

COMPASSWEDDINGS

Eight top tips for the perfect wedding reception

Julian Saïpe's eight top tips for making your wedding reception linger forever in your memory, and in the memories of all your guests

One: Stationery and invitations

Remember how stylish the wedding invitation looked that began new sequences in the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*? That's what you want your own invitations to be. So go for something original: a customized invitation in beautiful calligraphy.

Two: The venue

Think hard about venues: this is the key part of your entire reception. The right venue says something special about you and your wedding. Recent legislation has made far more venues able to hold weddings; take advantage of this to look around at everything available near you.

Three: Flowers

Again, consider being really original. Why not go for big colours and exquisite designs? As with every aspect of your wedding, try to avoid stereotypes. Talk to your florist, and make sure they 'get' what you want your wedding to be.

Four: Table settings

Another opportunity to look beyond the stereotypes. Instead of white linen, why not go for a Monet cream, ivory damask, or - for the summer - some richer colours: hot pinks, lavender or lime?

Five: The food

The food is the 'engine room' of your wedding. Increasingly, London society weddings are preferring a more original approach than the traditional three course sit-down dinner. Why not have a longer, funky reception, with some really great original canapés, and then a super two course meal? Or do things the other way round: sit down to a starter and a main course, and then have a splendid dessert stall. Think beyond the obvious.

Six: The drinks

Why not start with some fantastic champagne cocktails served in funky glassware, rather than the usual formal champagne in flutes? After all, this is a wedding, not a corporate get-together. Avoid full-bodied wines: choose some zesty, light, fruity wines, or grape varieties such as Pinot Bianco or Sauvignon Blanc, accompanied by some great non-alcoholic cocktails.

Seven: Lighting

The lighting at some weddings can be disappointing. Try to incorporate more mood lighting, and candlelight.

Eight: The cake

Here it is, your big chance to abandon the traditional wedding-cake-that's-actually-a-Christmas-cake-with-lots-of-icing approach and go for something more unusual. There are so many options: delicious cupcakes served in a splendid tiered display; and exotic cakes that will leave you wanting more rather than feeling dismayed at the idea of having to eat another slice. ❀

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