

Big Things

in Small Packages



BACKYARD AND MICRO-WEDDINGS
FOR THE BIG DAY

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IN EARLY MARCH 2020, ANDREW AND RIMA WERE anticipating their wedding with 200 loved ones in attendance. Her dress was perfect. RSVPs were in. Vendors were paid.

Then COVID-19 hit. Shutdown followed on March 13th. As a physician, Rima was especially aware of the virus's potential impact on a large event.

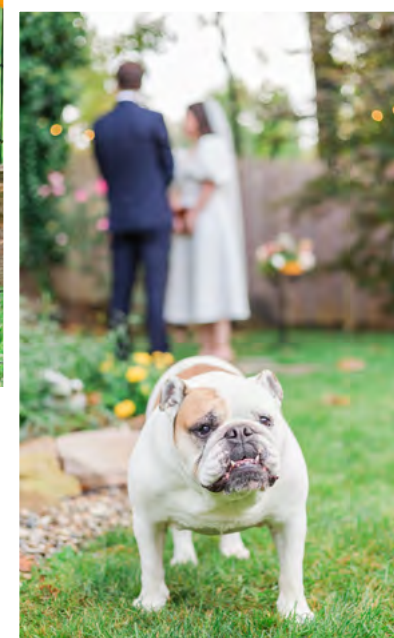
But the couple seized the moment. A re-imagined March 21st ceremony continued with their small gathering of immediate families and siblings as their wedding party. Bouquets and boutonnieres arrived at their homes. Cell phone cameras captured their vows. Their one-year-old niece viewed the nuptials from her mother's arms.

The result was a peaceful, intimate day. "It was all I needed and more," said Rima.

LOVE STILL BLOOMS

It takes more than a virus to stop weddings. Vendors have reworked logistics and created new packages and protocols. Glorious, memorable weddings endure as new marriages begin.

Faunbrook helps couples arrange micro-weddings and elopements that are beautiful, intimate and affordable. Brides and their intendeds



make choices by phone or appointment, then simply show up for unforgettable moments and forever photographs at the Victorian Bed and Breakfast.

This past February, a bride contacted Faunbrook. Five days later, details had been perfectly orchestrated. On Valentine's Day, the bride descended Faunbrook's three-story chandelier-lit staircase, escorted by her brother, and entered the parlor where her groom, his parents and the officiant waited. The white marble fireplace and bouquet of white lilies, hydrangeas and roses by Topiary 219 showcased her exquisite red dress.

Other couples are also booking small summer receptions on the wrap-around porch. Newlyweds take portraits near stained glass windows or the outdoor fountain, enjoy music from the baby grand piano and, at least one sip, champagne in a clawfoot tub.

Special Touches



Wedding planning stops for no one! Weddings in 2021, though, are still going to be different from what we're used to. And with virtual planning, it can be hard to conceptualize how you'll keep the event special for your guests. Luckily, we've gathered some ideas to add special (contactless) touches to your big day.

Customize Your PPE: Make protecting yourself and guests better with customized PPE. Order customized masks with your wedding date, have the wedding party wear masks coordinated with their outfits and personalize sanitizer labels to add a personal touch.

Celebration Care Packages: Have loved ones who can't attend the big day? Sending a care package filled with wedding goodies—chocolate, champagne, party poppers—will help them celebrate from home.

Zoom Room: Video chatting has been a great addition to 2021 weddings, allowing high risk loved ones to feel included while remaining safe. Make your ceremony fun for Zoom guests by using custom made backgrounds! Think photos of your venue or images combining your wedding theme and date.

Pod Seating: With social distancing still recommended, seat groups by pods instead of playing matchmaker between friends. Also, tables are generally smaller this year—think groups of two, four or six instead of 10 or long farm tables. If you're a fan of the sweetheart table, now's the time to embrace it.

Dinner Plates: For cocktail hours and seated dinners, caterers are offering a more individualized serving style. This lets you get creative with your menu and make each guest feel valued. And you can add a handwritten note on every plate.

Tiny Cakes: Make each guest feel unique while being extra safe with single-serve wedding cakes. You can personalize these desserts to fit the theme of your wedding and display them as their own bit of decor. Cakes decorated like succulents or flowers add another floral touch to your food display!

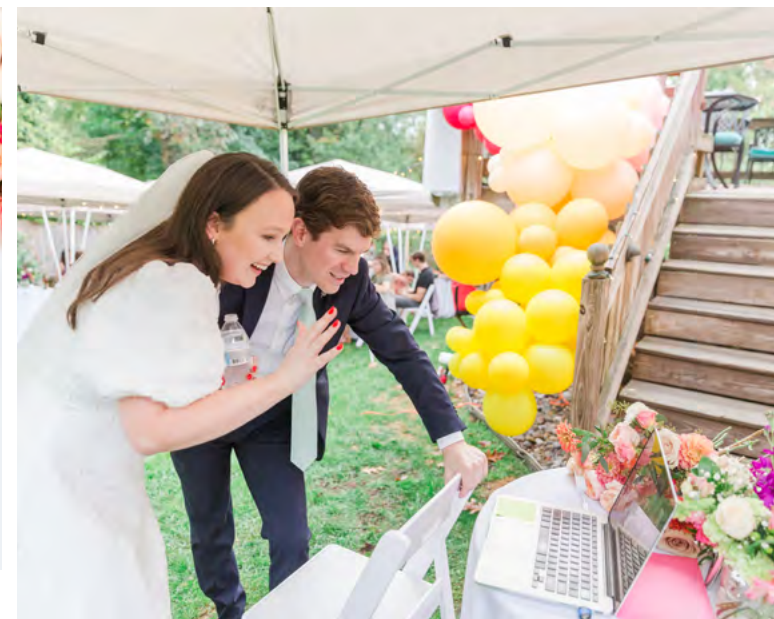


SMALL GROUPS, GREAT FUN

With less money spent on elaborate wedding receptions, couples reallocate budgets to upgrades and extras. They continue to experience cherished moments but often make longer lasting investments: jewelry and dresses that become heirlooms, photographs that last a lifetime and savings that get redirected to new homes.

For 75 years, the Cook family has assisted other families as they enter Walter J. Cook Jeweler for engagement and wedding rings. Fairy tale occasions—trying on gems to see how they light up a hand—are possible with shields, sanitizing and private appointments. Owner Michael Cook said since extensive honeymoon travel has dwindled, some couples invest in engagement jewelry: sparkling three-diamond rings, dazzling yellow solitaires and bands of mixed platinum and gold.

Long-dreamed-of wedding gowns at ceremonies for two, 20 or a future 200 are still in the picture. According to Rachel



Wedding Cakes

From mega-gatherings to micro-weddings there's always cake! Check out some local bakeries looking to make your sweet dreams a reality.



Miller, general manager of Sabrina Ann Couture, brides pick dresses they love, feel beautiful wearing and are comfortable for walking, dancing or hiking a mountain. Some purchase two outfits—one for a simple ceremony now and another for next year's party. Others opt for a dress with a removable, floaty tulle overskirt. They accessorize with winter fur wraps or, in any season, the neck-lace of a grandmother unable to attend the wedding.

Sales of veils haven't slowed, Miller added. A veil blowing in the wind or skimming the floor makes photos to share for generations.

Selecting dresses remains a highlight. Sabrina Ann Couture limits an entourage to two people, or up to five with a scheduled appointment. There's more focus on the bride's opinions and, without crowds, more time at the mirror.

Weddings today are also more highly personalized. Paper Moon's handmade flower-seeded paper invitations are affordable for shorter guest lists. Designs matching original invitations or in new styles soften the sadness of postponement announcements or brighten later vow renewal invitations.

Flowers fit the bride's style: florists' choice arrangements, buckets brimming with local blooms from the Farm at Oxford or tropical blossoms flown in from regions where more than snow drops are in season.

Instead of rushing table to table to greet hundreds of guests, at restaurants or small catered dinner parties, newlyweds savor special multi-course farm-to-table meals. Popular guest favors include local honey and handmade soaps.

LESS STRESS

Fewer participants can mean reduced tension—not reduced fun, festivities or the day's significance.

Event planners and packages can also “ease stress at a time when there's already plenty to go around,” says wedding planner Tara Thistlethwaite. Wedding planners shoulder the load for couples helping children with online schoolwork and other responsibilities. Venue packages are invaluable for couples who want cozy

weddings from a place other than the home where they already juggle work and life.

Limiting guests in bridal gown fitting rooms also eliminates tension. There's less pressure to please a large entourage and brides appreciate privacy—especially if body image suffers from lack of exercise during the pandemic.

Livestreaming ceremonies can share the occasion with extended family and friends, but some couples forego the headaches of technology and attempts to create a flawless performance for viewers.

SOMETHING NEW

Hosting a small wedding during the lingering pandemic comes with new protocols. Pay attention to language in contracts about cancellation fees, health screening questions, taking temperatures and providing guests' contact information for potential tracing.

Make adhering to rules more palatable with lacy or monogrammed masks and hand sanitizer labelled “Spread love, not germs.”

JUST THE TWO OF US

Aprille and Hunter's upcoming storybook wedding is an elopement by an officiant. Her stunning white dress, chosen with help from her mother, goes perfectly from the mansion ceremony site to the restaurant where the pair will dine without plans, place cards or pressure.

Will there be a cake for two, hair jewels or other embellishments? The smile in Aprille's voice was evident as she said she might consider them. “I just have to show up on time,” she said. “The day is just about us—intimate and loving.”

Celebrating their first anniversary, Rima and Andrew say their marriage is different because of the circumstances. Instead of a honeymoon, they vacationed for two weeks at home—where they also worked over the past year. They experienced a year of growth and happiness as they've met the challenges of a new world together.

Weddings may be smaller, but colossal love is here to stay. ♦



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