

Thanks to social media, there's more wedding inspiration than ever. And that's a good thing. As you'll see from our @youyourwedding Instagram account and Pinterest boards, if you're looking for fresh fashion and décor ideas, there's plenty to get you thinking. Maybe you'll find the flower arrangements you've had in your head for months but could never quite describe properly; maybe you'll see something that sends you off in a totally new design direction.

There is, however, an important point to bear in mind – a point that may seem obvious, but that lots of people overlook: a picture only tells part of the story. A catering idea that looks effortlessly cool on your Instagram feed may be a logistical nightmare in reality; an elegant décor idea you spot on Pinterest may in fact only last in its immaculate state for all of five minutes on the actual day. That's not to say you can't emulate something you see on social media – more that you need to be aware of what you'll need to do to make these elements work in real life. That's why we asked leading industry experts to look at the ideas that are popular on social media, which may not be as straightforward in reality – and explain how to make these as practical as they are pretty.



Hanging flower displays free up table space and look beautiful, too

Photograph by Matt Parry  
Event design & styling by Susie at Knot & Pop  
Flowers by Jo Flowers

# PRACTICAL VS PRETTY

Do the most on-trend wedding ideas actually work in real life? We asked the experts how to use them on your day



Ensure everyone gets their fair share of food

In theory, this is a lovely idea: guests tuck into shared platters, giving the social feel of a family dinner. The reality is that portion control is not everyone's strong point. We've heard from guests who have been left with little to eat by the time the platters have reached them. And a hungry guest is not a



happy guest – particularly if they then hit the free bar on a practically empty stomach. **The fix:** "This comes down to the way the food is presented," says Tim Hanbury of Apollo Event Consultants. "Make sure you have enough staff to help move the food around; staff who wander by the tables and move dishes around will ensure everyone is fed. The key is to keep it circulating."

## Escort cards

As an alternative to a table plan, escort cards may seem both practical *and* pretty. These are individual cards with each guest's name and table written on – easier to change than a printed plan if there are any last-minute drop-outs. However, if you have a larger guest list, people are going to struggle to find their names amid all the other cards.

**The fix:** "Firstly, make sure you arrange them in alphabetical order," says leading luxury planner Kim Balasubramaniam. "Secondly, have a back-up list of who's sitting at which table for your wedding planner or venue to have so that they can assist guests who can't find their table. Thirdly, consider having a secondary table plan just inside your reception space for those guests who either forget to get or can't find their escort cards!"

WORDS BY HANNAH DAVIES. PHOTOGRAPHS BY GETTY IMAGES, DESSERT PHOTOGRAPH BY ABIGAIL WHITE FOR KALM KITCHEN. FIRE PIT PHOTOGRAPH BY APOLLO EVENT CONSULTANTS. TALL TABLE ARRANGEMENT BY BLOOMING HAUS

**TALL ARRANGEMENTS ARE ALL THE RAGE, BUT WE HAVE TO ASK: HOW ARE GUESTS SUPPOSED TO SPEAK ACROSS THE TABLE DURING DINNER?**

## Champagne coupes

Also known as champagne saucers, these are wider and flatter than the traditional flute. Closely associated with the 1920s (although the design predates the period), they have a glamorous Art Deco appeal. However, this is a case of style over substance – the shape means your champagne will quickly lose its sparkle. What's more, it's pretty easy to spill, so you'll have to beware overenthusiastic toasts.



Avoid flat fizz with flutes

**The fix:** Choose a flute or tulip shape for champagne, and keep the coupes for non-sparkling cocktails.



Create space to get guests talking

## Tall table arrangements

Opulent blooms that reach for the ceiling are all the rage. However, we have to ask: how are guests supposed to speak to the people across the table during dinner?

**The fix:** "We advise clients who want tall floral table arrangements that they need to be at least

65cm high," says Michal Kowalski of Blooming Haus. "This means there's enough negative space for guests to easily talk unobstructed. In the same way, low arrangements shouldn't exceed 30–40cm in height. The flowers and foliage play a great role, not only in aesthetics, but also in functionality, so avoid too many cascading flowers in tall arrangements, which will take up more air space." Alternatively, Bernadette Chapman, director of The UK Alliance of Wedding Planners, suggests using hanging arrangements. "This could be a floral chandelier, flowers hanging from the ceiling or Edison bulbs," she says. "These give you a similar effect to a tall table arrangement in that they're adding interest and dimension to the design."

## Hay-bale seats

This type of seating is ideal for a rustic look. But your guests' enthusiasm for your sense of style will wane once they sit on them and are forced to endure straw poking into their posteriors.

**The fix:** Thin covers won't cut it. "The only way around the comfort issue is to place the plumpest of cushions on them," says Tim.

## Fire pits

Popular at all kinds of weddings, fire pits are excellent for creating a laid-back evening atmosphere, keeping guests warm, toasting marshmallows – and giving everyone's outfits an unpleasant fragrance that lasts for weeks. Yes, they certainly have their advantages, but that lingering, rolled-in-ashes odour isn't one of them.

**The fix:** Smokeless fire pits are available to hire in some places, but are less common. If you go ahead with the usual version, preparation is key. "There is definitely a knack to fire pits," says Tim, party planner to the likes of Mick Jagger and the royals. "The big mistakes people often make are not lighting them early enough and having seasoned dry wood. To get your fire pits just right, light them at least an hour before guests arrive. That way, anything you put on them will burn fairly quickly!"



## Styling ideas



Plan ahead to keep displays looking fresh

### Grazing stations

If you're following any wedding accounts on Instagram, you'll have seen these: tables that are artfully overflowing with gourmet snacks, typically featuring cold cuts, breads, cheeses, vegetables and dips. "Grazing tables are full of abundance and opulent elements that together create a food masterpiece," says Sarah Kellum of Surrey venue Millbridge Court. What they don't show you on Instagram, however, is that these can descend into an unappetising

mess once guests have tucked in – meaning it doesn't look good for long.

**The fix:** "The key to a great grazing table is to have a clear structure for all the elements included," says Sarah. "This will make the service flow perfectly for all the guests, with staff keeping a close eye on replenishing the food so it continues to look gorgeous. We recommend speaking to your catering team about how the station is presented and looked after throughout."

### Doughnut walls

Increasingly popular at all styles of celebrations, this is a fun way to treat your guests. But does the reality match up to the idea? "To get the most from the doughnut wall, you want it displayed for a while, but this way the doughnuts will get sticky in the heat, attract insects and lose flavour that you only get from eating fresh," points out Bernadette.

**The fix:** It's all about the timing. "Consider having the doughnut wall in the evening instead, when it's cooler," says Bernadette. Make sure guests are aware it's being set up, so they can help themselves while the doughnuts are fresh.

### Flower walls

These make a stunning backdrop for photographs, for you and your guests. If the flowers start to wilt, however, the effect is noticeably less impressive.

**The fix:** "Make sure your florist accounts for the interior temperature and sun exposure or the outdoor weather," says Michal. "Lowering the temperature of the room makes a big difference to the flowers staying fresh and gorgeous." For all-night-long longevity, go faux. "We've seen an increase in the popularity of faux flowers in the last few months and there are some amazing options out there," says Sarah. "They also give the structure a multi-functional purpose – it can make a fabulous photobooth backdrop during the evening reception."

### Clear-roof marquees

"We've all seen the pictures of those gorgeous twinkly fairy light canopies over a clear-roofed marquee," says Kim. "While they do look stunning, these can be absolutely stifling in hot weather."

**The fix:** Compromise is key. "Think about lining just the roof and leaving the walls clear to give a similar effect without making your guests uncomfortable," says Kim. "Or you could rethink your timings so you're not sitting in the completely clear marquee in the heat of the midday sun."

### Candles on the ground

What could be more romantic than candles casting their soft glow along pathways and staircases at your wedding? What could be less romantic than drunk guests or children knocking them over and setting the place on fire?

**The fix:** "If using real candles, ensure the containers are enclosed, or even better, use battery candles," says Bernadette. "For outside lighting, consider battery tea lights or string festoon lighting instead."



Do magical lighting – the safe way

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Worried about wilting? Go faux

GRAZING STATION BY YOUR PLATTER MATTERS. SMALL GRAZING STATION PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIPPA SIAN FOR KALM KITCHEN. CANDLES PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNETT MARINOVICH. STYLING BY OUI MON COEUR. FLOWERS BY LE COEUR SAUVAGE. FLOWER WALL BY DAZZLE AND FIZZ

## Styling ideas

### Pampas grass

This ornamental grass – *Cortaderia Selloana* – is a huge trend for 2019 and beyond. Yet the reality is that this is not the easiest of plants to work with, given its tendency to shed. “While a very freshly harvested, in-season *Cortaderia* will keep together decently, a mature plant will turn your wedding into a messy affair, especially when you create an arrangement en masse,” explains Michal.

**The fix:** “If couples are set on having this, we’d recommend using it in a sheltered space that doesn’t catch the wind, and ensuring the pampas grass isn’t yet in its mature stage,” says Michal. “Another tip is to coat it with hairspray!” It might also be worth researching alternatives. “If you’re looking to add texture, you could incorporate natural ostrich feathers into your décor instead, or use the pampas more sparingly nestled among other foliage for a similar look,” says Kim.

Separate flower arrangements positioned in a row give a similar effect to table garlands

Photograph by  
Roberta Facchini  
Styling by  
Amy Hatch  
Flowers by  
mossandstone.co.uk



**REMEMBER, THE MORE TIME**

**YOU SPEND HAVING YOUR PICTURE**

**TAKEN, THE LESS TIME**

**YOU’LL HAVE WITH YOUR GUESTS**



Bowl food is a popular choice

### Bowl food

This is what Harry and Meghan served at their drinks reception: miniature versions of main course-style dishes served in, you guessed it, bowls. However, this type of food won’t necessarily leave your guests feeling like royalty. Unlike one-bite canapés, you have to use cutlery, while juggling drink and bowl – not the most fun or elegant of experiences.

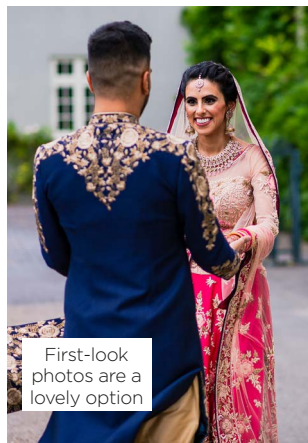
**The fix:** “To get around the issue of eating standing up, ensure there are enough poseur tables dotted around the room, and choose the menu sensibly. Only serve food that can be easily eaten with just a fork,” says Tim.

### Elaborate newlywed shots

Our @youyourwedding Instagram feed is full of couples posing for their first pictures as newlyweds. Often these take place in different parts of the venue, providing a range of backdrops. While these will be lovely lasting reminders of the day, don’t forget: the more time you spend having your picture taken, the less time you’ll have with your guests! We’ve even heard of some couples missing their entire drinks reception.

**The fix:** Set a strict amount of time with your photographer for your newlywed

portraits – and stick to it. Enlist a member of the wedding party to come and fetch you if you do run over that. You could also consider having a “first look” before the ceremony, and having your photographs taken then.



First-look photos are a lovely option

### Table garlands

“Beautiful garlands of fragrant blooms cascading down the centre of your tables look wonderful,” says Kim. “But they are extremely expensive and don’t leave a lot of room for much else!”

**The fix:** If you’re still keen to have table garlands, Kim strongly recommends liaising with your caterer, florist and venue, so that everyone is aware of what you’re planning and of the space available. “Alternatively, you could choose to have posies of florals that are lined up next to each other along the tables to give a similar effect, with the added benefit that they can be slightly moved if necessary, and your guests can take the arrangements home at the end of the evening,” she says.