which each of you feels heard and respected and solutions are agreed upon. Once you find this balance (which is different for each couple,) you'll have a foundation established to discuss five crucial issues.

Physical intimacy is a good place to start. Although most couples are sexually active before getting married, it's important to anticipate that your sexual relationship will change. It's crucial to discuss issues like frequency and who initiates romantic contact. It's also important to explore your attitudes on monogamy. Do you expect it from the other, and how would you respond if you learned that your spouse had cheated? Would divorce be an option? It's also important to discuss birth control: do you use it, what method do you utilize and who is responsible for it?

This leads naturally into a discussion of whether or not you want children. And if so, how many do you have? If you do have children, you'll need to explore philosophies on childrearing. Are you of the "spare the rod and spoil the child camp," while she doesn't think it's ever OK to spank a child? Do you think nightly family dinners are important, while she thinks that people should eat when they're hungry and where they're comfortable? Do you want to point your child towards a college education, while he thinks children should be able to figure it out without pressure or expectations? Do you think children should have one parent stay at home, while he thinks both of you need to be working to support your lifestyle?

This leads to a conversation about money. Begin by examining your attitudes around saving and debt. Do you believe in living within your means, saving as much as possible for retirement, while he is comfortable living from paycheck to paycheck, not worrying much about debt and planning for the future? Do you want to purchase a house? Who will make the big decisions on investing, and who will be responsible for paying the bills and managing the day-to-day budget?

As tedious as it may be, it's also important to discuss household duties. This is a sticking point for many couples, as one spouse (typically the man) expects to live in a house similar to that of his childhood. That is, his mom did much of the childrearing and housework, while his father "brought home the bacon" (and maybe did the yard work on weekends.) Times have changed and most of the women I've talked to aren't OK with this traditional set-up. They need their spouse to pull his weight both inside and outside the home. With this in mind, it's crucial to discuss this and develop a blueprint for who's going to do what.

Finally, it is important to consider if religion and spirituality are going to be a part of your relationship. If so, will you go to church every week, or only on holidays? If your spouse doesn't go to church regularly, are you comfortable going alone? Or do you need him to reconsider? If you have children, how important is it to attend church regularly and as a family? Also, do you plan to pray at home?

Granted, these conversations are going to be long and challenging. However, it's crucial to talk about these and other difficult issues before your big day. If you're comfortable with your decisions, you'll be able to walk down the aisle with your eyes wide open, knowing that you've developed the skills to talk through the difficult issues that you'll face for the rest of your married life.

Steve DeBenedetti-Emanuel is a licensed marriage and family therapist based in the Sacramento area. Steve's columns appear periodically in the Valley Community Newspapers. Ask Steve your questions – e-mail him at steve@rivercitycounseling.com.



Photo courtesy

A bride can wear her own mother's antique jewelry or some other gem that has been handed down to brides in the family.

Bridal jewelry: Fulfilling a wedding tradition

Special to The Valley Wedding

"Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue." This is a saying that many brides take to heart when considering their wedding trousseau. From wedding gowns, accessories and motifs, brides from all walks of life throughout the years have tried their best to stick to this formula. It's interesting to note that bridal jewelry can follow this adage, too.

"**Something old**" could most often be a piece of bridal jewelry that is a family heirloom. Sometimes the groom would give to his bride a ring or another piece of jewelry that had once been owned by his mother, grandmother, or past brides in his family. Maybe the bride would wear her own mother's antique jewelry or some other gem that has been handed down to brides in the family from generation to generation. One thing is certain, wearing such bridal jewelry would reinforce a sense of family, tradition and continuity in a wedding ceremony.

"**Something new**" hardly needs any explanation. Thousands upon thousands of bridal jewelry stores, both the Internet e-commerce sites and bricks-and-mortar stores, offer a dazzling array of accessories to make the bride shine on her wedding day. The would-be bride can choose from among various jewelry pieces one or several items that she would wear at the ceremony and which she could treasure and keep as a memento of that most special day.

At first thought, "**something borrowed**" doesn't seem applicable to bridal jewelry. After all, a bride would most probably want to wear her own jewels and not have to borrow and then return them. But for women who want to add to the accessories that they will be wearing on their wedding day without having to spend thousands of dollars more to buy new ones, renting jewelry offers a practical solution. Many establishments rent out antique or estate bridal jewelry, including necklaces, bracelets, and earrings, and only the rental fee plus a refundable deposit need to be paid. And of course, family jewelry (items from a grandmother or aunt, for example) is always an option.

Finally, for that "**something blue**" in a bridal jewelry ensemble, there are several gemstones that fit the bill. Depending on the shade of blue that she wants, a bride can opt for a necklace, bracelet, or earrings that are accented with sapphires, aquamarines or blue pearls. Hair ornaments or tiaras with other blue-tinted stones such as agate and topaz are also beautiful accessories for the bride.

The bride is the belle of the ball on her wedding day and it is important for her to look her best on that special occasion. Bridal jewelry, chosen tastefully and worn properly, will complement her wedding dress and make her look as radiant and as beautiful as any bride should be.

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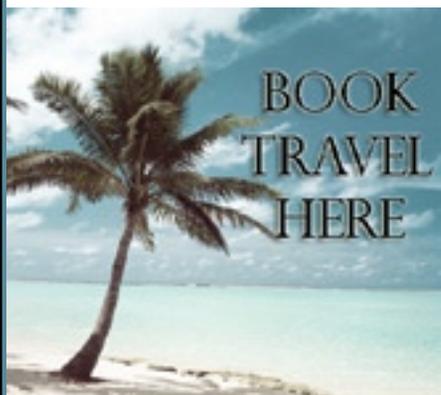
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Shots you'll want

Don't miss these classic wedding photographs

By BRANDI SIDLEY

Sacramento-area photographer
Special to The Valley Wedding

Most brides spend more than a year planning their wedding, carefully choosing every detail. Then, the big day comes and goes and it all seems like a blur. Food is eaten, flowers wilt and memories start to fade. Luckily, photographs last forever. But what if your photographer doesn't get a shot of the cake? What if there are no pictures of your favorite aunt from Spain and you're not sure when you're going to see her again? That is why creating a shot list with your photographer is so important.

As a professional wedding photographer, I meet with all of my clients well before their wedding day to find out what is most important to them and to learn about their friends and family before I create the shot list for the day. Now that wedding photographers do not have to limit their shots to the rolls of film in their bag, they can be more creative and shoot many, many more images. But are they the images that you want? The following are shots that you don't want your photographer to miss.

Family. Weddings are often a rare opportunity to capture an entire family together, especially if family has traveled from far away. While many guests may prefer to just make their way to the reception, when the photographs are delivered, everyone will be glad they took the time to pose for the classic family group photograph. There are a couple of ways that you can make the family group photograph process go smoothly and quickly.

Carefully consider the list. Will you really want an individual photograph with each aunt and uncle or will one photograph with all of your aunts and uncles be just as good? Keep in mind that each group portrait takes two to five minutes to set up and photograph.

Give your family members advance notice. Before the wedding, let your family know that you would like to include them in the formal photographs and tell them exactly where to be and when to be there.

Have an assistant. Ask a good friend or family member that knows most of your guests be in charge of rounding up family members. If everyone is ready to go, each image will take approximately two minutes to set up and photograph. If a search party needs to be sent out to find Uncle Fred at the bar, each photograph takes much longer.

“Now that wedding photographers do not have to limit their shots to the rolls of film in their bag, they can be more creative and shoot many, many more images...”

Special moments. Almost every moment is special on your wedding day and you want to make sure that your photographers capture them all.

Of course they will capture the kiss, the cake cutting and the first dance. But, will they capture the way your groom looks at you when he sees you for the first time? Will they capture your dad's tears as you hug your mom right before the ceremony? Will they capture the ring bearer and flower girl whispering to each other in the corner? Ask them.

When you interview photographers, find out what strategies they use to make sure that they capture every special moment. At a minimum, make sure that there are at least two photographers that will be working most of the day. It is also important to get to know your photographers and that your photographers get to know you and your family. Ask if they will attend the rehearsal. The rehearsal is a great opportunity for your photographers to learn exactly what will happen when and make a plan.

Details. You have spent hours upon hours making countless decisions about floral arrangements, favors, attendants' gifts, dinner menus, the list goes on, and on, and on. Everyone will advise you that the day goes by in a blur and though you will hope that it doesn't, it will. And so, the details; make sure your photographer captures the details.

When interviewing photographers ask about what kind of detail shots they will capture. Ask to see examples. Is there a good variety? Are the detail shots creative but not too trendy? Do you like the style of the images?



Photo courtesy Brandi Sidley Studios Photography

As a professional wedding photographer, I meet with all of my clients well before their wedding day to find out what is most important to them.

After you have hired a photographer, make sure to let them know about any special details you want captured. Most photographers will capture the traditional details such as the cake, the flowers and the place settings. However, most brides include many other special details in their day. Are you wearing your grandmother's wedding ring on your right hand? Let your photographer know. Are you carrying your favorite uncle's handkerchief in with your bouquet? Don't forget to tell your photographer.

Bride and Groom. This seems obvious. Of course your photographer will capture you and your groom. However, portraits of the bride and groom together are traditionally captured after the ceremony and after the formal family portraits. More often than not, at this point in the day, most brides and grooms are ready to make their way to the reception and don't want to spend a lot of time with the photographer.

There are a few solutions to this problem. Some couples are now choosing to see each other before the wedding to allow for extra time for photography. If you decide to see each other before the ceremony, it can be a very special time for just the two of you. In fact, you may not get another moment for just the two of you until the day is over.

In Australia, the wedding ceremony and reception are held hours apart to allow more time for photography. If this seems like a possibility for your wedding, you could choose to plan a cocktail reception for your guests between the ceremony and reception or offer a list of suggested sights to see during that time.

Another new trend in wedding photography is the after shoot, which gives you and your groom the opportunity to be photographed at your leisure. You can choose to wear your wedding attire or go more casual. You can even have your after shoot at a different location than your wedding such as a beach or vineyard.



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Taking the best photos possible

Techniques for posing for wedding photographs

By **BRANDI SIDLEY**

Sacramento-area photographer
Special to The Valley Wedding

You spent seven Saturdays at the boutique choosing the perfect dress, you had three rounds of fittings getting the perfect fit on the perfect dress and you were at the salon for four hours of beauty treatments ensuring the perfect look. It is your wedding day and you are beautiful. You feel beautiful; you look beautiful. Now, the photographer is on the way and you have butterflies in your stomach – it's not the wedding – it's the cameras that make you nervous.

As a professional wedding photographer I've seen it many times, brides are often more nervous about having their picture taken than they are about getting married. There is no need to worry; there are many techniques you can use to help you look your best in your wedding photos (or any other photos for that matter). Whether you are short or tall, thin or not, posture and posing is crucial to getting the magnificent photos of you that you deserve.

Position yourself. The right body position can shave off 10 pounds or more, the wrong body position – let's not even think about that. Try this, stand in front of a mirror with your hips and shoulders square and your arms against your body. Notice the width of your body. Now, put your weight on your right foot and move your left foot in front of your right foot. Your hips are instantly thinner. Turn your left shoulder towards the mirror and tilt

it down slightly. Your upper body is instantly thinner. Finally, bring your arms away from your body a bit and tilt forward at your hip flexors (be careful not to bend over – lean).

Look up. Not with your chin, though, with your eyes. To avoid the double chin, people often lift their chin and crane their neck – not a good look. Instead, bring your chin out and down, just a bit. Ideally, you should be looking slightly up at the camera.

Get back. Standing behind your man (or your mom, or a gate, or a door) helps you in a couple of ways. First, the further you are from the lens, the smaller you look. Second, you can hide some of your body behind him (or her, or it), effectively making you look smaller. So snuggle under his arm, put your weight on your back foot, bring your other foot forward, separate your arm from your body, lean forward, chin out and down, look up a bit – great, click...one more, click. Got it!

Hire a professional. Are you taking notes, creating a mnemonic or making a crib sheet so you don't forget all of these tips on your wedding day? Instead, hire a professional wedding photographer. While a beautiful pose is a great start, flattering lighting and the appropriate focal length, aperture and exposure are also key elements in making gorgeous photographs. When you hire a well-trained professional wedding photographer you are in good hands so that you can accomplish the final technique...**relax and have fun.**



Photo courtesy Brandi Sidley Studios Photography
To avoid the double chin, people often lift their chin and crane their neck – not a good look. Instead, bring your chin out and down, just a bit.

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Choosing the right wedding cake

Special to The Valley Wedding

No matter how well planned and intentioned, there are few brides who don't have second thoughts about something they have selected for their special day. The wedding cake is no different especially when there are so many styles available. Some of the easier questions are; should it be round or square? White or ivory? Sponge, fruit, chocolate, carrot or even lemon cake filling. Or can we have a different filling on each layer?

Having either seen something in a magazine or on a Web site, some brides have a clear idea of the cake they'd like. In many respects, they're the lucky ones; for most brides, picking a cake involves a lot of head scratching, deep thought and in some cases sleepless nights.

We know how important it is to get it right. This is why a bride should make appointments, such as with local baker Ettore's (call 916-482-0708), and enjoy a day of cake tasting.

Choosing the right filling

How the cake tastes is arguably what it's all about. There can be nothing more disappointing than to have guests complain to the wedding party that "the cake was too dry" or "too anything." Understanding that it's not only the design that's to be superb the cake must taste delicious too.

With a wide selection of fillings available you can choose from fruit, chocolate, sponge, lemon, toffee and carrot (not suitable for all cake designs) and many more. Many are now moving away



Photo courtesy
A bride should make appointments and enjoy a day of cake tasting.

from the tradition of fruit cake with most are finding that sponge and chocolate are the favorites and are seldom left with much to take home.

Choosing the right design

There are so many designs available it can be quite mind blowing to try and select the right one first time. Not all our contemporary designs are as far removed from tradition. There are a number of neat square, round and petal contemporary cakes decorated in anything from sea holly to sugar calla lilies. All our designs are easily tweaked to accommodate the theme of the wedding.

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Photo courtesy Nebi

Sometimes there can be members of the family or close friends who are not able to attend due to various reasons, and wedding speeches do good to honor those missing.

Understanding the role of wedding speeches

Special to The Valley Wedding

All wedding receptions have three main speech scenes. First of all, there is the speech given by the father of the bride. After the father of the bride, it is the turn of the bridegroom (and the bride, if desired) to give a speech of thanks. Lastly, it is the turn of the best man (and/or the maid of honor).

Father of the bride's speech

The best man usually calls upon the father of the bride in order to propose a toast to the bride and the groom. However, it is normal for the relatives and close friends of the recently married couple to say a few words on behalf of the bride. After this, the father of the bride will show his appreciation of the bride and bridegroom in his own words. All this is followed by a toast offered to the couple.

Bridegroom's speech

The typical bridegroom's speech can be used as an opportunity to thank their parents for all the years of love and care while they were growing up and their continued support later on in life. You should also thank them for all their blessings that you have received concluding with their blessing your wedding.

Sometimes there can be members of the family or close friends who are not able to attend due to various reasons. Remember these people and wish them a fast recovery. Also, remember those who are unable to attend due to less severe reasons. It is not necessary to exclude the common attendees. Thank everyone for their help on this very important day on which the love and support of all those around you is vital.

Also, don't forget to thank your parents-in-law, as they are the ones who gave birth and raised your wonderful wife to be. Otherwise, there won't be her.

Of course, the bride can share this time with the groom if she so desires. Offering thanks to one's guests is a sincere gesture that can be conducted by the couple together. Simply provide for an organized speech so as to avoid awkward pauses or too much passing of the microphone.

Best man's speech

There is a good probability that by the time the father of the bride and the bridegroom are done with their speeches, the atmosphere will be heavy with all kinds of sentiments. Then the best man arrives to lighten the mood or finish off the speeches with a tender story.

It has almost become an expected outcome that the best man's speech will be full of humor and stories from the past. It doesn't matter if a lot of people already know of the things you are speaking. Sharing them through words on this occasion makes a big difference to the overall tone.

After all, with all the customary thanks already been said by the father of the bride, and the groom, this speech should be an end to be remembered by having doses of humor and reflection of your time with the groom.

However, what is funny to you might be embarrassing to the groom and his family. Try not to use intimate details in your toast. It might just land the groom in hot soup on his wedding day.

The same rules apply to a maid of honor speech. Often, the two go hand-in-hand, with the two speeches following one another.

Final words

Speeches often offer the bride and groom fond memories when they look back on their wedding day – the words live on like a message of love locked in a bottle.

A wedding bouquet to compliment your dress

Special to The Valley Wedding

Every bride-to-be dreams of the perfect wedding, they want the perfect gown and the perfect wedding bouquet. It is wedding etiquette for the bride to walk down the aisle with a fabulous wedding bouquet.

Choosing the bouquet takes time, you want it to be perfect. There is not just one type of bouquet – each one is unique. Choosing the right flowers to make your wedding bouquet is critical to your wedding.

Choosing flowers that match the wedding dress is a time honored tradition. Colors that are variations of white such as cream and ivory are chosen more than any other. The bride can then choose the colors of the bridesmaids' dresses to bring the wedding party together.

You can also add bright bold colors such as roses or carnations to your wedding bouquet to make it incredible.

If you have a favorite flower or a flower that has sentimental value, you can add these to your bouquet as accents. There are literally thousands of types of flowers that you can use for your wedding bouquet.

A wedding symbolizes the love the two people pledge to each other for the rest of their lives. Everything about the wedding has a symbol – even the wedding bouquet.

Different types of flowers have a specific meaning. You can sort of mix and match the flowers in your bouquet to make it perfect. A bouquet of gardenias is an elegant choice for a wedding bouquet; surround them with carnations and roses, and you will have a wedding bouquet that is incredible. The meaning of all these flowers is love, fidelity and joy.

Lilies are available in an assortment of bright and vibrant colors; their meaning is truth and honor. When lilies are added to the wedding bouquet, it can be spectacular.

When it comes to weddings, there is a lot of planning involved. Some couples choose to use a wedding planner because they know what all of the traditions are. They know that members of the wedding party will have flowers and the bridesmaids will also have bouquets. The bridesmaid bouquets are not as spectacular as the brides, but they will be just as beautiful. The groom usually has a flower in his lapel that matches the bride's wedding bouquet.

Choosing a florist can be time consuming if you do not use a wedding planner, ask your friends and family if they know a reputable florist it is important to keep your budget in mind, as wedding flowers make up a large part of your wedding budget. Trust a local professional, like Relles Florist. Call them at (916)441-1478 or (916) 920-4911 to learn about your options.

There are a few things you need to take into consideration when before you hire a florist.

Making wedding bouquets is a specialty. Ask the florist if they have experience. You can also ask the florist to see work that they have previously done. Most will take photos of their best work and also keep letters of praise from former clients.

Ask where the bouquets are made, and if there are any additional charges. Ask to see pictures of current styles of wedding bouquets; you will be amazed at the choices.

There are many decisions to make when you are planning the perfect wedding. When you are meeting with the florist, it is important that you bring a picture of the gown and also if you have a swatch of the material. From there, the florist will create the perfect bouquet.

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Top four great wedding favors to make your wedding memorable and gifts unforgettable

By AARON HU
Special to The Valley Wedding

Wedding favors are very important while planning your marriage. They are a part of the bridal tradition, and make the matrimony memorable for the guests. There are many types of wedding favors, and you can select any kind of favor that you fancy. Generally it is a good idea giving a favor that the guests can use. Here are some types of favors that you can consider for your marriage:

Camera favors

You can use disposable cameras as wedding favors. There was a time when disposable cameras were the talk of the town, and used at every marriage or social event. These single-use cameras are low cost, and available in both digital and film modes. Some cameras also come with flash.

Candy favors

These are very famous favors, and you can get different types of candies to be used as favors. You can add a touch of uniqueness by wrapping the candy in personalized wrapping paper. You can turn these common favors into unique wedding favors, by beautifully decorating and personalizing them. A very famous candy is the 1-inch square shaped chocolate candy. You can also order bubble gum candy favors, with a gumball as the base, and bride and groom made from icing on the ball. You can wrap

this bubble gum candy in personalized wrappers to make really cute and adorably unique wedding favors.

Hand made favors

You can also go the "Do it yourself" way by making your own favors. Though, this is a good idea only if you are expecting a small number of guests at your marriage. For a large number of guests, it is always better to order readymade wedding favors. If you are making your own favors, go for the favors that match your nuptial theme. While making hand made favors, make sure you add some personal touch to them, like adding the names of bride and groom, and the marriage date.

Other favors

You can select any favor idea from these ideas for unique wedding favors. A unique idea for favors is giving a pack of flower seeds to each guest. This symbolizes the beginning of a new life for the wedded couple. These seeds can be planted by the guests in their yards, or flowerpots, and thus can remember your wedding for a very long time. You can pick from many types of flower seeds. It is best to select the seeds of the flowers that match the color of your marriage, to give it a more personalized touch.

There are some other favors that are not so unique but highly popular at weddings. Candles are used at many marriages. There are many types of candles that you can use



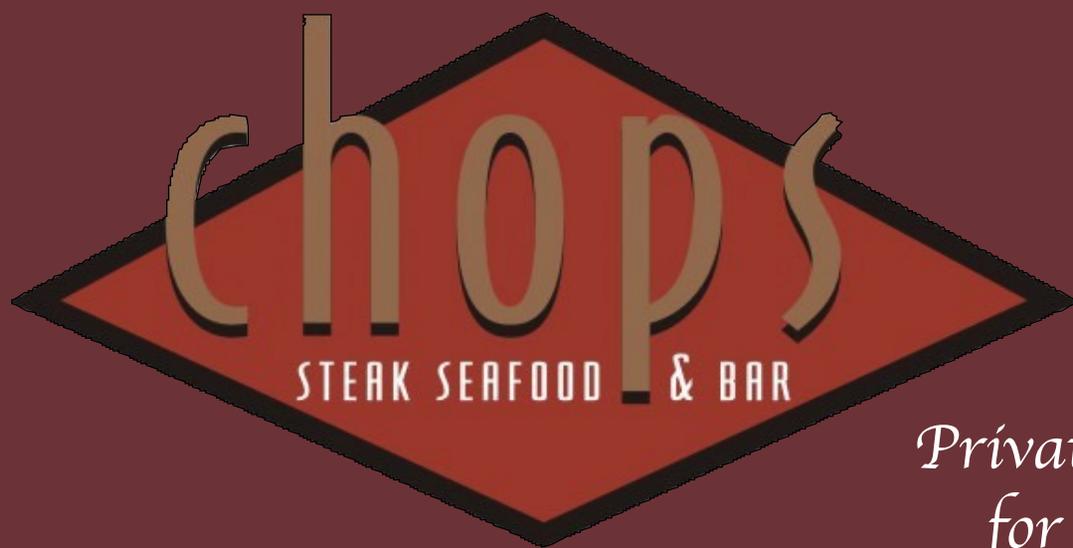
Generally, it is a good idea giving a favor that the guests can use or something they will enjoy greatly – like candy.

as wedding favors. Some popular candle types are: decorative candles, floating candles, scented candles, etc. These make excellent gift ideas.

You can also give more traditional favors like key rings and pens at weddings. Make sure you inscribe the marriage

details on them, like the names of bride and groom, and the nuptial date etc.

These favors will surely spice up your marriage. You can select any unique wedding favor from the suggestions given above, or you can think outside the box and create your own ideas for wedding favors.



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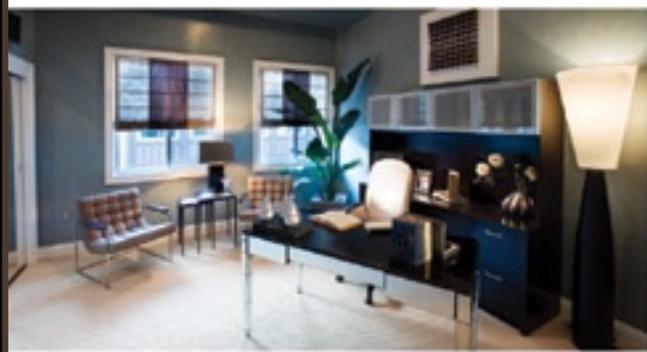




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