

WEDCETERA

Photograph by Benjamin David Photography

ECO CHIC

From sourcing flowers locally to composting food waste, sustainable event company Detroit Cultivated's fetes are as beautiful as they are environmentally responsible.

Waste Not, Want Not

Detroit Cultivated's sustainable revolution, new boutiques to shop now, a bridal beauty must-have, and more

WRITTEN BY *Giuseppa Nadrowski*

ETHICAL EVENTS

WHEN HALEY LERTOLA was working in the Chicago events industry, she was bothered by the amount of waste generated by an event. So much so, she quit and began to study food production processes at the Harvard Extension Center. "I learned that along the food production process, there are many ways to make it much more sustainable," Lertola says. "I then had this aha moment where I was like, oh my gosh, I want to apply similar practices but to planning events." After much research, Lertola headed to Detroit, where the city's blossoming urban agriculture scene made it the perfect place to launch her sustainable event coordination company — Detroit Cultivated. From planning private events like weddings and dinners to more corporate fetes, Detroit Cultivated does it all, even hosting its own soirees like this year's much-anticipated un•BRIDE•led, a wedding reception experience. We chatted with Lertola to learn more about her business, her upcoming events, and how to incorporate sustainability into your big day.

SOURCE LOCAL AND SEASONALLY

"Part of planning a sustainable event is sourcing local," Lertola says. She explains by sourcing your food and also your flowers locally, you help to reduce the amount of emissions that are produced, in addition to supporting and growing the local community and economy. Among her priorities is to "redirect large wedding purchases to small, local businesses." Lertola has worked and collaborated locally with the flower farms of pot + box and Fresh Cut Detroit, Detroit Laser whose repurposed table numbers Lertola described as art, and the tasty treats of Detroit Friends Potato Chips, "an extraordinary example of a business that was started by members of the community that have been in the city through good times and bad."

MANAGE YOUR WASTE

"Instead of throwing away everything at the end of the night, we recycle and compost as much as possible so that not everything is ending up in the landfill," Lertola says. "We partner with a farm in Detroit called the Michigan Urban Farming Initiative ... We take all of our compost there — our food waste as well as flower waste. They chop it all up and put it in their soil to grow food."

NOT YOUR ORDINARY BRIDAL EXPO

This spring, Detroit Cultivated presents their annual un•BRIDE•led event. A unique wedding reception experience for brides and grooms, the event offers couples the opportunity to chat with local vendors "that are incorporating conscience, ethical, and environmental practices into their businesses." Couples will discover stunningly styled tables, a local and seasonally sourced three-course meal, champagne reception, and more. "We are really raising awareness about how beautiful your wedding can be by using vendors that use best practices," Lertola says.

FUTURE PLANS

"If we can change the way we look at events, we can really reduce the amount of waste we are producing and we can make a really big change in the events industry," Lertola says. "My ultimate goal is to create a zero waste event space in the city."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

For Lertola, it's all about your purchasing decisions and how to keep them local, especially when considering your food, beverages, flowers, and favors. "You want to have this beautiful celebration for you and your family," Lertola says. "Realizing it can also be an opportunity to do good is a pretty cool thing."



For more information on Detroit Cultivated and its upcoming un•BRIDE•led event, visit detroitcultivated.com.