

The Reimagined Storybook Wedding

COUPLES ARE PUTTING THEIR
PERSONAL STAMP ON WEDDINGS

Story by Carol Metzker

Photos by Pictures by Todd

WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS by their sides, Joy and Michael exchanged rings and promises on June 26, 2021. Not long after the ceremony, the couple retreated to a reception just steps away. Joy switched a formal, lacy ivory dress for a lighter long, white summer dress and exchanged her bouquet for ... a light saber.

To dramatic orchestral notes of “Duel of the Fates” by *Star Wars* composer John Williams, Joy and Michael held a light saber fight—“which I won, even while wearing vintage high heels,” Joy laughed—against a beautiful backdrop of Pennsylvania fields and mountains. It ended in their first dance as newlyweds to the love song, “My Imagination” by Bill Withers.

As soulmates and equal partners, Joy and Michael’s wedding mixed a little of something old with a lot of something new to create an experience that told their story for guests. During their engagement they eschewed ballroom dancing instruction for fencing lessons. Reception decorations were Eagles-themed, and cupcakes frosted with green football helmets replaced a traditional tiered cake. There was no toss of the garter. “That’s just weird,” Joy said.

“Our wedding was a statement about the two of us,” said Joy. “We are unabashedly nerdy. Our house is filled with *Star Wars* objects and matching Eagles shirts instead of traditional decor. In marriage we will face stress that comes inevitably with life, but we can come together in harmony.”

[Editor’s note: Sadly, we weren’t able to get photos of the fun.]

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

At a wedding party recently, a spectacular custom floor with brightly colored patterns resembling Mediterranean tiles dazzled guests. People walked across the patterns to enjoy food stations designed like Mediterranean kiosks, take photos by the faux (but not faux-looking!) fountain in the floor’s center and later to dance the night away as though they were in an exotic land ... although close to home.

The floor lifted up easily the next day, but guests will talk about the room and the party for years to come, says Emily Spurlock, who designed it.

Spurlock, creative director and visual storyteller of Emily Kathryn Paper and Design, helps couples design local, national and international celebrations that tell stories of their past, present and future. Although weddings were once events with a checklist of amenities, many are now weekend or weeklong experiences, she says.

Couples celebrate their guests, not just themselves, through vow ceremonies and intimate family dinners that reflect their culture; sightseeing excursions that connect relatives and friends for relaxation and recreation; and nontraditional parties as they start new chapters in married life. They honor loved ones and often include favorite charities as part of wedding gift registries.

Every detail is given attention, Spurlock continues. Materials—soft or leathery paper for invitations, or shiny acrylic for signage—make a visual impact on people and the ambiance they experience. Pieces of each gathering become heirlooms—artful menus are mementos long after guests have savored a meal. Details express how a couple met, what they love and who they want to become together.

PHOTOS: CLANE GESSEL STUDIO FINE ART WEDDINGS





From traditional venues to backyard springhouses to special occasion tents, virtually any location can host a modern wedding.



LOCATION, LOCATION

Celebration venues help tell the story, too. Faunbrook's Victorian porch talks of timeless love. Thornbury Farm's timber-framed chapel speaks of nature.

To bring a fairy tale to life, drive through woodland and past a 56-column pergola, gardens and arbor up to stately Greystone Hall. Rich wood, wrought iron elements and stained glass abound for spectacular photo scenes. Enjoy cocktails in the Palm Room or Library and hors d'oeuvres on the terrace. Dine or dance in the tent-pavilion. If you're lucky, catch a glimpse of a stag and doe as you leave the estate.

Destinations are back in style. Within a short drive, Hershey's Butterfly Atrium's stunning flowers and colorful, fluttering wings shine for royalty and monarchs. At Philadelphia's Ritz Carlton, chandeliers and architectural arches express breathtaking drama. A myriad of inns, wineries and bed & breakfasts in Bucks County welcome couples and guests with their sophisticated or simple charm.

For a magical wedding or reception experience to delight friends young and old, take a twirl at the Carousel at Pottstown with enchanted horses and carved animals under sparkling lights.

FOREVER BEAUTIFUL

For something new, something blue and always gorgeous, wedding gowns—now in blue—are the shining star. At Agnes Edmunds Bridal in Pottstown, the sky is the limit for wedding fashion: boho, beaded, simple, fancy, with or without a train and any color including black. “Whatever makes you feel amazing is the right dress!” says owner Bridget “Z.” Comfort can even mean custom sneakers with pearls, crystals, sequins or ribbons to wear for a wedding in a flower field or for a reception on your feet.

Some brides are saying yes to two dresses—one for now and one for a big blow-out in 2020-something, or one for vows and one for a reception. Others fall in love with one dress and want to wear it as long and as many times as possible—at last year’s micro-wedding, this year’s grand re-I-do or one all-day affair.

FLOWERS AND MORE

Out with balloons, in with blooms! Many brides are turning to flowers as the adornment that makes any venue festive. From Phoenixville’s Hickory Grove Gardens in northern Chester County, south to the Farm at Oxford, and Wildflower Farm in between, local growers offer dazzling seasonal blooms for ceremonies and wedding-related events.

From field to venue, petals in sensational palettes form arches, garlands, wall and ceiling installations, bouquets and boutonnieres. Follow European trends of sending letterbox bouquets—flowers to slip through mail slots of guests who can’t travel—or field bouquets with assorted heights and colors to replicate the feel of blooms in nature. Select buckets for DIY or for designers who turn dreams into reality.

“Lily,” a mobile flower bar—a darling little truck that shows up to bridal showers with buckets of exquisite fresh flowers for guests to create their own take-home bouquets for favors—is just one of Wildflower Farm’s hits. The small farm in Malvern offers ruffly lisianthus and zinnias in a rainbow of colors, golden sunflowers, orange milkweed loved by butterflies as well as brides, purple stock, ranunculus and more.

Butterfly ranunculus blooms, newly developed in Japan, are the biggest rave. Long-lasting petals, reminiscent of a butterfly opening its wings and with a waxy texture that makes them almost shimmer in light, come in yellow, orange, red-tipped, soft pink and more.

Given enough time, says co-owner Lori, Wildflower Farm will dedicate part of their hoop house to plant and grow a small boutique space of flowers of a specific color palette for a couple’s wedding. The couple can visit their growing buds during their engagement. While visiting Wildflower Farm or enjoying a relaxing afternoon, sweethearts can sneak a glorious engagement photo while holding a bouquet at the barn’s swing.

With imagination and creativity, weddings are telling love stories in wonderful new ways. ♦



Zoom cameras and Insta-shots help preserve and share the memories.



Personal touches are everywhere: from quirky (or qwerty) ring displays to non-traditional cakes to less formal attire for grooms along with customized boutonnieres.



Wedding Bouquets

Flowers of all colors and varieties get the spotlight

PHOTO: ASHLEY ELIZABETH PHOTOGRAPHY



Matlack Florist
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MatlackFlorist.com



Katie Mac Floral Designs
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