



Mary Bikker's tips and trends on extravagant weddings made affordable

1. The couple should know what their budget is from beginning – the wedding planners are able to work with their budget from the start, recommending ideas and a program that is realistic for the couple's budget.
2. Provide an RSVP date and stick to it to avoid paying for people who do not turn up to the wedding.
3. Great food should not and cannot be compromised. Presentation is key – speak to the chef about presentation options, and they can work with you to provide a fresh or elegant set up.
4. Incorporate a non-alcoholic "welcome drink." It is popular to serve a fresh awa di lamunchi or coconut water, particularly in the Caribbean. Reserve the champagne for the toast only or use a high quality sparkling wine.
5. Flowers – go for a clean, cut flower with lots of green. Flowers can be very expensive whereas greenery is not. You can have nicely sized flower arrangements with this set up, and a touch of color can be very elegant.
6. Simplify the trellis with a billowing light material which looks great on the beach. There does not need to be a lot of flowers in the trellis.
7. Include simple, elegant and large scale decorations as opposed to intricate, smaller decorations. This is a trick to fill a big space, for example attach ribbons to balloons to make garlands for the ceiling.
8. Take advantage of the dress code for beach weddings. Guests don't have to spend money on wedding attire, for example bridesmaids can wear matching sun dresses.
9. Tailor your menus – if there are a lot of children or non drinkers, then select a pay per drink consumption rate instead of having an open bar.
10. Buy inexpensive yet extravagant ideas for the gift bag and baskets – sun umbrellas, slippers for guests to wear on the beach, refreshing after sun lotions and fans.

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