



HEAVENLY FÊTE

GABRIELA VELEZ & VINCENT CUELLAR

October 10, 2015 Alexandria, Virginia | Photographed by Abby Jiu Photography



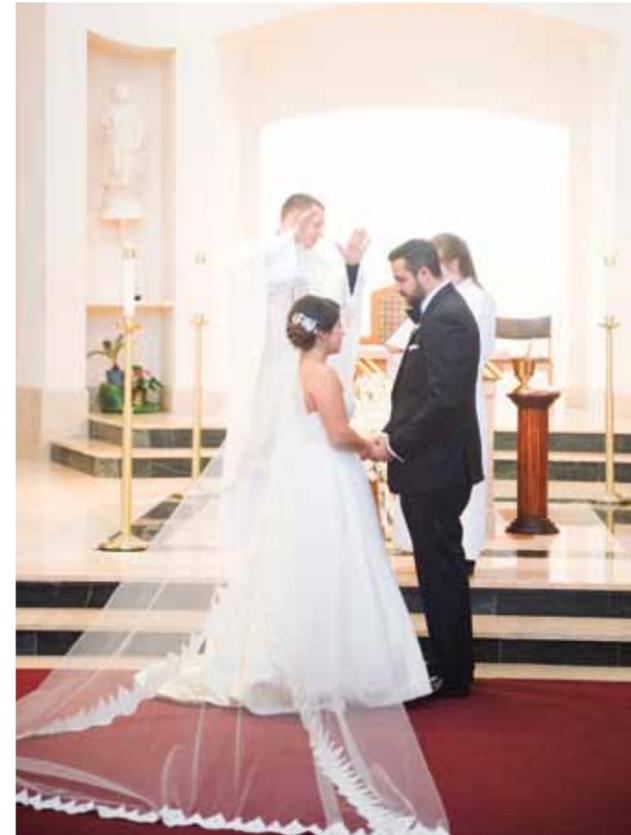
Vincent Cuellar had a monumental New Year's Eve planned for his high-school sweetheart, Gabby Velez. After a romantic dinner, they decided to welcome 2015 at one of the iconic holiday sites of Washington, DC – the National Christmas Tree. Unfortunately, arriving at 10 minutes to midnight, they discovered it was no longer being lit after the holiday. Thinking fast, they directed their Uber driver to the Lincoln Memorial.

Pulling up at 11:59 p.m., Vincent grabbed Gabby's hand and

ran up the stairs as the countdown began. Reaching the top at the "3...2...1," Gabby turned for their midnight kiss to find Vincent on one knee, ring in hand. "He asked me to make him the happiest man on earth and be his wife, because I [am] his soul mate," she remembers. "I gave him a big kiss and said, 'Of course!'" An auspicious token for the next phase of their relationship, Vincent happened to purchase the engagement ring from the same jeweler his father had bought his mother's ring 37 years earlier.

RESOURCES

- Beauty**
Amie Decker Beauty
- Bridal Gown**
Oscar de la Renta
- Bridal Salon**
The Bridal Salon at Saks Jandel
- Bridesmaid Gowns**
White by Vera Wang
- Cake**
Park Hyatt Washington
- Calligraphy**
Laura Hooper Calligraphy
- Catering**
Oysters XO
Park Hyatt Washington
- Consulting**
Thy Parra for EVOKE
- Entertainment**
Élan Artists
Stage Right Entertainment
- Floral Design**
Blue Vanda Designs
- Hair Accessories**
Margaret Rowe
- Invitations**
Haute Papier
- Jewelry**
Bloomingdale's; David Yurman
International Jewelers; Siman Tu
- Lighting Design**
Frost Lighting DC
- Linens/Rentals**
Capital™ Classic Event & Tent
Rentals; Chameleon Chair
Collection; DC Rentals; Nüage
Designs; Silver Lining Design Group
- Photography**
Abby Jiu Photography
- Registries**
Bloomingdale's; Blueprint Registry
Macy's
- Shoes**
Jimmy Choo
- Veil**
Coral Gables Brides
- Venues**
Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
Park Hyatt Washington
- Videography**
Toy Box Productions



The couple set out to plan an unforgettable event for themselves and their guests on the extended Columbus Day Weekend. “Love of food and drink is something Vincent and I, and our families, love to share,” reveals Gabby. “We will sit around a table for hours, enjoying the conversation and laughter over delicious dishes and good wine.” In order to replicate those cherished moments with their guests, the catering menu of a luxury hotel was a defining factor in its selection as the reception venue. Plus, it offered separate areas for the cocktail hour and after-party. Paying no mind to current fads, Gabby elected a timeless ivory palette for the event. She drew inspiration for her accent colors from the mirrored mercury-glass dresser in their home.





The traditional Catholic ceremony was held at the church where Gabby's family has been parishioners for more than 10 years. A large window in the sanctuary filled the space with brilliant sunlight as the bride walked down the aisle in a strapless ball gown of jacquard fabric. Her updo was fastened with a sparkling floral hair clip, and a cathedral veil with lace trim trailed behind her. Like her bridesmaids, Gabby held a fragrant compilation of Playa Blanca roses, calla lilies, and gardenias. The dapper groom was attired in a black tuxedo with matching vest and bow tie. Their precious seven-month-old daughter, who served as the flower girl, sat nearby clutching a jewel-and-bloom encrusted baby rattle.

The couple included two Latino customs in the service; the first being the gifting of the arras. "The groom gives the bride 13 coins as a symbol of his unquestionable trust and confidence. He pledges [to place] all of his goods into her care and safekeeping," explains Gabby. "Acceptance by the bride means taking that trust and confidence unconditionally, with total dedication and prudence." The second involved presenting the Virgin Mary with a bouquet and heartfelt prayers for their future lives together.

The cocktail hour reflected the couple's love of Champagne and oysters. Ladies in gilded gowns with metal structures containing flutes of bubbly fitted over their skirts greeted guests. Bridesmaids and groomsmen elegantly dressed in black were welcomed with Moscow Mule mugs engraved with each of their initials and filled with the savory cocktail. Servers delivered fresh oysters on the shell.



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Among the spectacular floral arrangements were bursts of creamy orchids and roses in tall vases accented with crystal strands. In addition, cut-crystal candelabra topped with draped vanilla orchids were interspersed with petite bouquets of pearl roses and hydrangeas with blush roses adding a touch of color. “Coupling the flowers with the lighting and live music gave it an ambience of a really special night,” attests Vincent.

The dinner service catered to the spirited crowd with the first and second courses followed by dancing interludes. A band and DJ provided a sound track of Latin music and current hits with a sprinkling of wedding classics. “At one point, Gabby and I were jumping up and down in [the] front row like we were at a concert,” recalls the groom. “We got on stage for [a] Journey [song] and played the air guitar together.”

The couple credits their wedding planner for being able to completely relish the entire day. “We owe this to Thy Parra and her team from EVOKE for having everything planned so incredibly smoothly, so that we could enjoy the ride,” declares Vincent.

Gazing out at the ballroom from the sweetheart table with her new husband by her side, “I [was] so grateful for everyone who traveled far or near, to my family for supporting us through thick and thin, and to all of the staff who worked so hard to make this day as perfect as it could be,” muses Gabby. “It was a really special moment for me to realize how blessed I truly am for everything and everyone I have in my life.”

ROSIBEL GUZMÁN

