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How to Plan the Most Amazing Intimate Wedding

Consider these seven tips to help plan for your incredible nuptials with a smaller guest count.

I have been planning weddings since 2008, but it was not until 2018 that I myself felt what it was like to be a bride. The milestone definitely impacted how I now identify with and plan for my clients, as I had the opportunity to see what “that side” of the planning spectrum go through firsthand. The pandemic has caused me to think a little bit more about what couples everywhere have been through and continue to experience with their planning journeys and ultimately with their wedding days. With intimate weddings becoming the norm, be sure to make your micro-event incredibly unique with personalized elements and wow-worthy tablescapes. Learn more with these seven tips.

1. Have a real conversation about your marriage versus your wedding day. I was really fortunate because I planned my wedding at a time when there were no caps on guest counts or guidelines that needed to be adhered to in order to stay safe. However, I did know that the wedding I was planning was a celebration to mark this milestone in our lives and that ultimately the marriage was what mattered. After discussing it, we agreed that being married was more important than having a long engagement. To apply this to couples planning during this pandemic, I would say that although a big, gorgeous wedding celebration is an incredible experience, being married and celebrating that, even in a smaller way, is so valuable. Waiting may not be in the cards for everybody as life changes so quickly, so I encourage couples to think about evolving their original vision



with an open mind and seeing the positives; smaller celebrations can be so full of incredible details and an intimate gathering can be unimaginably meaningful. And, the great thing is that a vow renewal later could be a wonderful opportunity to experience the feel of a larger party.

2. Be willing to invest in professionals who understand your values and your vision. More than ever, it is the responsibility of wedding industry pros to be creative and knowledgeable as they guide their clients through planning journeys. Given that weddings may have to be smaller in many places these days, this can enable couples to really invest in a talented and trustworthy planner as well as a team of creatives who can bring a beautiful and meaningful experience to life for their clients – safely and well within all public health guidelines. The peace of mind that comes with responsible professionals is priceless, as they enable couples to make informed decisions that are not about sacrifice or even compromise, but rather, collaboration. If a certain element of a vision is not economically feasible, that team of vendors will be creative and solutions oriented, so that what comes from those conversations is perhaps even better than the original idea. And *that* is such a gift while planning!

3. Style your bridal party and yourselves! One of the experiences that I am most grateful for from my own wedding is that we hired a stylist to help our bridal party and our families with what they were wearing. Not only did this make for an incredibly seamless look that also allowed for both Collin’s and my style to really manifest, it gave every member of our bridal party a chance to feel confident, look great, and still feel like individuals. Right now, as I mentioned above, many clients are experiencing restrictions that are impacting their wedding plans, but style is something that you can still revel in – with both attire and décor! I worked with Caroline Shaw in Chicago, who gave me two really valuable pieces of advice that I always love sharing with my grooms; make sure that grooms’ shoes and shirts are purchased versus rented if at all possible as these are details that

PHOTOS: COLLIN PIERSON PHOTOGRAPHY

can really bring a look home. The fit is always more important than the brand and if the shoes and the shirt are fitted impeccably, it will absolutely upgrade the caliber of style for the groomsmen. For all the brides out there styling their bridesmaids, my advice would be to not be afraid to have fluidity with fabric or color but to step outside the idea of dressing everyone to match. Right now, couples and wedding professionals alike are facing a new kind of planning, and it is one where details are more celebrated than ever before; I encourage you to embrace them!

4. Plan for impeccable wine-and-dine elements. Think about a really grand meal and pair it with great wines! With a smaller guest count, the need to provide food and beverages for hundreds of people is not there, so this really gives couples a chance to curate a fantastic and memorable menu. For a fresh twist, incorporate an additional course or an interactive element to the fare. Creative approaches will really add something unique to the wedding, as we do not see this very often with larger guest counts.

5. Make good use of time for just the two of you. A smaller wedding means that couples are not meeting and greeting as many guests, which can allow for more time together on the wedding day. This additional time allotment can be used to take editorial-style photos, perhaps even with an outfit change later in the evening if that was not being considered already. The most consistent thread that runs through all of these suggestions is the fact that a smaller guest count allows for more wow-factor in every detail when you are planning.

6. Do not rush the details. I love a gorgeous, custom napkin at a celebration. When my parents celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, we had linen hemstitch napkins made with a custom logo to mark the occasion. Given that this can be a bit of an investment, it might not be feasible for everyone when having 150 or more guests, but the idea of more intimate guest counts can lead to really bespoke details. After the wedding, you will get to use these luxurious linens in your home and think back to the special day often.

7. Prepare the finest place-card arrangements. While I have always been a fan of really gorgeous escort card setups, I truly like nothing more than a sophisticated dinner party that features



place cards at each seat. With a smaller guest count, a couple who dreams of a gorgeous escort card display can certainly have one! However, brides and grooms can also include even further detailed and thoughtful place cards so that extra personal touch is at each place setting, welcoming the smaller group of loved ones who are celebrating the day.

What I take away from revisiting my wedding photos and film each year are the feelings associated with the moments of that day. Ultimately, being surrounded by loved ones – whatever the guest count may have to be – will provide you with some beautiful memories that you will carry with you forever. So, happy planning to you! Stay positive, find the silver linings, and remember that you two are planning a wedding celebrating a marriage, and that is what really matters.

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