FEBRUARY 2014

Wedding GUIDE



Our special supplement is full of information, ideas, and resources designed to help you plan the perfect wedding.

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE WINCHESTER PRESS

Tee-off your nuptials at the Metcalfe Golf club

METCALFE

What better backdrop to have than picturesque greenery, and a 400-year-old oak tree bending its way toward the sun?

At the Metcalfe Golf Club, general manager Rob Howell said it is the all-inclusive options that have brides and grooms flocking to the 1956 8th Line Rd. facility.

"The ceremony, photos, dinners, and reception, we can handle all of those arrangements," he said. "We can even host the rehearsal dinner. It is relatively affordable in terms of venue, and we can package things, with some related fees, but have mostly everything needed included."

More and more couples are shying away from traditional church weddings and that bodes well for the Metcalfe club, which hosts an average of five weddings per season.

The club's 60 person main dining room gives way to an adjacent 80 person sitting area shaded by the centuries old tree. Or couples can make use of a tent, which overlooks the nine-hole course's first tee-off area, that holds up to 120 people.

Howell and his staff can also arrange an officiant to solemnize the nuptials, and can complete all decorating required prior to the ceremony and reception. A large selection of linens in various colours (green, burgundy, blue, royal blue, and white) is also available.

Table settings include glasses, silverware, plates, coffee cups and saucers, glass flower vases, and LED candles.



Newlyweds can also have their post-ceremony pictures taken on site, with various locations available for the perfect shots.

"We do our best to keep the weddings separated from the golfers, and work with various companies to ensure the right photographer, disc jockey, and officiant are chosen," Howell said.

As well, a wide variety of food choices are featured, with Tony Skaf, a master chef who has worked previously at a variety of Ottawa restaurants and who has 30 years of culinary experience, and his staff preparing items fresh for each event.

"If you've got in your mind the Chateau Laurier, this is not the place for you," Howell said. "But if you're looking for a laid back setting with great food and affordable prices, look at the Metcalfe Golf Club."

For more information, visit www.metcalfegolf.com.

Left: *For outdoor ceremonies, the archway is placed in front of the club's 400-year-old oak tree, which stands as a landmark on the facility's property.*

Below: *The big white tent, which seats 120 people, is one of many items available to couples planning to be married at the Metcalfe Golf Club.*





Featured on our cover

Pictured on our cover are Jill Kirkwood and Jamie Steiner, who were married on August 24, 2013 at the home of Jill's parents, Lynn and Todd Kirkwood. The photo was taken by Heather Cooke Erwin Photography.



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Juliannah's offers brides the 'right' dress and fit

MOOSE CREEK

Small weddings, big weddings, church weddings, destination weddings… whatever the size, theme, style, or venue, Juliannah's Dress and Bridal the Bridal Emporium of Eastern Ontario is the place to find the perfect gown for the once-in-a-lifetime event.

"Every woman should be made to feel beautiful," owner Vivian Théoret said. "We are one-on-one with brides; we explain everything. We have so many of the most amazing lines out there, coupled with great customer service, [and] that together is a success."

Currently, the huge sellers in the Moose Creek Mall shop include Essense of Australia, Justin Alexander and Sincerity Bridal, among others.

"The [Essense of Australia] dress will sell itself just because it fits so well," Mélanie Charbonneau, Théoret's daughter-in-law and co-worker, said. As for the gown in the Eddy K poster mounted on the shop's wall, it is so popular that it briefly sold out of stock.

While the majority of today's brides appear to be purchasing lace fit and flair backless-style gowns with beads, crystals, or pearls attached, there are those who come in looking for something unique. Recently, Charbonneau had a customer looking for a specific '50s-style dress. The bride-to-be had gone to store after store looking for this vision to no avail. Finally, it was at Juliannah's, where Charbonneau suggested looking through various catalogues, that the young woman found her treasure. Measurements were taken, the dress was ordered, and the bridal emporium had fulfilled its mandate of finding that perfect gown.

More often than not, however, brides will come in with one idea of what they want, but leave with something entirely different.

Attendants begin by pulling the dress or dresses that fit the bride's request, then add those they feel will suit the customer best.

"Don't go with what you thought you would like, go with your gut," Charbonneau advises clients.

Théoret's dress emporium, which offers a bilingual service, carries dresses in sizes from 00 to 34. As well, there is an assortment of colourful options for bridesmaids, flower girls, and mothers of the bride or groom.



Dresses with beads, crystals, pearls, and open backs are in high demand. This dress, with its full skirt, makes for a thinner-looking waist.



Vivian Théoret of Juliannah's Dress and Bridal the Bridal Emporium of Eastern Ontario posed with two of the Moose Creek Mall shop's popular bridal gowns.

Press Photos – Casselman

Juliannah's Dress and Bridal, which recently underwent an expansion, is bigger than ever, with more change rooms, more space for browsing and trying on gowns, and more variety. Prom dresses, in various styles and colours, have been added to the store's inventory.

"These young ladies for prom are very important," Théoret said. "They are our future brides."

It is the customer service and hands-on care, coupled with guaranteed quality that will turn prom clients into bridal clients, and all clients into the best form of advertising possible, Théoret said.

Juliannah's long-time seamstress, Zoe Dovas, and Arja Eastland, the woman who ensures all dresses are steamed, pressed, and ready-to-go for the big day, are the pair who ensure Théoret's guarantee of quality.

"[Dovas] is extraordinarily gifted," Théoret said. "She is old school; she doesn't take short cuts."

All gowns, even those hanging on the "sale" racks are 100 per cent quality, she added. "Every [dress] will be on a bride [so] all are treated with great respect."

With the store's recent expansion, Dovas has taken the leap to entrepreneurship, opening Zoe's Alterations in a mall unit connected to the bridal shop.

While Dovas is now independent, Théoret promises that Juliannah's clients take priority for Dovas.

The many changes taking place at Juliannah's Dress and Bridal have come just in time for the store's 10-year anniversary, which is to be celebrated this fall.



Through recent expansion, Juliannah's selection of prom dresses has found room to grow.

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Wearing hand-me-down wedding gowns

Brides-to-be devote plenty of time to thinking about their wedding gowns, and some women spend months scouring stores for their ideal designs. But what if the perfect gown is already tucked away in a family member's closet?

Some brides view a hand-me-down gown with a degree of skepticism. After all, people may poke fun at dresses passed on by well-meaning friends and family that feature styling that is out-of-date (think 1980s shoulder pads). However, in most cases, dresses can be altered and turned into something that fits the new bride's style and physique.

When considering a vintage or hand-me-down gown, there are certain questions brides-to-be should ask before agreeing to wear the dress.

• **What is the size?** It's much easier to take fabric away from a gown than to match it and add fabric to the gown. Therefore, try on the gown and see if alterations will be possible. Do not plan on crash dieting to fit in the gown. You may not reach your goal, and then you may be stuck with an ill-fitting dress.

• **What is the condition?** Many dry cleaners offer wedding gown preservation packages, and brides have been taking advantage of this service. The gown is cleaned and boxed so it will not discolour. If you are receiving a gown that has undergone this treatment, there is a greater likelihood it will look much like it did when it was first worn. However, some former brides do not store their gowns properly, and they may be stained, torn or discoloured. While it is possible to do some cleaning, you may not end up with a gown that meets your approval.

• **Is the shape flattering?** If a gown has good "bones" to it, there's a chance that a talented tailor can turn it into something that will enhance your frame and body type. If the gown is of a style that you never would have considered, such as a mermaid cut or princess style, then it may be much more difficult and costly to transform it into something workable.

• **Are you settling?** Every bride wants to feel romantic in her wedding gown, which is why shopping for a gown is often akin to searching for lost treasure. If the hand-me-down gown doesn't give you goose bumps when you put it on and you're settling simply because of the price, then it may put a damper on your entire wedding.

• **What's your budget?** Even though hand-me-down wedding dresses may be free initially, they may need costly alterations. Get an estimate from a seamstress and find out if it will be financially smart to go with the used gown or purchase something new.

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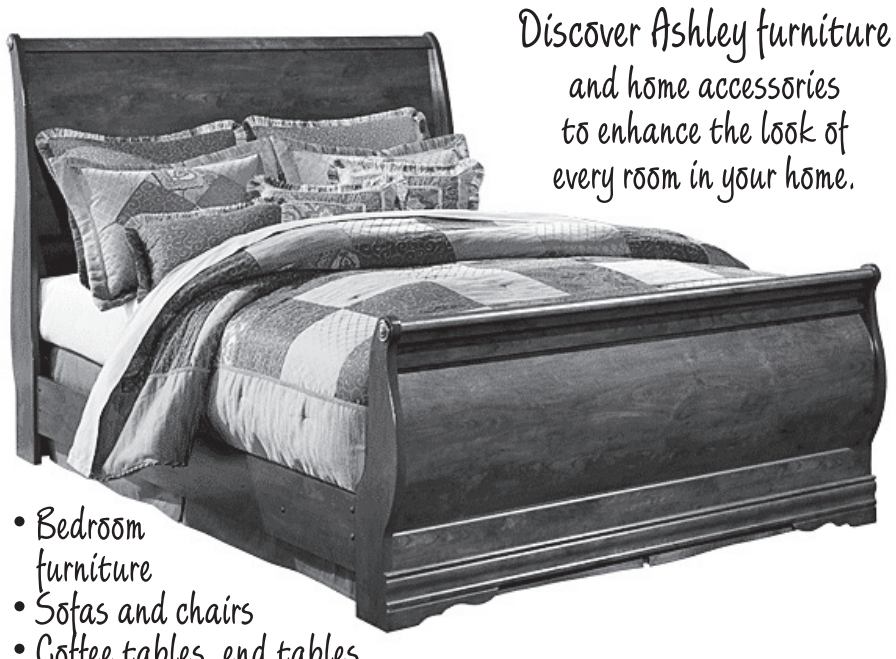

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Ottawa firm restores century-old wedding dress

Editor's note: This article, written by Jenn Jefferys, was originally published on the Browns Cleaners website (www.brownscleaners.ca). Outside of correcting spelling and grammar, a portion of the submission has been reprinted in its original format. – M.U.

by Jenn Jefferys

OTTAWA

What reverberates in a family for generations after a marriage are often the keepsakes held onto and stored away, coupled with stories relayed onto children, grandchildren, or even great-grandchildren.

Such was the case for Montreal-resident Jennifer Reoch's great-great-grandmother, Marjory Stuart McLean of Dundas County, when she married Robert Wilson Reoch of Glasgow, Scotland. This entrancing, century-old photograph (at right) of the young couple, was captured on their wedding day at the home of McLean's uncle in Carleton County Sept. 4, 1901.

Not long ago, McLean's great-grandson, Robert Reoch, and his wife, Murielle, were tragically struck by a flood in their Winchester home, and many of their treasured possessions were consequently lost or damaged. Reoch was one of the inheritants of his great-grandmother's Victorian gown, which he was heartbroken to learn had been damaged as a result of this flood, and in need of serious repair.

When Browns Restoration Services were called to help address the flood damage to the home, workers found the 113-year-old wedding dress. Browns Bridal Services quickly took over, and was able to breathe new life into the gown.

As a result, the dress was on display at the Wedding Palace Bridal Show held at the Ottawa Convention Centre in January.

Jennifer modelled the historical gown, which meant so much to her family, since it was entirely restored and fitted for her to wear in memory of her great-great-grandmother's special day. This unique piece is said to have been handmade by McLean's sister, Mary Margaret, as she was a dressmaker by trade.







Above: *Jennifer Reoch, great-great-granddaughter of McLean, modelled the restored dress during the Wedding Palace Bridal Show in Ottawa in January.*

Above, centre: *Marjory Stuart McLean is pictured here with her husband, Robert Wilson Reoch, on their wedding day Sept. 4, 1901. The century-old dress worn by McLean was recently restored after it had been damaged in a flood.*

Left: *Winchester resident Muriel Reoch (middle) is pictured here with sister Lorraine (left) and granddaughter Jennifer during the bridal show last month.*

Photos courtesy Brown Cleaners

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Save-the-date card etiquette

Many couples find that tradition reigns supreme when planning a wedding. Certain traditions, such as fathers walking their daughters down the aisle and grooms sharing a dance with their mothers at the reception, are moments to cherish. Though such traditions have withstood the test of time, couples still have some opportunities to embrace relatively recent traditions.

One such recent tradition is the save-the-date card, a precursor to wedding invitations that simply let guests know when the wedding is so they can clear their calendars and be there on a couple's big day. While save-the-date cards are best kept simple, there are a few rules couples should follow.

• **Finalize the guest list before sending save-the-date cards.** Couples must finalize their guest lists before sending their save-the-date cards. Doing so avoids the potentially messy situation that would no doubt arise if a person were to receive a save-the-date card, but then not make the final guest list. Trimming the guest list often comes down to finances, so couples also want to agree on their budget before sending out their save-the-date cards. Once the guest list has been finalized, couples can send out their save-the-date cards as soon as possible.

• **Confirm addresses.** Couples should confirm their guests' addresses before mailing any save-the-date cards. This can be easily accomplished by sending mass emails to friends and family members or contacting individuals via private messages sent on social media sites. Postage to send save-the-date cards can be costly, especially for couples with large guest lists. Confirming addresses can save couples money on potentially wasted postage should the cards be returned because they were sent to the wrong address. In addition, confirming addresses ensures everyone gets their cards and no one feels left out.

• **Keep things appropriate.** Save-the-date cards need not be as formal as wedding invitations, but they should still be appropriate. Guests often keep save-the-date cards on their refrigerators, where people of all ages can see the cards. So while cards can be light-hearted, they should still be family-friendly. For example, photos of the bride- and groom-to-be decked out in swimsuits should be avoided.

• **Don't overdo it with information.** Save-the-date cards don't need to include as much information as the more formal invitations, which tend to include information about the ceremony, reception, hotel, directions, and other relevant wedding details. A save-the-date card only needs to include the date of the wedding, including the year so guests are not confused if the cards are going out well in advance of the wedding day. Couples can include a link to their wedding website on the backs of their cards, which makes it easier for guests to learn more details about the wedding.

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MOOSE CREEK

Ottawa, Montreal, Kingston, Brockville, Northern Ontario… brides travel to Alliance Bridal in Moose Creek from far and wide to find the perfect dress for the big day.

"You have to make them feel comfortable and you want to make them feel beautiful," store manager Val Lemieux-Sauvé said. "That is the number one thing. That is our job."

Consultants focus on each bride individually, giving them one-on-one attention, as each bride has a complete vision of what their wedding day should look like, as well as their own unique set of needs.

"There is no pressure here," consultant Tania Gill said. "We will work with her budget."

When it comes to style, as well as price, Alliance has dresses from one end of the spectrum to the other with more than 800 gowns in stock, and social media has made finding that dress much easier.

In addition to the store's website, Lemieux-Sauvé has added a Facebook page, which has been gaining in popularity throughout the past year. Instead of searching through magazines, brides can now keep up on the newest arrivals to the Moose Creek store, as pictures are posted upon arrival.

When a bride comes in with a picture she has pulled from Alliance's Facebook page, Gill said she knows she can produce that exact gown for the client.

More often than not, however, the average bride will leave with a gown that is the opposite of what she came in looking to purchase. It is the gown that fits the bride best that gets chosen in the end, rather than the one that caught her eye in the bridal magazine.

Right now, the majority of brides are looking for a vintage feel, Gill said, with an emphasis on lace coupled with a resurgence of interest in the off-white, champagne, or blush-coloured wedding gown. In addition, brides are leaning toward the traditional ball gown or the fit and flare, mermaid-style.

There are those brides, however, who tend to stray from what is currently trending. In fact, there are more same-sex couples shopping at the store with some brides choosing gowns and others choosing pantsuits, like the ivory pantsuit from Alfred Angelo.



Straps are beginning to make a comeback, and many brides are choosing to "dress up" their gowns with beaded sashes and accessories.



Tania Gill (left) and Val Lemieux-Sauvé are just two of the many professional consultants ready to help today's bride find exactly what she is looking for in bridal attire. They are pictured here with a blush wedding gown.

Press Photos – Casselman

It is Lemieux-Sauvé and her mother, store owner Ginette Lemieux, who are responsible for the inventory. While they consult the store's attendants to get as much feedback as possible, it is the mother-daughter duo that make the final selection of what dresses make their unique lineup of wedding day fashion.

"That is really fun [to] see firsthand all the new collections that are coming in," Lemieux-Sauvé said.

One of the store's most popular dresses right now is the Mori Lee S108, which Lemieux-Sauvé said is very simple, but brides are dressing it up and making it their own by adding their choice of accessories, such as belts or sashes. For brides, Alliance carries such lines as Maggie Sottero, Sottero and Midgley, Allure Bridals, Mikaella, and several more, as well as Julietta Collection, Calista Bridal, Bonny Unforgettable, and Allure Women for those brides with curves. Sizes range from petite to plus size.

Meanwhile, it is not just brides who make the trek to the elegant clothing store at the corner of McLean Road and Highway 138, but bridesmaids, flower girls, mothers of the bride and groom, and even prom-goers who find just what they need at the Moose Creek location.

"We have the biggest inventory for prom dresses with sizes from 0 to 30," Lemieux-Sauvé said.

Like the bridal section, the prom section also has its own Facebook page (glitzandglamourprom) with pictures of the latest fashions posted, and to ensure that teens attending the same high school do not show up in the same dress, Alliance Bridal maintains a registry.

Making things easier for the client is the priority. With five seamstresses on site, as well as steaming and pressing services, the bride does not need to go anywhere else. In addition, Alliance also offers a series of undergarments, bathing suits, and cruise wear.

"It is a one-stop shop," Lemieux-Sauvé said.



While Alliance Bridal carries a wide range of bridesmaids dresses in various colours and styles, it is the pale, soft, vintage-style colours that are trending right now.

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Left: *David Théoret said this season's groom is choosing grey for their tuxedo.*
Above: *A tuxedo can be distinguished from a suit by the addition of satin in the design.*



Above: *Richard Men's Wear also carries tuxedos for toddler-sized ring bearers.* *Press Photos – Casselman*

Convenience and style – the name of the game at Richard's

MOOSE CREEK

While the majority of people in attendance are generally looking at the bride as she makes her way down the aisle, it is the groom, dressed sharply in a perfectly tailored tuxedo from Richard Men's Wear, who has the bride's undivided attention.

With a large selection of suits and tuxedos for purchase or rental, Richard Théoret's Moose Creek Mall store makes shopping for groom and groomsmen a breeze.

Currently, the most popular choice for many men is the all-inclusive rental package from Freeman Formalwear. It has everything the client needs, except socks and underwear, nephew and co-worker David Théoret joked. Also, with the rental of five tuxedos, the sixth one is free.

Measurements are taken on the spot, and done well, as the Théorets take pride in their work, David said. In fact, more often than not pants can be measured and professionally tailored the same day they are purchased, taking only 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

"We sell a lot of pants because of that," David said.

While black remains the first choice for most customers, it is the varying shades of grey that are making impressions this season with grooms ordering ties and vests in one of a number of pastel colours to accompany the new trend. And another item on today's popular list… the bowtie.

Although Richard Men's Wear can service clients on a "last-minute" shopping excursion, grooms and their attendants are encouraged to reserve their choices roughly three months before the big day. Those that do can save $30 on the price of their rental.

In addition, David said he prefers to meet with the bride and groom first, ensuring that it is the couple's opinion that takes precedence in choosing the end product. To make matters even simpler, the bilingual shop also takes long-distance orders for those groomsmen who may be out-of-province and unable to travel to Moose Creek, as measurements can be taken at any Freeman's location.

On the less formal front, Richard Men's Wear also offers customers an assortment of items for destination weddings, including linen suits, pants, and cruise wear. However, if formal and away is what the client is looking for then rentals are also available for such destination affairs.

Richard Men's Wear also carries a line of casual men's wear, hats, and accessories, and the Moose Creek Mall features a shoe store, a bridal shop, and women's casual wear.

"It is one-stop shopping at the mall," David said, pointing out that many grooms make their way to his store, as their counterparts visit Juliannah's Dress and Bridal down the hallway.



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Your engagement photo session

Tips for 'engaging' photos that reflect your personalities

Newly engaged couples choose to capture the occasion in photos that they can cherish. Often, one of these photos is used as an announcement to family and friends and might even be published in the newspaper.

Engagement photos may be part of a package negotiated with the photographer who will be covering the wedding day. Some couples enlist the help of a friend or a budding photographer to capture an engagement shot. The average cost of engagement photos can range from $200 to $500. Some couples opt to use a photographer who might specialize in other areas (i.e. fashion models) but may want to break into the wedding biz because of how lucrative it can be. Costs may be negotiated as a result.

When shopping around for a photographer, there are certain things couples should keep in mind. The first and most important is selecting a photographer you can relate to. If you don't feel a connection with the photographer, he or she will have trouble coaxing the shots that will produce the best results. He or she should also be a professional and have some experience working with posing couples. This way the photos don't look stiff or contrived. Here are some other tips that can lead to great photos.

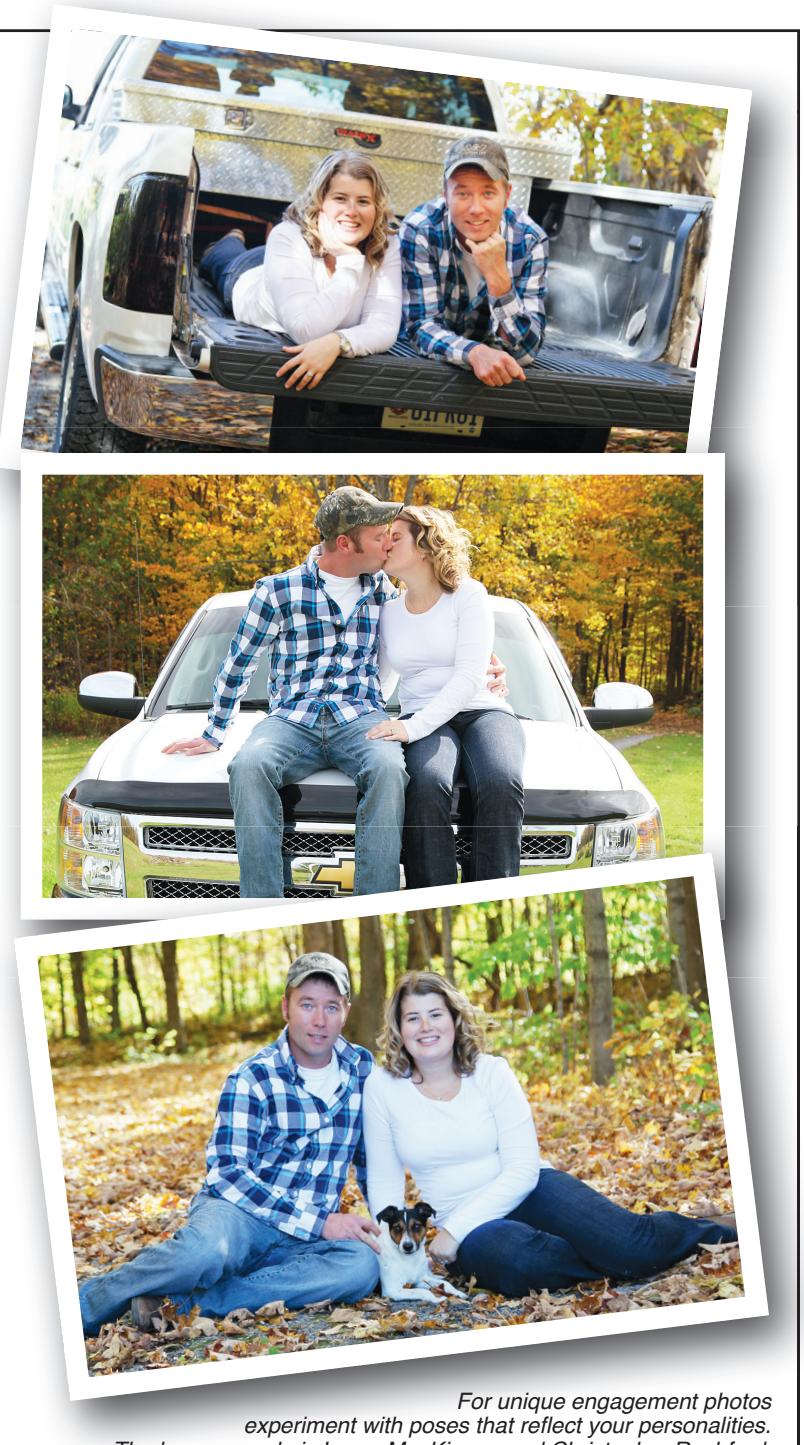
• **Find a photographer who fits your style.** If you're a quirky couple, go with a quirky photographer. If you're reserved and a follow-the-book type of couple, then select a more traditional photographer. Some photographers out there forget that this is your moment and want to impart their idea of what you want. Make sure he or she takes your ideas into consideration.

• **Select one who is open to different shoot locations and brainstorming.** Some of the best photos occur in natural settings, where things aren't entirely planned. If a photographer simply works out of a studio, you may want to select one who has more free reign with different locales.

• **Choose your location wisely.** Certain locations will stand out in your minds because they are visually stunning or are special places where you have spent moments as a couple. By choosing a place that offers a personal connection, there's a good chance you'll appreciate the photos in the long run. Also, be open to the fact that unplanned stops may offer a great background for the image. Be open to the unexpected.

• **Try random poses and some candid shots.** Although you might have a vision of the perfect photo in your mind, experimenting with different ideas can sometimes lead to a great photo you really love. Expect to take your share of kissing, nose-touching and portrait shots. But some fun poses, such as running or jumping (or rolling around on a beach full of waves) can produce candid shots that are truly masterpieces. Remember, sometimes photographers will pose you in positions that seem a bit awkward, but this is to get the best lines of the body and flattering images.

• **Choose clothing that fits the mood.** If time and budget allows, have several different wardrobe changes so that you can see which outfits work and which ones don't. A formal outfit, comfortable street clothes, something beachy or clothing that fits with your interests (such as polo or baseball) can make for interesting engagement photos. Avoid clothing that is too trendy or busy, which may take away from the actual images in the long run. Plus, you don't want to look back at these photos in the future and say, "What was I thinking?" Avoid matchy-matchy, though. If you are dressed alike, you may appear to be trying too hard. It's the individual personalities you want to shine through.



For unique engagement photos experiment with poses that reflect your personalities. The happy couple is Laura MacKinnon and Christopher Rushford. Photos by Lindsay McIntosh-Mainville of LM Photography.

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Engagements



Munro - Drapeau

Mr. and Mrs. Carl Munro of Chesterville are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter Erin Ashley, to Maxime Joseph Guy, son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Drapeau, of Ottawa.
Marriage to take place on Saturday, September 6, 2014 at Strathmere Garden House in North Gower.



McGann - D'Souza

Dan and Greta McGann are pleased to announce the upcoming marriage of their daughter Kristine McGann to Sujay D'Souza, son of Rodney and Blossom D'Souza on May 17, 2014, at Our Lady of the Visitation Church in Ottawa. A reception at the adjacent hall will follow.

How to calm last-minute jitters

Brides- and grooms-to-be are often nervous when the day they will tie the knot finally arrives. The realization that months and months of planning and anticipation are finally about to come to a head often inspires some jitters in the days leading up to the wedding.

The following are a few ways couples can calm those nerves in the hours leading up to the moment they have devoted so much time and effort to planning since becoming engaged.

• **Get a good night's rest.** Couples should prioritize a good night's sleep the night before they are set to walk down the aisle. Make your last night as an unmarried couple an early night so you will look your best and have plenty of energy on your big day, which will no doubt start early and end late. A good night's sleep can go a long way toward ensuring you're in a good mood as you handle a full slate of responsibilities on your wedding day.

• **Spend time with family and friends.** Chances are your closest friends and family members are playing significant roles in your wedding, and spending time with them is a great way to keep your nerves in check while having a fun time before, during and after the ceremony.

• **Don't be afraid to delegate responsibilities.** In spite of months of planning, couples will still have a to-do list come their wedding days. If such a list is overwhelming, brides- and grooms-to-be should not be afraid to delegate some of the tasks on their lists. Bridesmaids and groomsmen can no doubt handle any outstanding tasks that don't require any input from the bride or groom.

• **Relax as the ceremony draws nearer.** As the start time for the ceremony approaches, couples about to tie the knot should take time to sit down and relax. Once their hair and makeup is finished, brides-to-be should sit down and exhale or arrange for the photographer to snap some fun pre-wedding photos with their bridesmaids. Grooms-to-be can do the same with their groomsmen, sharing a few last-minute jokes to ensure everyone is relaxed and ready to go before taking their places.

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Engagements



MacKinnon - Rushford

Brian and Patsy MacKinnon and Gerald and Donna Rushford are delighted to announce the engagement of their children, Laura MacKinnon and Christopher Rushford. Plans are in place for a July 12, 2014 wedding.



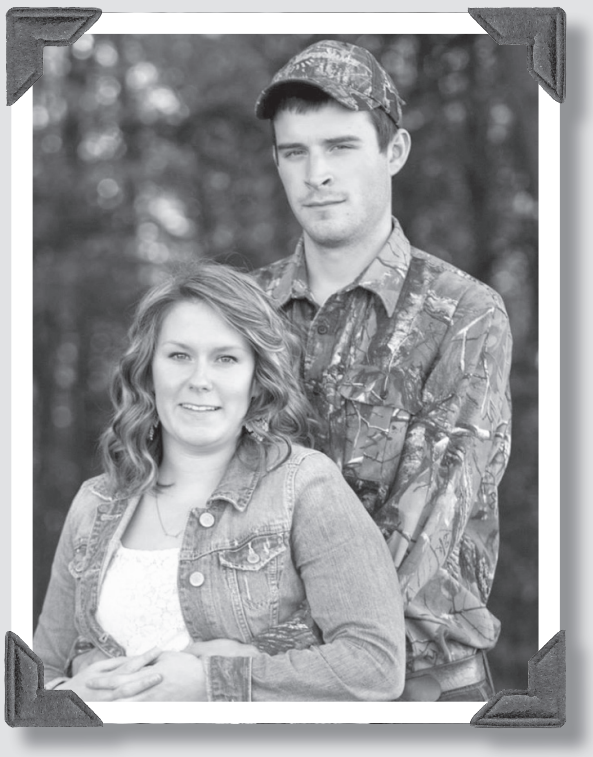
Johnston - Brown

Linda and Steven Johnston of Winchester are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Lindsay Anne to Martin Jordan Brown, son of Patricia Ellsworth and the late Richard Brown of Fredericton, New Brunswick.
The wedding will take place on July 27, 2014.



Kirkwood - Matthies

Lynn and Todd Kirkwood are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Tanya Lynn, to James Brian Matthies, son of Sue and Brian Matthies.
Wedding to take place Saturday, October 4, 2014 at the home of the bride's parents.
Congratulations and love from your family.



Baird - Merkley

Brent and Patti Baird of South Mountain are pleased to announce the engagement and upcoming marriage of their daughter, Jennifer Baird, to Kurtis Merkley, son of Steve and Carol Merkley of Iroquois.
The wedding will take place on June 21, 2014.
Mixed party to be held on May 3, 2014.



Begg - Henderson

David and Brenda Begg of Crysler are pleased to announce the engagement of their daughter, Lana, to Brandon Henderson, son of Blake and Lorie Henderson of Avonmore.
The wedding will take place August 23, 2014.

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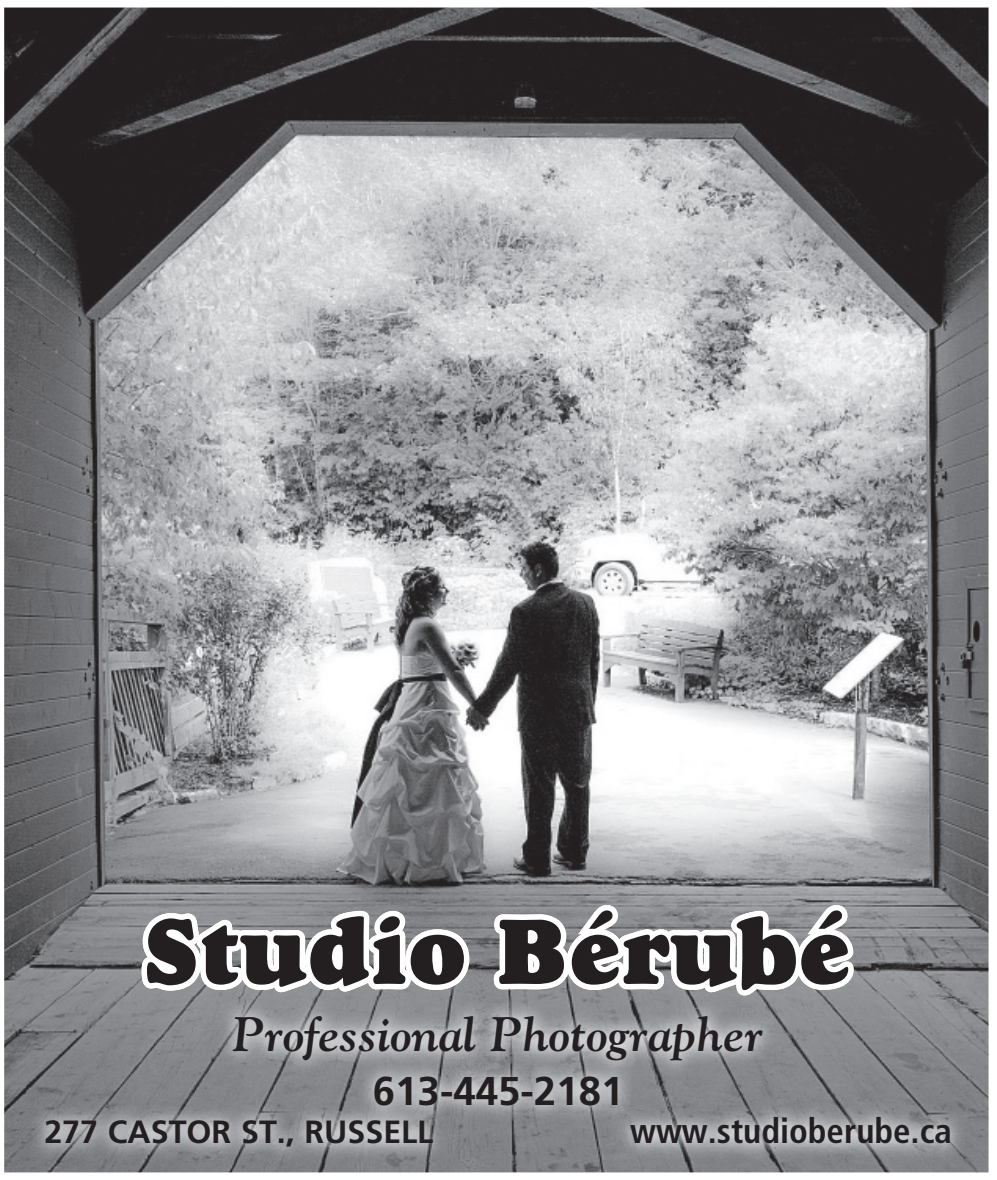

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Tips when toasting the bride and groom

Toasting the bride and groom at a wedding reception is a responsibility that typically falls on the shoulders of the bride's father as well as the best man and the maid of honour. Though it is an honour to give a wedding toast, it also can be nerve-wracking, as no one wants to give a toast that's memorable for all the wrong reasons.

While the best toasts are often those that veer off the beaten path, coming from the heart rather than from a how-to guide found on the Internet, there is a certain formula men and women can follow to ensure their toasts cover all of the appropriate bases without offending the bridal party or fellow guests.



• **Acknowledge the guests.** Families are more geographically diverse than ever before, so more and more weddings host guests who come from far and wide to celebrate with happy couples on their wedding days. It's customary for men and women making wedding toasts to acknowledge the guests, thanking them for being there. This is often a great way for best men and maids of honour to break the ice and calm their nerves, especially at larger weddings where they may only know a small percentage of the guests. When thanking the guests, be sure to thank the parents of the bride and groom as well.

• **Explain your relationship to the bride and/or groom.** Best men and maids of honour should devote a portion of their toasts to explaining their personal relationships with the bride and/or groom. Introduce yourself and explain how you met the bride or groom. Oftentimes, such stories have a comical twist that can further calm your nerves.

• **Aim for a jovial toast.** Wedding toasts are typically given at the wedding reception, when guests and the bridal party are ready to celebrate. Such an atmosphere lends itself to a jovial toast wherein best men and maids of honour focus on happy times with the bride and groom. Tell a funny anecdote that illustrates the special bond you have with the bride or groom. When choosing a story to tell, remember to keep things appropriate for guests of all ages, including young children.

• **Steer clear of alcohol before giving your toast.** Many people overindulge in alcohol at wedding receptions, but best men and maids of honour should avoid consuming alcohol until after they have toasted the bride and groom. Horror stories about drunken, inappropriate wedding toasts may seem more like an urban legend than a legitimate possibility, but the tendency for alcohol to lower people's inhibitions makes it dangerous for men and women to consume it before giving their toasts.

• **Give your best wishes to the bride and groom before raising your glass.** Raising your glass to toast the bride and groom is often the last step before your toasting duties officially end. But before you raise your glass, remember to offer your best wishes to both the bride and groom. Once those sentiments have been expressed, ask the guests to raise their glasses and toast the newlyweds.

Toasting happy couples at their wedding receptions can be stressful for best men and maids of honour who are unaccustomed to speaking in front of large groups of people. But following a certain formula and speaking from the heart will ensure such toasts go off without a hitch.

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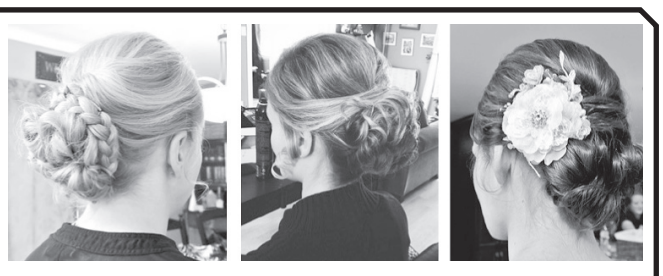

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Weddings



Duhaime - Berends

Ben and Anja Berends are thrilled to announce the wedding of their daughter Cara to Dany Duhaime, son of Gerry and Rachelle Duhaime of Kapuskasing, Ontario. Their wedding took place on August 17, 2013 at their farm in North Gower.



Brant - Porteous

Laura Jean and Thomas William are happy to announce they are now Mr. and Mrs. Brant. A beautiful wedding was held on September 28, 2013 when they exchanged vows at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Chesterville. Laura is the daughter of Allan and Colleen Porteous of Winchester. Thomas is the son of Paula MacDonald and James Brant of Sydenham, Ontario. We would like to thank all our family and friends for sharing our special day.



Steiner - Kirkwood

A beautiful country wedding took place on August 24, 2013 when Jill Kirkwood and Jamie Steiner exchanged vows at the home of Jill's parents, Lynn and Todd Kirkwood. Jill and Jamie now reside in Thurso, Quebec.

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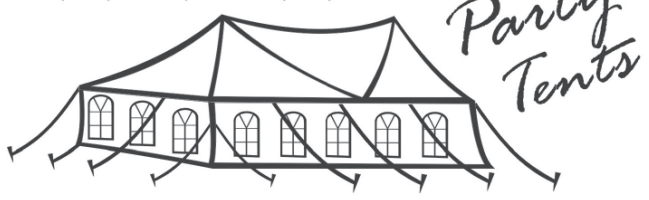

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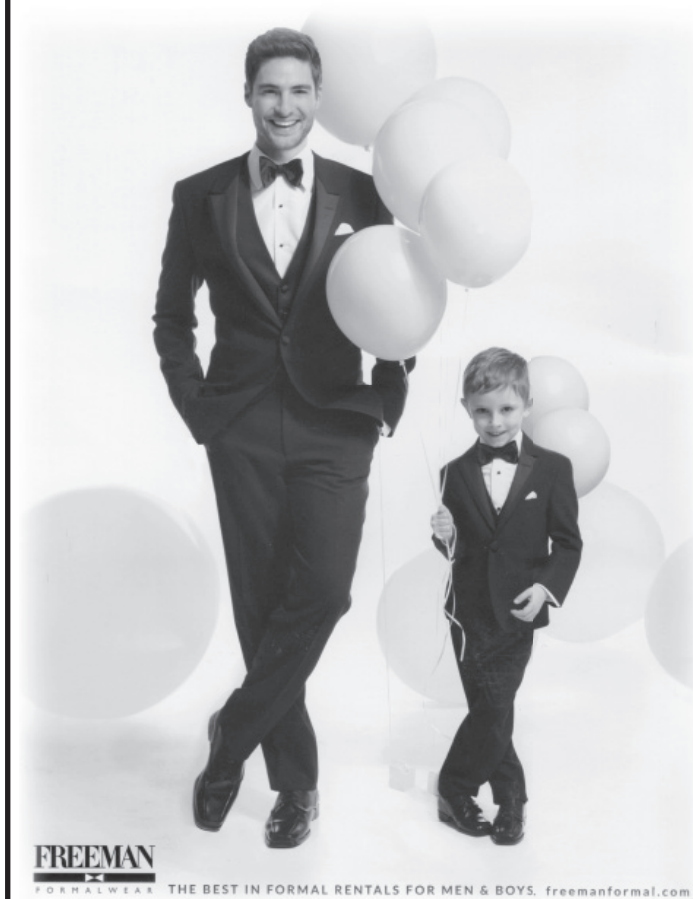

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Choosing reception favours

A wedding favour is considered a symbol of good will to guests, and there are many different wedding favours on the market. Finding the right one can take a little work. It is usually a good idea to find something that suits the theme of the wedding and is both long-lasting and practical. A couple's budget should be considered when choosing wedding favours. It may be challenging for couples to find favours that fit the theme of their wedding, as well as their own personalities and budgets. But it can be done. The following are some favour-finding guidelines.



Be creative

Wedding favours can be just about anything, so there's no need to stick to Jordan almonds or wine bottle stoppers. The more creative couples are, the more receptive their guests will likely be. For example, for an autumn-theme wedding, fill mason jars with the ingredients for a spiced cake and give the recipe directions on a tag. For a summer wedding, gift guests with a sun and surf survival bag, full of sunblock, a beach towel and sunglasses.

Complete the theme

Some weddings follow a particular theme from start to finish, and wedding favours should stick with that theme. Couples who will showcase their love of travel on their wedding day may want to give guests keychains or purse holders that feature popular landmarks around the world. Those who are admitted beach bums may want to present a small fishbowl with sand and a goldfish inside, reminiscent of days at the seashore.

Go traditional

Couples who opt for universally appealing favours can lean toward some popular options, such as silver cake servers, candlestick holders, decorative photo frames, or engraved keepsake boxes. Aim for favours that have utility. Otherwise, favours may end up collecting dust on someone's shelf.

Food and beverage gifts are fun

Food favours mean guests can enjoy their gifts and not have to worry about finding space inside their homes to display trinkets. Food favours can be lavishly decorated cookies, fine chocolates, petit fours, small bottles of champagne or cupcakes decorated like the wedding cake.

Tips for newlyweds about to merge finances

Combining finances can be a touchy subject for many couples, especially those who had not given much thought to their finances prior to tying the knot. Here are steps couples can take to make the process of merging finances go more smoothly.

• **Discuss finances early and often.** Allowing finances to be the elephant in the room is a mistake, as couples do not want to begin their lives together treading lightly around an issue as significant as finances. Couples should discuss their expenditures and spending habits as early as possible, as one of the biggest hurdles newly married couples must clear is coming to grips with one another's financial habits. When discussing finances, define both short-term and long-term goals and how each of you can adjust your spending habits to make those goals come true.

• **Pay off any debts**. When merging finances, couples should prioritize paying down debt, as debt is a significant source of stress for newlyweds and long-married couples alike. Newly married couples with little or no debt should avoid spending above their means in the months after they get married. Such spending is commonplace, as newly married couples often want to fully furnish their new homes.

• **Make note of mutual expenses and open a joint account to pay for those expenses.** Mutual expenses like mortgage payments, food and utilities should be the responsibility of each partner, and a joint account should be established to handle such expenses. When opening a joint account, discuss how much and how often each partner will contribute money. One partner might earn considerably more money than another, so work out a reasonable agreement that details how much each partner will contribute each month.

• **Make concessions for one another.** When merging finances, couples often discover that they don't see eye-to-eye on how each person spends money. Couples who successfully merge their finances often note the importance of making concessions with regard to their partners' spending on certain hobbies or luxuries. As long as those hobbies are not putting couples in debt or jeopardizing their financial goals, couples can make concessions so their partners continue to be happy and enjoy their favourite activities.

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Wedding showers continue to break from tradition

Bridal showers have long been steeped in tradition, but today's bridal showers are veering off the beaten path. Nowadays, bridal showers feature fun and games much like a party having nothing to do with a wedding. TheKnot.com, a website that aims to help couples plan their weddings and all the events leading up to the big day, identifies these key trends in modern bridal showers.

• **Couples' showers:** Modern couples who like to be all-inclusive are now planning bridal showers that cater to mixed audiences. Dubbed a "couple shower," these parties include female and male friends and relatives. Gifts are still the main focus of the event, but they're varied and include guy-friendly items within the mix of household goods.

• **Power showers:** Many are familiar with the terms "man cave" and "bromance," but few may know that there are now wedding showers geared entirely around the groom. Known as "power showers," these events focus on the groom-to-be, who is showered with a bevy of gadgets and power tools that are certain to stock his future garage. The parties are decidedly more testosterone-friendly and can include golf outings, poker nights or action movie flicks as possible themes.

• **Destination/activity showers:** Rather than having guests hang around a restaurant watching gift after gift get unwrapped, some bridal parties opt to throw an activity shower. These showers are focused around a particular activity. For example, ladies may be treated to a day at the spa. Other ideas include horseback riding at a stable or a day at the ballpark. Because hosting an activity shower for dozens of people may get expensive, these types of showers may be reserved for only your closest friends and family members.

• **Bride-involved showers:** The idea of walking into a room and being surprised by friends and family members is appealing to some brides-to-be but not everyone. Some brides prefer not to be surprised by a shower and actually would like to have a role in the planning of the party. However, this is delicate ground on which to tread, considering there may be differences over where the party is held and even the overall experience of the party. These type of showers should be discussed before any plans are made, and tasks should be delegated in accordance with those plans.

It is customary for a bridal shower to take place before a wedding. But new trends have emerged that are shaking up the way showers are planned and held.

Explore unique cake flavour combinations

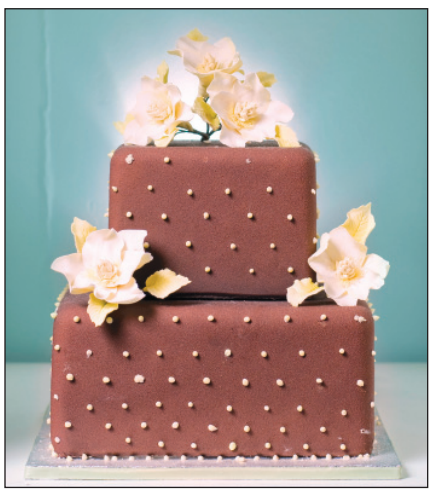
While the look of a wedding cake is certainly important, cakes should not only look good, but taste good as well. Vanilla cake with vanilla buttercream frosting was once the gold standard. But today's couples are being more adventurous with their wedding cakes and winning rave reviews from guests along the way.

The vast scope of wedding cake flavour choices available to brides and grooms is astonishing. Options may range from the traditional to something adventurous and daring. Keeping in mind that couples will need to please the masses, finding a compromise between plain vanilla and a mocha-chile-coconut surprise is essential. Otherwise, they risk an unpopular flavour and a lot of wasted, expensive cake.

Some couples shy away from more adventurous cakes because they fear something chocolately or not white in colour will not be well suited to a wedding reception. Such couples should keep in mind that any flavour of cake can be hidden beneath layers of pearly white fondant or royal icing. Therefore, the sky is the limit with regard to flavour combinations.

Those who might want to veer from tradition can consider these clever cake combinations.

• **Lemon cake with vanilla buttercream:** Lemons are tart, juicy and refreshing, helping to cleanse the palate after a rich meal. Lemon cake, with its summery feel, is tailor-made for summer weddings. The flavour is popular enough to appeal to many, but just a little different to add an unexpected zip of flavour.



Think outside of the cake box when selecting flavours for the centerpiece of the wedding reception.

• **Chocolate cake with chocolate ganache and mocha filling:** True chocoholics will be hard-pressed to resist such a decadent flavour profile. Chocolate can be sweet and satisfying and a welcome change from the vanilla cakes commonly served. For traditionalists, the cake can be covered with a white chocolate ganache. Or couples can ask that the cake be adorned with white sugar roses for an eye-appealing contrast. Chocolate cakes covered with autumn hued flowers go over well at fall weddings.

• **Red velvet cake with cream cheese frosting:** Red velvet cake was once a regionally specific staple, but now has grown steadily in popularity across the country. Red velvet has quickly become the new classic, as its vibrant red colouring offers a shock of something different, while the flavour is mild for those who are not comfortable taking risks. The richness and creaminess of cream cheese is irresistible.

• **White cake with chocolate mousse:** Couples who want a bit of chocolate but do not want to be overwhelmed can select a white cake that is filled with light and rich chocolate mousse. It's the perfect blend of vanilla and chocolate for guests who enjoy both.

• **Variety tiers:** Those who cannot settle on just one flavour can have different flavours on each tier of their cakes. This gives guests some flavourful variety and enables them to pick their favourite flavour combination.

In addition, an assortment of cupcakes in lieu of one cake can give guests the opportunity to sample several different flavours.

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Bridals by Al-Mor takes care of everything

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"Our brides and their extended families become part of our family."

This is according to shop owner Kim Carruthers, who said when brides walk into Bridals by Al-Mor in Winchester, they are not only greeted by the friendly owner, Kim Carruthers, and her dedicated consultants, but also with pictures of brides and weddings gone by, as each bride is given a self-addressed stamped envelope in which to mail a photograph from the big day to add to the store's display of "family" photos.

"I like to have fun with the brides," consultant Wendy Byers added.

Providing a friendly, welcoming, home-like setting is par for the course at Bridals.

"We want them to be comfortable and to have fun," she said. "The experience they have here is going to be the best. That's our goal. That's my goal."

The spacious shop allows room for the bride to bring along her entourage of family and friends, and those that purchase their bridesmaid, flower girl, or mother-of-the-bride dresses are eligible for a discount when the bride purchases her gown from Bridals by Al-Mor.

With seven bridal lines, including Essense of Australia, Stella York, Maggie Sottero, and Alfred Angelo, as well as more than 500 choices in bridesmaid dresses from Sorella Vita and After Six to Alfred Sung, and more, the Main Street store has a great selection for everyone in the bridal party… even the groom and his attendants.

The bridal shop, which offers Collins Formal Wear tuxedo rentals, is seeing "more and more" grooms choosing their wedding day gear at Bridals.

"It's a big job because of the volume of men coming in and the number of alterations, [but] it is great having the guys coming [to the store] too," Carruthers said.

While black is always a staple, it is the grey, charcoal, and slate blue colours that seem to be trending right now in men's wedding attire.

The brides, however, are focusing on lace, low backs, and accessories like beaded sashes, while bridesmaid gowns seem to be trending toward the pale colours such as nude, blush, or peach.

"It is very important to learn right away what your bride wants," Byers said.

Armed with the requisite knowledge, Bridals' consultants are ready to help each bride find the dress that she feels confident in.

"They really trust us," Carruthers said. "We come highly recommended."

Service at the Winchester shop includes one-on-one consultations, and once the dress has been chosen, everything can be done on site from alterations, to steaming and pressing. In addition, brides can bring the dress back to the store after the big day is over to have it dry-cleaned.

"From start to finish, we will take care of everything," Carruthers said.

Bridals by Al-Mor also carries a large line of prom wear in varying styles and colours.



Bridals by Al-Mor owner Kim Carruthers (second from right) is pictured along with consultants Kristie Billings (left), Kayla Graham, and Wendy Byers. *Press Photos – Casselman*



Bridal fashions on display include shawls, wraps, accessories, and jewellery, as well as gowns.



Bridesmaids' dresses come in an array of colours from the pale to the vibrant, as well as an assortment of styles.



More men are finding their way to Bridals for its tuxedo service, provided through Collins Formal Wear.

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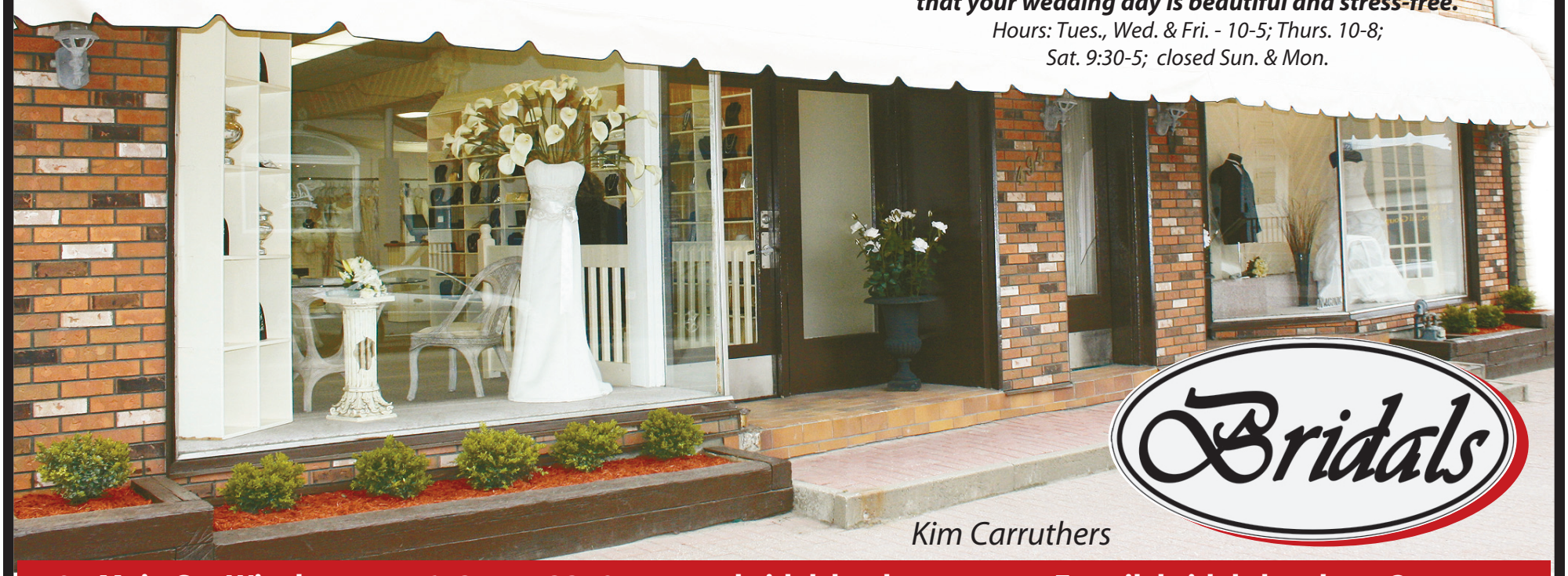

Bridals
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