

Rock Your Reception

EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT THE RECEPTION IS WHERE THE REAL FUN BEGINS



As a soon-to-be bride, it's easy to fixate on the moment when you finally get to look the love of your life in the eyes and say "I do". After all, that simple exchange of words is the reason you're having a wedding in the first place. If you've sat through a wedding ceremony though, you're probably all too familiar with how it goes down for the people in the audience. In between all the smiling, clapping, tearing up, and cheering, your guests' thoughts are going to be on what comes next: the reception. *What's for dinner? Who am I sitting next to? Is there an open bar? I really hope they don't play the YMCA...*

With guests putting so much emphasis on your reception, it's important to get it right.

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While there's no magic recipe to ensure that all your guests have the night of their lives (if we ever find one, we promise to share), our wedding experts let us in on a few tips and tricks that are guaranteed to make your reception not only live up to your guests' expectations, but exceed them.



Use Your Color Palette to Set the Mood.

We love neutral tones. We really do. They make us want to curl up with a warm cup of tea or coffee and read a great book, which

is exactly the opposite of what you want your guests to do at your reception. That's why we're huge fans of the latest wedding color trend: gemstones. Whether it's rubies, amethysts, sapphires, or emeralds,

borrowing a little inspiration from jewel tones will infuse your celebration with a vibrancy and excitement that more muted colors like base tones and pastels simply can't deliver on their own. Some couples might be intimidated by the thought of using such strong and impactful shades and we don't

blame them one bit. The key to using gemstone hues successfully? Balance, balance, balance. "When I have clients who want to utilize jewel tones, I always recommend that they start off with a base color like beige, cream, or pale gold, and then give a little 'pop' of the richer colors," says Nicole Williams of **Allen/Williams Events**. "It's a feast for the eyes, if you will. Balancing your colors ensures that you won't run into issues like overpowering a beautiful centerpiece with a powerful linen color."



Break Away from Traditional Table Layouts.

Clusters of round tables have become somewhat of a wedding reception hallmark but lately, more and more couples are trading them in for beautiful banquet-style tables. In addition to giving the reception a more intimate feel, using long tables allows you to up your wedding wow-factor in a variety of ways. Circular tables limit décor to a small space at the center of the table, but the elongated shape of banquet-style tables leaves room for much more elaborate place

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settings and centerpieces. The longer tables are also perfect for being arranged in a box formation with the bride and groom at the top. This layout gives you a birds-eye view of all your friends and loved ones, and makes it easier for you to gauge how the reception is going. "The king's table or harvest table is a wonderful trend that we love for our clients to incorporate," says Samantha Dockery of Bliss by Sam Wedding & Occasion Planners. "They're great because they allow for flexibility with seating arrangements, and make everyone feel grand!"

Don't Forget the Midnight Snack.

Of all the trends that are turning into traditions, the "midnight snack" might just be our favorite. No matter if it's sweet, savory, or somewhere in between, midnight snacks give your guests a second wind and reinvigorate your reception. Guarantee that your snack is a smashing success by following these simple rules. 1) Talk to your venue and make sure they're on board. If they aren't, don't panic! Just because they vetoed your popcorn cart doesn't mean all is lost – beautiful tins of popcorn, like Garrett Popcorn's delicious Garrett Mix, are always a sensational hit. 2) Make sure your guests know the snack is happening. If you aren't having your caterer walk around with the midnight snack, make sure no one misses the treats by having your band or DJ make an announcement. 3) Pick a snack that has meaning. "Midnight snacks are a great way to showcase who you are as a couple," says Erin Bobsin of Prairie Landing Golf Club. "If your first date was spent over dinner and

drinks at your favorite pizza place, then why not serve up slices of your favorite deep-dish pizza?" A little helpful hint: don't let nostalgia overpower common sense with this one. Whatever snack you pick still needs to be a crowd-pleaser. Just because you live for dill pickles and mustard doesn't mean that your guests do too.

Throw in a Little Something Extra.

Since midnight snacks and wedding favors are becoming less of a surprise and more of a routine highlight, adding an additional twist to your reception is a hot new trend. If you've got space at your venue and room in your budget, why not go the extra



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mile and give your reception a little extra oomph? Some venues, like **Skydeck Chicago**, deliver all the oomph on their own. "Our private event space is on the 99th floor of Willis Tower, but guests are more than welcome to zip up to the 103rd floor and take advantage of our glass ledges," says Mary Lynn Ferrara,

the venue's Director of Sales. "It's such a unique and memorable experience, and it doesn't cost the bride and groom any extra!" If you're now stressed that you aren't getting married near a scenic glass-bottom ledge, fear not – your options are still almost endless. Cigar bars, Tarot card readers, poker tables,

caricaturists, hot chocolate or coffee stations, fireworks shows... we could go on about reception extras forever, but we'll leave you with one final note. Since your guests won't be expecting it, there's no need to break the bank over your reception surprise.

Feeling inspired and maybe a little overwhelmed? We'll let you in on our Golden Rule. Focusing on wedding details is necessary, but getting bogged down by them is a major wedding no-no. No matter what elements you decide to incorporate into your reception, it's important to remember that your guests have shown up to your wedding to celebrate *you*. The best gift you can give your loved ones is the sight of you and your new spouse glowing on the happiest day of your lives. **ES**



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