

Cut the cost of your wedding in half

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By Jennifer Holder

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So you and hubby have set the date, now what? If you are like most couples these days the financial burden of planning a wedding is rested upon your shoulders and you find yourself worrying about how you will ever be able to afford this major life event.

Believe it or not if done properly your big day can pack a powerful punch without spending thousands of dollars. As long as you are willing to put the thought of an overpriced wedding planner aside and do some of the grunt work yourself, your special day will be one to remember forever.

First of all think about who you know. Do you have a friend who has really great decorating sense? A cousin who is taking photography classes? If you sit down and think about who you know and what types of things they excel at you will be surprised at how quickly your wedding bill will shrink. Forget hiring expensive caterers and photographers. All it takes is a simple phone call and I would bet money that the person on the other end would be more than happy to help in any way they can. While planning my wedding I knew a friend of a friend who bakes cakes out of her home for a little extra cash. I got in touch with her and I was able to get a very beautiful cake made exactly how I wanted it for under \$150.00.

Consider having a small intimate reception at your home or someone else's home. The days of having a huge stuffy reception at a hall or overpriced ballroom are over. People like to be comfortable and cozy and surrounded by people that they love. The fact is, the less people you invite the less expensive the affair is going to be. When making your guest list consider crossing off the second cousin you haven't seen in 5 years or the Aunt that lives on the other side of the country. Your wedding day isn't about how many people you can cram into a room. It is about being with the people you love and care about the most. You can shave thousands of dollars off of your bill by checking your guest list twice.

Once you have decided on a theme for your big event it is time to go invitation shopping. Resist the urge to order all of those thick wedding catalogs that sell invitations and accessories and head on over to E-Bay. There are some very talented people out there that earn a living on E-Bay creating custom made wedding invitations at a fraction of the cost. For my wedding I was able to get my invitations,

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response cards, reception cards and all envelopes for just over \$50.00 with shipping and handling. They were made to my specifications and turned out beautiful. Now if you are feeling creative and you have the time you can also try making them yourself. There are invitation kits at craft stores that are very inexpensive. You can save hundreds of dollars by doing it this way.

Serve appetizers and Champaign instead of a 5 course meal and an open bar and save thousands. Your guests will be just as happy with some shrimp cocktails and crab cakes as they would the traditional chicken & pasta with a salad on the side. And you and your fiancé will save a ton of money! Better yet do you know someone who loves to cook?

Flowers are a very important part of any wedding and whether you want real or artificial you want them to look nice. I found a lady on the internet that makes artificial wedding bouquets at a very reasonable

price. What was great about her arrangements was the flowers she used were not the fake looking silk flowers you find in a craft store. They were made with latex and looked, felt and even moved like they were real. So instead of paying over \$100 dollars on a real call-lily bridal bouquet I paid approx \$45. And the best part is that I get to keep them forever. If you have your heart set on real flowers then buy wholesale and make them yourself. You do not have to be a florist to make a beautiful arrangement. Check online to find instructions on how to make bouquets or keep it simple and just carry a bunch of lily's or roses.

I mentioned E-Bay earlier and I am going to mention it again because you can save big time by purchasing your favors, supplies, matchbooks, napkins and any other accessories you may need from reputable sellers there. Most of my items including my bridesmaid's jewelry, my tiara, veil etc were bought there and I saved a mint! Bridal boutiques and specialty shops are so overpriced. Think about it, would you rather pay \$50 for personalized beverage napkins or \$10?

Don't be afraid to ask for help either, your friends and families are probably just as excited as you are about your upcoming wedding. You would be surprised at how much you can save by investing some time and research into planning your wedding day and delegating small tasks to others.

Jennifer Holder is a new bride and also an Ind. Avon Rep. She can be contacted by email at avonjen@yahoo.com or by visiting her website at <http://www.youravon.com/jenniferholder>

Using Silk Flowers – Should I?

By Ginger Ruoff

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Many of the silk flowers available for bridal bouquets today look so real only the bride knows for sure whether they are. Using silk flowers in the bridal bouquet may not be for every bride, but many are taking a second look at the advantages.

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One of the best reasons for choosing silk flowers for the wedding bouquet is that the beauty of the flowers will remain the same for many tomorrows as it looks today. Too often with a fresh cut bouquet, saving it means drying the bouquet. If you are not adept at drying flowers, they may even end up with mold spots. Even if they are dried appropriately, the colors will be faded. You can get a fresh cut bouquet freeze dried to perpetuate the true colors, but it must be done by a professional and can be expensive. Silk flowers will not wilt, mold, or fade on your wedding day or over the years that pass.

If you choose to have a silk flower wedding, you can plan and order your bouquets far in advance of the wedding. Most brides are very busy in the month before the wedding. Having to coordinate with a florist to have fresh cut flowers delivered to the wedding venue is just one more pressure point on the countdown. Also, if the fresh cut flowers do not look like you envisioned, when you get them it is often too late to change anything. When you order your silk flower bouquets as far in advance as six months before the wedding, you have plenty of time to ask for changes or to order extra pieces if other honored guests appear on your list.

Finally, in terms of the wedding budget, a silk flower wedding can be more economical than fresh cut flowers. The flowers you like are always "in season." Prices are not bumped by seasonal changes. Also, because you will be able to order at a time that you wish to, you can pay for the flower expense months ahead of other expenses that will necessarily come right before the wedding.

Whatever choices you make about your wedding flowers – silk flower or fresh cut – a good wedding flower designer will help you create beauty in your wedding bouquet.

Ginger designs custom-styled bridal bouquets and wedding packages for brides. Visit her website <http://www.bridalsilkbouquets.homestead.com> for ideas.

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