

Married to a budget

How to plan the wedding of your dreams for under \$20,000

By LAURA DEBRIZZI

Whoever said weddings are priceless obviously never planned one.

In 2006, extravagance and decadence have taken on entirely new meanings. One only has to look as far as MTV's "My Super Sweet Sixteen" — a show documenting adolescent birthday bashes where Cirque du Soleil performers and royal celebrity courts are the norm — to understand the high expectations placed on a bride and groom to entertain guests who make the trek to witness their exchange of "I do's."

Samantha Goldberg, a wedding planner and a regular on the Style Network's "Whose Wedding Is It Anyway?," reports that the average price for a wedding with 150 guests in the United States is \$24,000. Have one in the five boroughs, and the budget for the same amount of people jumps to \$30,240.

"The amount of money spent on weddings alone in New York is almost \$4 billion," says Goldberg, who founded Gold Events LLC in 2000.

Can a New Yorker possibly wed in style if the last name isn't Trump?

Yes, and we can help.

Here, Goldberg — whose forte is working with brides on a shoestring budget — gives us her quick tips for how to create a fairy-tale wedding for as little as \$20,000 and what each element should cost you (after taking her advice, of course!).

Cake

Don't assume that bigger is better! And who really needs all those extra calories?

If you want to put more funds toward your photographer, simply limit the ornate pastry. Though no one wants a couple to resort to a box of Betty Crocker cake mix, "Purchase a smaller, less decorative tiered cake, which you will use as your 'cutting' cake," says Goldberg. "Order a plain sheet cake from a local bakery and have your caterer cut it in the kitchen for your guests. No one will ever know the difference."

Cost: \$200-\$400



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Bridal Gown and Accessories

While there is no denying that the bride and her dress are the focal points of any nuptials, you don't have to walk down the aisle in a mothball-eaten frock dredged from the chest of your great-great-grandmother to save a penny. On the job, Goldberg has found several ways for her brides to cut corners without the loss of glamour.

NO JUNK IN THIS TRUNK "Look for trunk sales in metro areas. A lot of known and unknown designers have 'specials' sales open to the public to sell samples that have been used for fashion shows or model shoots."

EASY EBAY "eBay is the trend of the millennium, and it's fun to play 'May the best bid win!' Many times, local stores or manufacturers sell overstocks of bridal attire online."

GET THEE TO NEW JERSEY "The Gar-

den State should be a shopper's haven for New Yorkers; you do not pay tax on clothing in New Jersey. That is almost a 9% savings alone, not to mention most items are priced higher when you shop in the city."

SAVINGS IN NUMBERS "Make sure you consider having your bridesmaids purchase their dresses at the same store that you bought your gown; many places will afford a discount somewhere between 10%-20% for a party of three or more."

TUX FOR HIRE "The groomsmen should consider a chain rental locale like Men's Warehouse (menswarehouse.com) or After Hours (www.afterhours.com). In most cases, chains will offer the groom a free rental once four from his party have already placed their orders."

Cost: \$800-\$5,000