

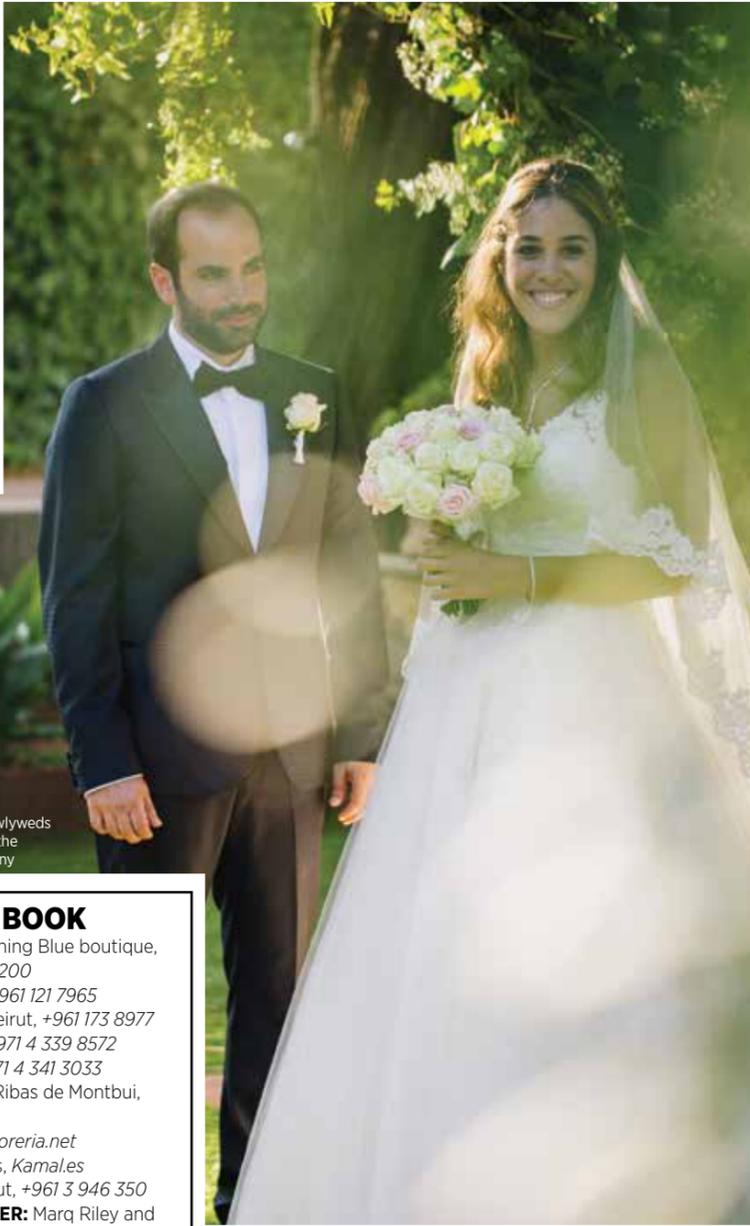
# ZEINA HALAOUI

*With the hills of Barcelona as a backdrop, Zeina and Mustapha created a chic Catalanian-meets-Middle Eastern wedding that let nature take centre stage*

*Photography by MARQ RILEY*



The ceremony area scattered with petals



The newlyweds during the ceremony



The bride's 'getting ready' outfit, a gift from a close friend



Zeina and her parents, just before the ceremony

**BRIDE'S BLACK BOOK**  
**DRESS:** Alvina Valenta from Something Blue boutique, Beirut, +961 7 048 6200  
**SHOES:** Maria Pino Beirut, +961 121 7965  
**WEDDING RING:** Nsouli Jewelry Beirut, +961 173 8977  
**GROOM'S SUIT:** Paul Smith, +971 4 339 8572  
**GROOM'S SHOES:** Tod's, +971 4 341 3033  
**VENUE, CATERER & CAKE:** Can Ribas de Montbui, Canribas.com  
**FLORIST:** La Floreria, Laffloreria.net  
**MUSIC:** Kamal Productions, Kamal.es  
**INVITATIONS:** Carte Blanche Beirut, +961 3 946 350  
**PHOTOGRAPHER & VIDEOGRAPHER:** Marq Riley and Veronica Hansen, Marqriley.com



The coffee truck that served thirsty guests after dinner



A fountain at Can Ribas de Montbui filled with Granny Smith apples

The tree-lined walkway leading to the wedding



Sunset and a beautiful flower cart during the drinks reception



Peonies and hydrangeas decorated tables named after Spanish cities



Canapés and celebrations



Personal touches kept things unique

For globetrotters Zeina Halaoui, 30, and Mustapha Chaker, 33, a destination wedding was always on the cards. With 170 guests to entertain, finance analyst Zeina was keen to find a place that could accommodate a variety of different tastes. After much thought, Barcelona came out on top for its perfect balance of beach and city life. "I wanted a coastal city with lots of different sight-seeing options," says Zeina. The Lebanese couple chose the picturesque Can Ribas de Montbui as their venue, a huge 15th century farmhouse in the village of Bigues i Riells, just a 30-minute drive from Barcelona's centre.

What the couple didn't plan on, however, was the difficulty they would have in arranging the wedding from afar. "Although we hired the help of a local Spanish agency," says Zeina, "they ended up serving more as translators than planners." The reason? "The wedding industry in Spain is very different from this part of the world. People are not attentive to detail and just don't invest a lot of time or energy into decoration, flow or planning. I literally took over the organisation of everything, from A to Z."

And it was no mean feat. She had to reach out to florists, lighting suppliers, caterers, dance-floor suppliers and many more in order to find the one that offered the best services and that could translate and execute what she had in mind. "I also worked directly and very closely with the venue's owners and staff. I enjoyed it so much and the end result was

The best men on duty waiting for Zeina to arrive with her father



Cutting the white, three-tiered chocolate truffle cake

absolutely amazing and worth all the planning," says the bride.

Luckily Zeina isn't one for much deliberation. Something that also ensured the selection of her wedding dress was a smooth and quick process. "It was the easiest part of the whole shebang," she smiles. "I had a particular style in mind – I wanted sleeves not strapless, and a whole lot of lace." Although she did try on many dresses over the course of a week, Zeina kept coming back to the second one she had tried on; a beautiful ivory lace gown by American label Alvina Valenta.

Preferring to keep things simple, although still very stylish, the bride chose a fresh colour palette of green, white and pink. "I didn't really have a dominant theme," Zeina admits, "I just wanted a very outdoorsy green garden feel in an understated, chic setting." Her choice of flowers? Peonies and hydrangeas, for a fresh, summery feel.



The couple enjoy their first dance to Always by Bon Jovi

Despite her difficulty in delegating, Zeina paid phenomenal attention to detail. She had a kitsch lemonade stand next to a floral bicycle, there were trolleys of flowers dotted around, a fountain filled with green apples, and two-food trucks – one for coffee and one for sweet or savoury crepes.

So what was Zeina's favourite part of the night? "Definitely the welcome drinks," she smiles. "We had a piano bar – a band of two, who play the piano, sing and serve drinks on the same piano. It turned out to be more of a dancing affair and everyone looked ecstatic. The setting was beautiful with a full mountain view and the weather was just perfect. We stayed at the welcome drinks until sunset, which made it all so much more magical." ■

Welcome drink decorations kept to the garden theme

