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Brides
WHO BRUNCH

SO WHAT IF YOU'RE MORE CROSSWORD AND MIMOSA THAN CANDLELIGHT AND CABERNET? THE HOWS AND WHYS OF HOSTING A BRUNCH WEDDING.

by MAGGIE GINSBERG-SCHUTZ



As

MORE AND MORE BRIDES BUCK TRADITION in favor of creative expression and personalization, brunch weddings are cropping up all over like fresh-faced daisies. Typically a Saturday- or Sunday-morning event that wraps up by late afternoon, brunch weddings offer brides an intimate, affordable and uniquely stylized event, with more options for dates and venues, and a timeline on your terms.



"I think brunch weddings can get a bad rap. When you say the words 'brunch buffet,' no one really thinks 'elegant wedding,'" says Sarah Sarbacher of Cherry Blossom Events. "But you can really be creative in classing it up, and brunch weddings offer a unique guest experience, something that can be more memorable because it's just different than what you typically see."

'I'M A MORNING PERSON'

"Breakfast has always been my favorite," says Wendy Sulzer, who hired Cherry Blossom Events to create a brunch wedding for her and her husband Andy. "I wanted to do something a little different than just the typical chicken and fish, something that felt more family gathering than formal plated dinner."

On a crisp, late-October Saturday morning at 10 o'clock, 200 guests gathered at Blackhawk Church in Middleton for the ceremony. Afterward, they were treated to doughnuts, hot apple cider and fresh coffee for the scenic drive out to Wintergreen Lodge at the House on the Rock Resort, about 40 minutes away in Spring Green. Guests were encouraged to stop along the way to soak in the breathtaking fall color and enjoy their coffee while the bridal party took photos.

Upon arrival, cocktails and a signature mimosa drink were served, then a full brunch buffet began, featuring quiche, pastries, fruit and a roast beef carving station. Wendy opted for a traditional wedding cake by Alicia Russell of Madison-based Creative Confections, but chose two brunch-themed flavors, orange and cinnamon roll.

After dining, a full dance ensued with a live bluegrass band, featuring rock, country and swing. "The music fit with the daytime vibe," says Wendy. "It was the typical wedding schedule, just shifted earlier in the day."

Wendy says that at first, Andy wasn't so sure about this whole morning concept—but he ended up loving it. The couple saved enough per plate to allow them to invite more guests and include more loved ones, and the daytime hour afforded gorgeous country views that would have been obscured at night. Many family and friends who had traveled from a few hours away didn't need to book a hotel room. Best of all, Wendy, a "morning person," was snuggled up to her new husband by 6 p.m. that night.

"Staying up until midnight, trying to mingle and talk to

guests, wasn't something that I wanted to do," says Wendy. "I'm really happy with every part of it."

BRUNCH WEDDING BASICS

Brunch weddings may not be for every bride but they're undeniably appealing for the right couple, and there are some clear advantages. Vendors, from musicians to restaurants, may offer discounted rates if it means they can double up on gigs for the day. The availability of venues opens up as well; there's far less competition for space on a Saturday or Sunday morning, particularly at restaurants that aren't normally open during the day, or venues that boast years-long wait lists. Some may even offer special rates, and per-plate charges tend to be lower for daytime menus.

"Any day event is always going to be less expensive than a night event," says Maria Bartolotta of Wauwatosa-based Bartolotta Catering and Events. "It depends on the venue."

Bar bills tend to be lower for daytime events, and you can get creative with drinks. A fully loaded build-your-own bloody mary bar is sure to be a hit, as is an espresso bar or specialty coffee station and a variety of mimosas or freshly squeezed juices.

Brides can opt for a traditional cake, or they can choose dessert bars and buffets. "That expression of creativity gives variety to the guests and makes things more personal," says Laura DeVries of Cupcakes-A-Go-Go in Madison, who creates a heart-shaped made-from-scratch pop tart for her brunch brides, as well as cake pops, mini-cupcakes, champagne-flavored cupcakes, personal-sized mini quiches, breakfast muffins and dozens of other yummy brunch treats.

Keep in mind that for a 10 or 11 a.m. ceremony, you'll be rising to dress and prepare quite early. If you opt for a Sunday you'll want to end the day earlier than you might on a Saturday, since most folks go back to work on Monday morning. But many guests appreciate having the rest of a Saturday or Sunday evening free, particularly if they've got a plane to catch.

(facing pages)

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SMALL AND SWEET

When wedding planner Elizabeth Hunt of Hudson-based Lizzie Anne Weddings first heard about the burgeoning brunch wedding trend, she was instantly charmed, thinking of waffle stations and bacon on a stick, stacks of pancakes and raspberries in mimosas. She imagined taking an empty venue and transforming it into a coffee shop or cozy lounge, even bringing in Sunday newspapers wrapped in twine and custom crossword puzzles as place settings—things she calls “Sunday adorable.”

“I just thought, this is such an amazing idea,” says Hunt. “I just needed the right bride.”

Melanie Zacker turned out to be that bride, but she wasn't thinking about trends at all. She simply knew



(facing pages)
 THE WORDS "MIMOSA BAR" TURNED BRIDE MELANIE ZACKER AND GROOM RONALD INTO BRUNCH WEDDING BELIEVERS. THEY HOSTED AT MILWAUKEE'S LAKE PARK BISTRO AND FILLED THE INTIMATE RECEPTION WITH SWEET TREATS AND LAWN GAMES.



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she wanted a waterside wedding at Milwaukee's Lake Park Bistro, that she and her groom-to-be Ronald both loved brunch food, and that they were both more interested in quality time with an intimate crowd than a traditional evening gala.

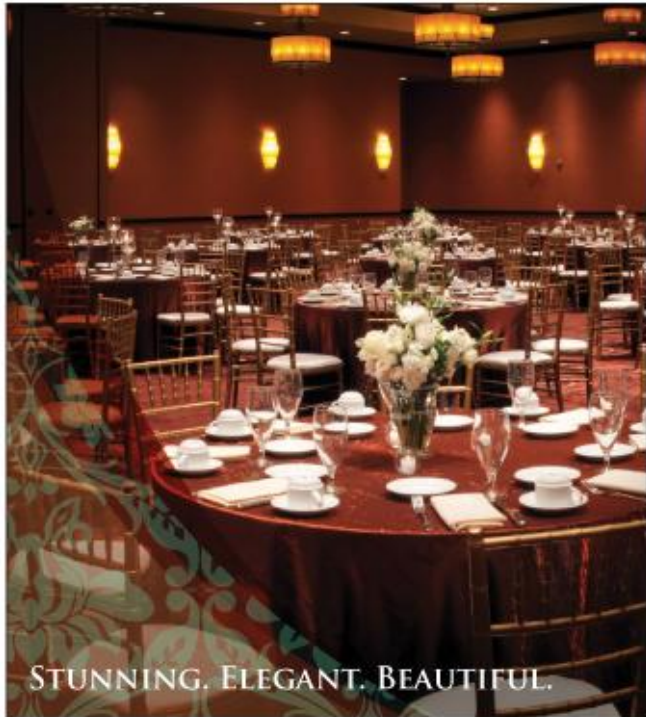
"Then I said the words 'mimosa bar' and she said, 'Done!'" laughs Hunt.

Melanie and Ronald's 36 guests arrived early for the 11 a.m. nuptials, mingling first and noshing on buttery honey madeleines, chocolate-covered strawberries and lemon curd crème tarts at a sweets table. They moved into the North Lake Room for the ceremony, then the South Lake Room for brunch including pork terrine, French cheeses, brioche French toast and Alsatian tarts oozing with gruyère.

Melanie didn't want a dance, opting for games instead. Inside, guests played Uno or worked on a jigsaw puzzle featuring a photo of the couple. Outside, against the oceanic backdrop of the Lake Michigan shoreline, guests played croquet and bocce ball on the Lake Park Bistro lawn. When Melanie's 13-year-old niece got the impulse to run through the sprinkler, Melanie joined her, in her wedding dress. The whole thing wrapped up by 3:30, but guests were invited to join the bridal couple on a sunset Edelweiss private boat cruise on Lake Michigan later that evening.

"The day was perfect, and it all felt so easy," says Melanie. "Just what we wanted, small and sweet." ❁

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