

Here comes the Bride



Are Wedding Bells in Your Future?

The Sampson County Bridal Guide is designed to help you plan the perfect wedding day. This special section is filled with valuable advice and businesses that will help couples getting ready to tie the knot plan the perfect wedding.

Get helpful tips on wedding budgets, food, the perfect engagement ring, hair and makeup and much more. And also read the love stories of our featured Bridal Couples. They are Amazing....

What's more, you'll find valuable advertising and offers from local wedding professionals dedicated to making your big day a success!

Featured Bridal Couples

Cameron Baggett & Brittany Cottle

Love Reignites After Congratulatory Text

Brittany continues, "Well, I think we got to the point where we both knew that we messed up. That is why it was easier the second time. We had been there, done that, you know? We both made mistakes and we were more mature – so it was different."

That reignited spark continued to grow over the next three and a half years – even though the couple were far away from each other during that time.

"I was going to college in Wilmington and he was here, so that made us in a long-distance relationship all that time," Brittany explained. "But we were really committed to each other and made it work."

When Cameron would visit, the couple would take Brittany's 4-year-old Shih Tzu (named 'Nixon') for walks at the local park.

"Nixon just loves Cameron and he adores Nixon," says Brittany. "That became a routine of ours."

[Fun Fact: 28% of couples who are dating have pets together; 12% use them in their actual wedding ceremony]

The Proposal

According to statistics over 96% of couples, who have been dating over 3+ years or more, discuss details of their engagement months before the actual event.

It was no different for Brittany and Cameron.

"In the last year (before the engagement) there was talk about it," Brittany said. "There was a lot of big things happening for us and we did know that we would eventually get engaged, I just didn't know when."

'When' came during a visit from Cameron on May 13, 2018.

"We had gone to the beach and we were headed out, when we made a detour because Cameron had to 'pick something up'," explained Brittany.

The 'detour' was at Hugh McRae Park in Wilmington. "He took me to the cool, little spot we had walked through before," notes Brittany. "It seemed off; I knew something was up."

Cameron, who had already asked Brittany's parents for her hand in marriage, picked his moment, bent down on one knee and proposed.

"He was so nervous," remembers Brittany. "He is not typically romantic, but this was super romantic, and it was so exciting."

And the timing couldn't have been better.

"We grew up a lot over the past five years," Brittany said. "We are really great together – we balance each other out."

After the excitement from the engagement, and subsequent announcement to all their family and friends, the couple began working on the plans for their dream wedding.

[Fun Fact: 89% of men get down on one knee to propose to their future wife; 64% of recently engaged couples begin planning their wedding within the first two months.]

Making Plans For the Big Day

"We were able to get done with a lot of things early," says Brittany. "I am the third daughter to get married, so we knew what to expect."

The couple plan to share their nuptials on June 22 at Grove Park Baptist Church in Clinton.

"Honestly, we were good to go in about six months," Brittany says. "But we wanted to make sure to include our family and friends. I had two of my close friends from my family and Cameron had his cousin and aunts involved."

With the help and support of their family and close friends, the couple wound up with a guest list of 300+.

So far, plans and preparations for the wedding have gone smoothly.

"Well, we have had a lot of help," Brittany admits. "The support has been incredible."

According to Brittany, the hardest part of the planning experience for the couple has been the invites.

"I would say making the guest list," she said. "That is a beast to tackle ... It is very important to not leave anyone out and that is why it is the hardest. Thank God that I have a mom that really helped me out with everything."

What would be the best piece of advice Brittany could give to a couple planning a future wedding? "I would say try not to stress or worry," says Brittany. "That is my biggest thing, at the end of the day, you are going to be married. The little things you are worried about - no one but you will know it. The day is all about you – so just go out and enjoy it."

After the wedding, the couple, who have recently closed on a home, will reside in Clinton. Cameron is the safety coordinator for Smithfield Foods; Brittany is a seventh-grade educator at Midway Middle School and her students are excited about the upcoming wedding.

"They are all involved," Brittany says with pride. "They ask me every time they see me – how is the wedding coming along and they want to know everything. It's been fun because they are just as excited."

Although they have no idea when it will happen, Brittany said that the couple would love to have children.

"If the Lord blesses us," she said.

The couple would like to thank those who have made their planning go that much easier.

Natalie Soto and Madison Holland at Bill's Beauty Shop in downtown Clinton "for always fixing me up with perfect hair, makeup, and nails for every wedding event," says Brittany.

Brittany Campbell at Sunshine Artistry in Fayetteville, North Carolina for the flawless tan.

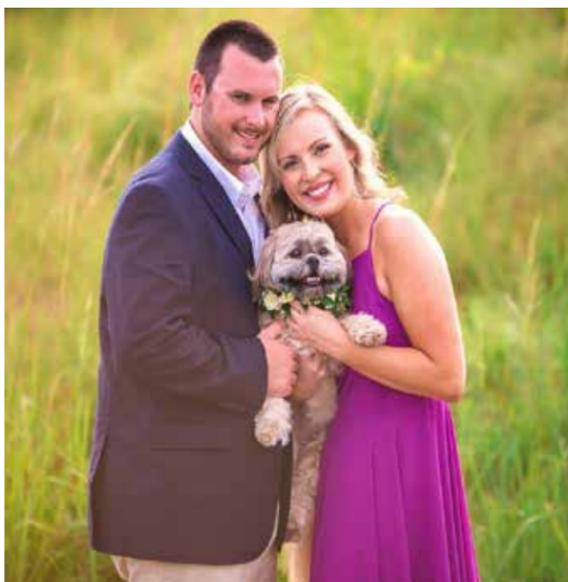
Tonya Parrish for "working with me to put together the perfect China pieces and assisting family and friends with every shower and gift need," said Brittany.

Carly Fogleman Photography for the most timeless engagement photos and bridal portraits.

"And our family, church family, and friends for hosting special events all throughout this year to help us celebrate this special time."

She adds, "and also The Sampson Weekly for featuring our story in this bridal edition."

[Fun Fact: 14% of newly married couples who already have children, are included in the ceremony; 89% of engaged couples include family members in the planning of the wedding.]



When Brittany Cottle, 23, and Cameron Baggett, 24, unite in marriage this June, it will solidify the couple's journey of love that was sparked back in a pre-calculus class back when the two were in high school.

Cameron sat in the back of the class, Brittany remembers.

"Oh, I just thought he was the cutest thing," she admits. "He was quiet and sat in the back of the class. I sat in the front and we really didn't talk with each other until later on."

Both Sampson County natives, Cameron was raised in the northern part of the county, while Brittany was raised in Clinton.

It wasn't until her sophomore year in high school that a move saw Brittany enrolling in Midway High School, a school Cameron was already in – he was a year ahead of Cottle.

As fate would have it, the two were scheduled in the same pre-calculus class.

"He thought I was obnoxious," Brittany says with a laugh. "I was a little bit loud and he was more reserved and quiet ... But I can remember being attracted to him because he was so cute."

It was a question about a homework assignment that opened the door to conversation.

"He says I contacted him, but I think he was the one that contacted me through a Twitter DM (Direct Message)," Brittany says with a laugh. "We went back and forth for a while and then it came to point where it was like, 'what are we doing?' and that's when we started talking to each other."

The chemistry between the two was evident right away. Within weeks the two high schoolers had their first date.

"My sister went along with us," Brittany remembers with a laugh. "We went to the movies. It was kind of an intense one too (the 2013 Halle Berry film 'The Call'). So, I was close to him and my sister became sort of the third wheel."

The relationship blossomed from then on.

By January 1, the two were 'officially' a couple, even attending Brittany's prom together – however, by August the two went their separate ways.

"He went off to college and I still had my senior year of high school to go," said Brittany. "We were both hurt ..."

Life went on - Brittany finished her senior year and headed off to college in Wilmington, while Cameron began his sophomore year in college.

Two years later, Brittany's sister got engaged and out of the blue, Cameron contacted her.

"He sent me a text asking me to congratulate my sister," Brittany said. "Then we texted a few more times and that set off another spark."

BRIDAL

Andrew Hawkins & Taylor Malpass

Local Couple Prepare For Nuptials
With Plenty Of Support

Whether it is getting engaged around the holidays (the most popular month for proposals is December at 19%) or inviting friends and loved ones to witness the actual proposal, millennial couples are opting to make their engagement a highly shared experience.

One local couple – Taylor Malpass, 23, and Andrew Hawkins, 29 – are one of those couples – but there is a specific reason why Andrew invited one of his and two of Taylor’s best friends to the couple’s engagement that took place on October 27, 2018.

The setting was perfect – sunset on a beach in Charleston, South Carolina.

“I unofficially hired our best friends to be there earlier and set everything up for me,” Andrew admitted. “We had been talking about taking a weekend getaway to Charleston for a while and we finally managed to get the time to go.”

Andrew rented a local Airbnb and the two enjoyed their getaway by touring Charleston.

“We went all around,” explains Andrew, “just doing the ‘tourist’ things. When it was time to propose, we were set to go to dinner, and I sort of tricked Taylor by saying we needed to make a stop before we went to the restaurant.”

As the two watched the sunset fading into the sea, Andrew suddenly knelt down in the sand and asked for Taylor’s hand in marriage.

“I was very surprised,” Taylor admitted. “I had absolutely no idea – once he did it, our friends came out and they celebrated with us.”

From Early Beginnings to Love

Being both from Clinton, the couple actually “knew of” each other growing up.

“We grew up in the same area,” confirms Andrew. “So, we were familiar with each other and we knew each other’s families.”

However, a relationship between the two really was never even a consideration back then.

“No, not at all,” says Taylor.

“I really had no clue,” Andrew said. “Back then, I never would have guessed we would be where we are today.”

For Andrew, he remembers Taylor coming into a gym he was running.

“She used to come in there and I would see her from time to time,” he explains. “This was right before she went off to college.”

Taylor returned to the area after earning her degree in Recreational Therapy from East Carolina University. Before long (in 2017) a mutual friend would set her up with a date with Andrew.

[Fun Fact: 23% of couples have met through friends; 55% dated 2+ years; 72% live together]

The rest is history.

Although, admittedly, it took a while for the duo to become exclusive, the chemistry was there from the beginning.

“I knew right away,” notes Andrew, with a laugh. “You could say I had been chasing her for about two years up to that point.”

In fact, the couple had dated for approximately two years before the timing was perfect for Andrew to get down on one knee in front of that beautiful beach setting.



a week planning their wedding and spend nearly 80 percent of their time planning online.

Peak times for online planning is at from 9 p.m. to midnight; the most popular day? Sunday.

After their engagement became official Taylor and Andrew began planning their big day.

“We have had our ups and downs,” Taylor says with honesty. “We will have over a year to prepare for it.”

Early in the planning, the couple was planning for a smaller ceremony, but they quickly scrapped that idea.

“We both have really big families,” Taylor said. “And there was just no way we couldn’t include everyone. Both of our families are involved, as well as our friends.”

The couple is expecting about 250 to celebrate their love at the ceremony.

[Fun Fact: The average number of guests for 2019 weddings is 126; Number of wedding party members is 10; Average age of couple is 33]

One of the hardest parts of planning, according to Taylor and Andrew is making sure everyone is invited to the ceremony.

“We want to make sure that we invite everyone and not leave anyone out,” Andrew admits. “That has been the hardest part of the planning.”

When asked if they could give a piece of advice to any other couple getting ready to plan a wedding, Taylor says, “I would tell them to set a budget right away.”

“You get that budget set first then you can knock the bigger things out first,” she continued. “You can worry about everything else after that.”

With just six months before they walk down the aisle, the couple is more than ready.

“We are both super excited,” Taylor said. “We can’t wait.”

Although most of their families are local, there will be some family members attending from out-of-town.

“It is going to be nice to see everybody together,” Taylor added. “It is going to be a lot of fun.”

[Fun Fact: A wedding in 2019 will set you back – on average - \$38,700; \$5,000 on ring, \$29,200 on ceremony/reception, and \$4,500 on honeymoon. * Study based on 18,000 couples]

Here’s To The Future!

Andrew, who is currently a fire fighter with the Fayetteville Fire Department, and Taylor, who is currently working on her doctorate in Occupational Therapy at Methodist University, say they both will continue to reside in Autryville after their wedding and in time, begin a family.

“We both really want to have a family,” notes Andrew. “But we really want to establish our career goals first. We want to lay down a solid foundation before we start having children.”

The couple have supported each other and wanted to send a special ‘thank you’ to those who have supported them on the way.

“We want to give appreciation to all of our friends, family and vendors that have and continue to be a big part of our day,” says Taylor. “We just really appreciate all of the support.”

[Fun Fact: According to 2018 statistics, the average cost of a wedding – by category – is: Venue - \$9,000; Catering - \$6,700; and Live Band/DJ - \$3,900, Band/\$1,000+, DJ; Photography - \$2,400; Videographer - \$1,800; Wedding Planner - \$1,850; Flowers - \$1,800; Cake - \$550; Officiant - \$300]

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Michelle shows the bridal couple, Taylor and Andrew, the newest trends in home decor including real to the touch floral arrangements!

“Although it was earlier for me, it was later in our dating when we both realized that it was getting to be about ‘that’ time (to propose),” Andrew said. “By that time, we both laid out what we wanted and really knew where we were headed.”

But Andrew still wasn’t sure if Taylor would say “yes”.

“I was excited and nervous too,” Andrew says. “I felt like it could go either way, but I felt like it was time to do it, so I did it.”

“I was very surprised when he proposed,” Taylor admitted. “Once he did it, it was just wonderful.”

Planning For The Big Day

Percentage-wise the top wedding date in 2019 is on October 10.

Taylor and Andrew have selected the fifth top wedding date – October 5.

Why? “Well, it is special to us because we got engaged in October,” explains Andrew. And I just really feel like October is my favorite month.”

The couple will be united in marriage in Fayetteville in the beautiful backdrop of Cape Fear Botanical Gardens.

Statistics say that in 2019, most couples will spend at least two hours

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John Turner & Allie Hinson

Falling In Love With Your Best Friend

“It marked the page of my favorite Bible scripture ... It was completely unexpected.”

While Allie was checking out the Bible, John knelt down and proposed.

“When he got down, I knew ... and I just cried,” she said.

John’s proclamation of love was a double surprise.

Although John had asked Allie’s father for permission to marry Allie, it was decided that no one would share it with Allie’s mother.

“She was just as surprised,” Allie said. “We were all crying.”

[Fun Fact: 58% of men ask the father (and/or parental figure) of the future bride for his blessing; 67% get down on one knee to propose to their future bride; 47% of couples get engaged on a holiday – most popular? Valentine’s Day; Average number of guests invited to weddings in 2018- 126]

Making Plans For The Big Day

Allie, who works as the Activity Director for Southwood Nursing and Retirement Center in Clinton, and John, who is a Flight Paramedic with Vidant, both agreed that they didn’t want to have a long engagement.

After the couple took time to enjoy their new status as “officially” engaged, they started the process of planning their nuptials – this was a year and a half ago.

The first thing the couple settled on is the date – June 1, 2019.

“Surprisingly, we didn’t really want to do a church wedding,” Allie explains. “We are lovers of the mountains - that is our place – so we knew that we wanted to begin there.”

However, planning the logistics of a mountain wedding was – excuse the pun – an uphill climb.

“We are going to get married at Pretty Place Chapel in Cleveland, South Carolina in the mountains,” Allie said. “It is five and a half hours away, but it is beautiful.”

One look at the open-air chapel – with its awe-inspiring, 180-degree spectacular views – and it’s easy to see why the couple chose the venue.

“We got started early,” Allie said. “There have been a few issues along the way – especially with having to do a lot of the planning over the phone or online through email. But for the most part, it hasn’t been that bad.”

The couple did not hire a professional wedding planner, they decided to work together to bring the wedding to fruition.

But they did have help – thanks to their loving families and close friends who pitched in to give help and support when they needed it.

In addition to the chapel, the couple had to lock down other vendors in and around Cleveland for their dream mountain wedding.

“We have had to travel there about four times in the past year” Allie said. “Luckily we have been able to take care of some other things without having to travel back and forth.”

Currently, everything is set – with the exception of a few minor “last minute” things – for the June wedding

that the couple is expecting 75-100 guests attending.

The couple – who are not living together – are currently in the process of renting a home in Clinton until they are ready to settle down and buy their own home.

[Fun Fact: Just over 50% of couples live together before they get married; The credit (score) rating needed for a couple to buy a home ranges from 580 to 680 according to SFGate]

Wedding Budget

According to costofwedding.com, the estimated price for a wedding (nationally) this year, with 100-150 guests, will run you \$25,764.

For Allie and John, the couple wanted to try to keep costs at a minimum.

“We had a budget in mind,” Allie said. “As we were planning there were some things that we had in mind cost a little bit more than we expected. But we shopped around and tried to get the best deal we could. We tried to find what some of the packages offered and would be the best fit for us.”

Allie said the hardest part for her was being able to have so many different choices for every aspect of her wedding day.

“I don’t do well with a lot of options,” she says with a laugh. “When you are planning a wedding there are so many options and sometimes that makes it hard to narrow down exactly what you want.”

In addition to sharing the experience with her future husband, Allie says the best part of the planning stages of her wedding has been having the love and support of family and friends.

“As a female, you have this idea of what your wedding will be like,” notes Allie. “It is exciting to see it all coming together and having your loved ones involved ... But it is totally different than what I had in my mind.”

[Fun Facts: Reception Edition: 79% of couples incorporate their wedding colors into their florals; 47% of couples give a speech during the reception; 52% of couples incorporate a wedding theme into the decor]

Advice For the Young At Heart ...

After the big day, Allie and John are planning to take an Alaskan Cruise for their honeymoon.

“Neither of us have ever been on a cruise and this is something that we really wanted to do,” Allie said. “We are both very excited about it.”

Now that she is just over a month left until she walks down the aisle, Allie said that the best piece of advice she could give to any future brides to be would be to take a deep breath and try not to stress too much over your big day.

“You can’t stress about every little thing,” Allie said. “Everything is going to work out in the end. I mean, if something little goes wrong, most likely, no one will ever know what it was, so there is no need for you to stress. It is your day, focus on you and enjoy it.”

Here’s to a lifetime of love and happiness to this beautiful, loving couple.

Allie Hinson and John Turner’s love story is a unique one. How many couples can say they have known each other just about all of their lives? Not many.

“We really have grown up together,” Hinson, 28, explained. “We have been going to the same church together since I was about four years old, so both of us, as well as our families, have known each other for years.”

At the Clinton Family Worship Center, Allie and John (now 33), were long-time friends, who were in the church’s Youth Group.

The two shared a friendship throughout the years – all the way up until John went away to college.

After that, they wouldn’t see each other for another two years.

“It was at the Alive at Five (in Clinton) concert that took place on May 5, 2013,” Allie remembered. “We were both there and ran into each other ...”

After catching up, John casually asked Allie to go out to get a bite to eat soon after.

“I told my mother that I wasn’t going to go,” a somewhat reluctant Allie admitted. “I mean, at that time, he was more like a big brother to me. Never in a million years did I think it (our relationship) would turn into what it did.”

Love Is a Beautiful Thing

After that dinner date, the two kept in touch through phone calls and texts.

“I was hesitant at first,” Allie admits with honesty. “Because we were good friends already ... but we continued to keep talking back and forth with each other ...”

However, the more they talked, the more the two realized they had so much more in common with each other than they ever thought they would.

As their relationship began to blossom, the two were invited (by their friends) on a getaway to the mountains, which brought them even closer together.

“That’s when it was starting to become more than a friendship,” Allie said. “But we just took it slow and steady.”

It wasn’t until Christmas Day 2017 that John got down on one knee and proposed.

“By that point, we had already talked about getting married and everything,” Allie said. “But John is unpredictable. We had talked about getting engaged, but one of the things we said was ‘never on a holiday’.”

She continues, “So, of course, he knew the only time that I would be completely surprised was to do it on a holiday (laughs).”

Ever the gentleman, John had already asked Allie’s father for his blessing before getting down on one knee that Christmas day.

Before he took a knee, John presented Allie with a Bible.

“There was a bookmark in the Bible,” she remembers.

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Popping the Question?

How to Select an Engagement Ring

"Will you marry me?" Be sure to pair these four little words with the perfect engagement ring. While there's a bit of a learning curve when it comes to selecting the right diamond, the most important thing you can do is find a piece both you and your significant other will love.

That said, don't let the business of choosing an engagement ring be a source of stress at this exciting time in your life. With a bit of knowledge, you can make the right selection with confidence. Consider the following.

- Consult with the leading authority: Be sure your diamond is Gemological Institute of America (GIA)-certified. Established in 1931, GIA is the world's foremost authority on diamonds, colored stones and pearls. A public benefit, nonprofit institute, GIA is the leading source of knowledge, standards and education in gems and jewelry.

- Four Cs: Of course, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so make your decision based on what looks most beautiful to you, however, knowing more about the four Cs – that is the cut, color, clarity and carat – of a diamond, can help you make a selection wisely. Created by the GIA, the four Cs are the global standard for assessing the quality of diamonds, allowing you to compare one diamond to another, which is extremely helpful in determining whether you are getting a fair price.

The cut is what gives a diamond its brilliance and sparkle, so this is an important factor. As far as color is concerned, the less color the better -- tinting is indicative of a lower quality diamond. Clarity refers to a diamond's relative flawlessness -- blemishes are a mark against a diamond. Lastly, carat measures the weight of the diamond.

Be sure to view the GIA grading report specifying the exact quality of an individual diamond when making a



decision.

- Design your own engagement ring with the help of an expert: An engagement ring is one of the most meaningful items you will ever purchase. So, why opt for the style everyone else is wearing? Consider working with a jeweler that specializes in engagement rings and quality diamonds.

Before getting down on one knee, do your research. There's a perfect engagement ring for every couple. Finding it just requires a little bit of legwork.



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Be smart about wedding beauty preparation

All eyes are on the bride and groom on their wedding day. Feeling beautiful and dapper can boost a couple's confidence and ensure they look back on their wedding photographs and videos with pride.

Certain beauty basics and makeup and hair strategies can help any bride look spectacular on her wedding day. The following are some dos and don'ts of wedding day beauty preparations.

DO employ the services of a professional hairstylist and makeup artist. Professionals have the experience and tools of the trade to help you to look your best. From contouring to make your face seem slimmer to enlarging the appearance of small eyes, some tricks of the trade are best left to the pros.

DON'T forget to schedule a trial run. Make this appointment several months before the wedding day so you have ample time to work with your stylists and experiment with colors and hair arrangements to fit your personality and the style of your gown. Take plenty of pictures and notes so you will remember what needs to be on hand for the wedding day.

DO allot enough time for the wedding day beauty appointment. If you will be going to a salon, block out two or more slots instead of one. This way the stylist does not overbook and will not feel rushed. Many brides opt to have stylists come to their homes. There may be an extra charge for this service, but it may be well worth the cost.

DON'T make any drastic changes to your appearance right before the wedding. This includes changing your hair color or texture, extreme tanning, using colored contact lenses, or chopping off all of your hair. It's better to wait until after the wedding to change your style.

DO bring a veil, headpiece, hair extensions, and any other accessories to your hair consult. This enables the stylist to practice working with these items.

DON'T tweeze or wax brows too close to the start of the ceremony. Redness and swelling are common side effects of tweezing and waxing, and they can be difficult to mask with makeup. Instead, take care of hair removal a day or two prior to the wedding.

DO exfoliate your skin prior to the wedding. This doesn't necessarily mean you should endure a harsh fruit acid peel or another procedure. You can exfoliate with a gentle washing of your skin with a nubby washcloth to remove any dryness and errant flakes. Moisturize well to ensure a smooth palette for makeup application.

DON'T wash or condition hair the day of the wedding. Intricate styles tend to stay better when hair has a little grip. "Dirty" hair is easier to work with than shiny, freshly washed locks. If you must wash, remember to thoroughly dry your hair before going to your appointment.

DO wear a little extra makeup than you are accustomed to wearing because it will show up better in photos. However, do not wear so much that you look clownish. A makeup artist can help you achieve the right balance.

DON'T have bridesmaids wear makeup that is bolder than yours, especially red lips. No one should upstage the bride.

DO experiment with any products you haven't used before to test for allergic reactions and see how well they wear.

DON'T wear too much under-eye concealer or one



that is too light of a shade. This can draw more attention to problem areas than remedy them.

DO bring a pain relief medication in case a tight hairstyle or headpiece causes a headache.

DON'T forget that men need a little help as well. Exfoliation and moisturization can help dry skin. Guys should use a new razor and plenty of cream before shaving to avoid irritation. A dusting of finishing powder can banish shiny noses and foreheads for photo-ready faces.

Chances are more photographs will be taken of a newlywed couple than at any other moment in their lives. Certain beauty dos and don'ts should be followed so couples put their best faces forward.



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BRIDAL

How to preserve wedding bouquets and arrangements

A bride's gown may garner its share of attention come her wedding day, but floral arrangements also tend to impress guests. Fresh flowers make a wedding and the ensuing reception more inviting and appealing.

According to The Knot.com, couples can expect to spend 8 percent of their wedding budget on flowers. For the average wedding, that equates to roughly \$2,000 for various arrangements and bouquets. That can be a considerable expense for fragile flowers with a shelf life of only a day or two.

But instead of tossing beautiful bouquets and other flowers into the garbage once the wedding day has come and gone, couples can employ various methods to preserve those impressive displays for years to come.

Air drying
One of the easiest ways to preserve flowers is to dry them out. This is best done by hanging blooms upside down so they will remain straight and not warp or wither while drying.

Secure flowers in small bundles and hang from an out-of-the-way spot in a cool, dry area. The flowers may need to remain hanging for up to three weeks before they are completely dried out. After which, gently remove the flowers

and arrange them in a vase or another container. Otherwise, reassemble a bouquet how it was and carefully display.

Pressing
Pressing is another way to preserve floral bouquets and arrangements. To press flowers, find a few heavy books to stack or another weighted object. Place the flowers between parchment paper or waxed paper and lay the heavy items on top. You also can place the flowers in tissue paper between the pages of a book so they are not jostled.

Leave the blooms for a week or two and then check on them before putting them in a shadow box or photo frame.

Chemical drying
Silica gel, borax and regular sand can be used to dry and preserve flowers as well. These can be handy for people who desire to preserve an entire bouquet as-is.

Silica gel is a desiccant commonly found in small packets inside of new shoes and purses. It also can be purchased at home improvement retailers and is used to dry out musty basements and other areas.

Fill a deep container halfway with the silica gel or other drying material. Put in the bouquet and then gently add more product to the top of the flowers so they are com-



pletely submerged. Place a snug cover over the top of the container and let everything sit for about a week. Slowly the moisture will be absorbed from the flowers.

Some people choose to spray dried flowers with a sealant to keep them looking nice longer. An all-purpose craft spray might work. You also can ask for recommendations from the florist who handled your arrangements, and that florist may even preserve the flowers for you for an additional fee.

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YOUR wedding day...the day you've dreamt of and planned in your mind since you were a little girl more than likely. As wonderful as those fairytale dreams were, the reality is it can be a tad stressful. That stress often shows on our face in the form of blemishes, other poor skin ailments or last minute makeup decisions. From bridal portraits to the rehearsal day and wedding itself, all eyes will be on you and you'll want to be looking your absolute best. Here are four beauty tips to make sure that you can put your best face forward on your wedding day.

Skincare

Your skin is the largest organ of your body and often times the most overlooked. From sun exposure to breakouts, our skin takes the brunt of the elements day in and day out. The single best thing you can do to keep your skin glowing, healthy and reduce aging is to moisturize. Most young women that I consult with skip this part due to time or that they think it only applies to older women. Wrong! To keep young, supple skin use a daily moisturizer, preferably one with SPF. However, you do not want to use SPF products on days where you will have your picture made professionally because it will cause you to appear "whiter" in the final photograph.

Diet

They say you are what you eat and this holds true for

our skin looks. Not so healthy items such as chocolate, fried food and caffeine can trigger breakout. Dairy may make your face more red and gluten can cause you to feel "puffy." It's always a good idea to up your water intake, as a well hydrated skin makes for the best canvas for makeup application.

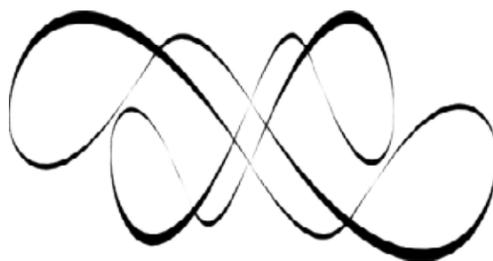
Tanning

Just don't do it! Unless you're living under a rock you know all the stats about skin cancer and premature aging that is caused by indoor tanning and sun exposure. A good spray tan will give you the same effect with a much healthier outcome. I prefer a Norvell hand spray tan over a booth. Always exfoliate prior to help the formula adhere to your skin and make your tan more even.

Makeup

Of course you want to be a little more made up than your every day appearance, but you still want to look like yourself. Your wedding day is not the time to go overboard on products. A soft, natural, classic look is what I always recommend. This includes a neutral lip such as a Macaroon Enduring Lip Color from LimeLife by Alcone, a smokey eye using neutral tones and a pop of blush for a natural flush. I highly recommend a personal consult with your makeup artist prior to your bridal portrait session. This session should include being the skin tone (spray tanned or not) that you plan to be for your portraits as well as your wedding day.

Hopefully these tips will help you look your best as you walk down the aisle. Above all, relax and enjoy! This is your day to shine!



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BRIDAL

Hot trends in wedding cuisine

Once a couple has officially tied the knot, the newly recognized man and wife and all of their guests will retire to a party room where they can mingle, dance and enjoy a good meal.

In the past, standard fare like prime rib and roasted chicken dominated wedding menus. But today's weddings cater to people of various culinary tastes, and couples and their guests can expect more upscale and creative cuisine to be rolled out for wedding receptions. The following are a handful of the more popular trends with regard to wedding cuisine.

Miniature bites

Many people say good things come in small packages, and when it comes to miniature versions of favorite foods, they may be right. Instead of large meals that fill guests up fast, they can munch on smaller bites of their favorite dishes. How about a piece of meatloaf topped with whipped mashed potatoes? A cherry tomato with a small piece of mozzarella cheese makes a mini caprese salad. Turning favorite foods into bite-sized adventures can add a touch of whimsy to the reception.

Breakfast for dinner

Some couples are circumventing high price tags for their weddings by choosing to hold the festivities at less expensive times of day. Brunch-themed weddings are a big hit with those who would much rather dine on a stack of pancakes than a dish of pasta. Omelet stations, croissants and a bevy of other breakfast table fare can be enjoyed any time of the day.

Dim sum

Dim sum allows guests to sample different foods without filling up. Carts of dumplings and other small plates of appetizers can be wheeled around so everyone can choose what they want and what they want to avoid.

Gourmet comfort food

People love familiar comfort foods, but now gourmet comfort foods are shaking up wedding receptions. Mac-and-cheese with gouda and brie or chicken pot pie with a puff-pastry crust are a few offerings that can add glamour to down-home cooking.

Food with a show

Instead of passed foods or buffet stations, couples are opting to make food an experience for guests. An oyster bar with a chef serving fresh seafood or a dessert master whipping up flambé is a feast for the eyes and mouth.

Interesting buffet stations

Keep guests on their toes with various meal stations. A bountiful display of artisanal cheeses, fruits and breads will be a cheese lover's dream. These stations also can be appetizing focal points around the room and ensure all guests get a bite of what they like best.

Family style

Rustic and informal weddings have grown in popularity. Rather than food being brought to the guests or participants lining up in buffet lines, family-style dining allows guests to share conversation and pass the peas at the same time. Larger, rectangular tables allow more guests to sit with one another and serve themselves food from community plates located in the center of the tables.

Food and beverage pairings

Food-forward wedding couples are offering guests mouthwatering appetizers matched with a cocktail. A slider and a craft beer or a dumpling and a shot of sake are examples of this trend.

Nontraditional 'fake' cakes

Instead of a multi-tiered cake or the cupcake fad that is starting to fizzle, couples are now opting for something new. Desserts that mimic the look of cake, but aren't quite that combination of sponge and frosting are trending. Crepes, pies, cookies, and doughnuts are acceptable and can add a creative spark to the cake-cutting ceremony. When offered along with dessert stations, guests can certainly get their fill of sweet delights.

Vegan and gluten-free options

Chances are one or more people attending the reception will be on a restricted diet. Rather than relegate these guests to dining on side dishes and patchwork



meals, certain couples are building entire offerings around vegan and gluten-free foods.

Couples are getting creative with their food and beverage offerings at their weddings. Guests never know which culinary wonders they will encounter as they gather to wish the newlyweds well.

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