



Weddings

- Pick a caterer
- What a wedding costs
- A wedding checklist
- Questions for an officiant

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Local caterers help make for the perfect occasion

By MARIN HOWELL

ADDISON COUNTY — Behind the scenes of any wedding is a group of people working to ensure the happy couple's day is as memorable as possible. Oftentimes that team includes the caterers that bring the couple's food-related visions to life and support them throughout their big day.

Addison County is home to a variety of catering teams that specialize in anything from wood-fired pizza to Asian-inspired cuisine. Local teams are often flexible in their offerings and dedicated to helping couples develop the perfect menu.

"I love to see happy people and enjoy the fact that they enjoyed the food," said William Wisell of Farmers Market Pizza. "A lot of people put in a lot of time to these things for their wedding day; you've got people that think about it their whole life...and that day's a big day, so just making that day theirs is what I strive for."

William and Cristy Wisell make up the two-person team behind Farmers Market Pizza, a mobile wood-fired

catering company based in Vergennes. Like other caterers around the county, Farmers Market Pizza handles a variety of other gatherings in addition to catering weddings — from baby showers to corporate celebrations.

The pair previously owned and operated Cucina Antica restaurant in Shelburne, where they operated a wood-fired pizza oven at the local farmers market. That work led to the launch of their frozen pizza line, Half Baked Pizza. They later sold the business and returned to their roots of catering with the pizza oven through Farmers Market Pizza (www.farmersmarketpizzavt.com).

"When we went to Half Baked and started doing the production and manufacturing, we just lost that personal touch with people, so this gives us that opportunity to be connected with people and showcase Vermont," Cristy said of the catering business.

In each of the operations they've run, one of their main focuses has been offering clean, GMO-free options. The pair grows many of the ingredients they use at their Vergennes property.

"We try to grow most of our vegetables for our grazing tables...flowers for our décor, herbs for our pizzas," Cristy said.

Farmers Market Pizza offers packages for pizza and other catering options, all customizable. For appetizers, the caterer's offerings include grazing tables — a spread filled with charcuterie, veggies and fruits, cheeses, and other snacks — as well as wood-fired chicken wings, beef skewers and salad bars.

During the summer, the pair focuses on their wood-fired pizza and enhancements like appetizers, salads and dessert tables. Cristy noted serving ciabatta-style pizza allows the pair to whip up meals quickly.

"We can definitely feed 100 people in about 35 minutes, and that's the process of us pre-building and then just cooking and continually refilling the board before pizzas run out," she said.

Winter catering options include buffet-style pulled pork, roasted turkey and other protein options served with various sides.

William noted the pair welcomes couples to make the menu their own.

"One time we had a guy who was a big time game hunter. He brought wild boar, he brought venison, he brought elk, a whole bunch of stuff for the pizzas and we put that on all the pizzas," he said.

Once food service begins, Cristy and William find a rhythm and work to ensure the event goes smoothly.

"We can circumvent any obstacles that a wedding day will put in front of you,

and believe me, there are obstacles," William said. "This allows us to not be one of the worries, and when you don't have to worry about your food on your wedding day, that's a load off your mind."

Making sure couples and guests can celebrate worry-free is also the goal for the team at Crooked Ladle Catering in Middlebury.

"Our job is to help people feel relaxed and for no one to have to worry about a single thing," said Jenny Urban, who runs Crooked Ladle with her husband, Lou.

The pair opened the business in 2022, bringing to the table prior experience at local eateries like the Black Sheep Bistro in Vergennes and Bristol's Bobcat Café. Crooked Ladle began as a catering

(See Caterers, Page 7)

"We can circumvent any obstacles that a wedding day will put in front of you, and believe me, there are obstacles ... and when you don't have to worry about your food on your wedding day, that's a load off your mind."
— William Wisell



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● ● ● ● ● *Questions to ask when interviewing caterers*

A wedding reception is a joyous occasion that affords newlyweds and their guests an opportunity to celebrate into the evening. Various components combine to ensure a memorable reception, but food is a major highlight of the festivities for guests. That places a significant responsibility on couples to find a reception center or third-party caterer who can dish up food that will have guests saying “I do” to a great meal.

These considerations and questions can help couples find the right caterer for their weddings.

Does my venue mandate use of a particular catering service?

The wedding planning website Zola advises that many wedding venues require couples to use a specific catering service. They may have an arrangement with a particular caterer who they trust, or the venue has in-house chefs and servers. In the earliest planning stages after the wedding date has been set, a couple should be sure to pick a venue that will serve the best food possible. Couples who have a specific caterer in mind may need to shop around for a venue that will allow outside vendors.

Identify your preferred meal

First and foremost, a couple should know how they want to have their food served and inquire with potential

caterers about their standard options. Service types often include a formal sit-down dinner reception, a buffet dinner service, a family-style dinner, or a more minimal cocktail offering without a full dinner. The couple can cross out prospects that don’t offer the type of service they desire most.

Ask what’s included

A couple should determine if a catering service offers food prepared by professionals, the amount of flexibility related to menus, if table settings are included, and if cleanup is part of the fee. Full-service catering typically includes all of this, while more limited service may be food brought in that requires the venue’s own staff to serve and clean.

Compile the right questions

It’s important to ask caterers some key questions to narrow down prospects. Some of these include:

- Are you a participant in any local business associations?
- What events with a similar concept have you catered?
- How many weddings do you book each year?
- Will my wedding be the only event you cater on that day?
- How many guests can you accommodate?
- Do you handle special food requests, such as gluten-free or kosher

meals?

- How many chefs and cooks prepare the meal, or are meals exclusively prepared by the business owner?
- Do you allow substitutions or customization to a set menu?
- Do you have references for other events you have catered?
- Do you have any preferred vendors?
- What do we need to know and do regarding delivery?

Keep location in mind

The distance a caterer has to travel to cater the wedding will affect the price. It’s helpful to find a caterer who knows the venue or has had experience with a similar place.

What are the contingency plans?

When interviewing caterers, Cvent, an event management software company, suggests asking about any last-minute changes they’ve dealt with to gauge how the caterer handles problem-solving. Inquire about how they adapt if a certain menu item is no longer readily available or what they do if a piece of equipment breaks down the day of an event? Answers to these types of questions can separate seasoned professionals from those caterers who may not be as experienced.

Food is a vital component of a wedding reception, which underscores the significance of finding a talented and experienced caterer.

— Metro Creative





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This is what people spend on weddings

Vermont is a relatively small state among the 50 that make up the United States, but it pretty much falls in the middle when comparing how many weddings are hosted here each year, the number of guests at each wedding, and the average cost of weddings. That comes from The Wedding Report Inc., which tracks trends in the industry nationally.

The company reports that the average cost of a wedding in Vermont in 2025 was \$39,616.

That number probably makes most engaged couples say, “Wow!”

And it is reported that the nationwide average for 2025 was \$32,899, so that puts

the Green Mountain State a little above average.

What is the most expensive state for a wedding in 2025? Hawaii. The average wedding price there was \$53,369, followed closely by the District of Columbia at \$49,810.

Where are the most affordable weddings located? Mississippi (\$23,432) and New Mexico (\$23,776) represented the most budget-friendly states for couples in 2025.

But local couples need not freak out about the price of a wedding quite so much. The Wedding Report’s numbers are for the “Average” costs, which reflects the total economic footprint of the industry.

For some, a better thing to look at is the “median” amount spent on weddings, which provides a more realistic middle-point for typical wedding budgets by removing ultra-luxury outliers.

In Vermont, the median spent on a wedding in 2025 was \$19,462.

That’s still above the national median, which was \$18,23.

Average costs are often skewed by a small number of ultra-luxury weddings costing six figures or more. The median spend identifies the exact middle point of the market, where 50% of couples spend more and 50% spend less, providing a more attainable target for most planners, according to The Wedding Report.

Hawaii, not surprisingly, also had the highest median spend at \$21,117, followed by Massachusetts (\$20,584) and D.C. (\$20,381).

The Wedding Report asked what is the “typical” national wedding spend? The fact that the median spending falling between \$15,000 and \$20,000 seems to indicate that many couples are successfully finding value by inviting fewer guests to their wedding and prioritizing key amenities, like venue, catering or entertainment.

In 2025, Vermont hosted 4,564 wedding. That is a small fraction (0.226947%) of the total number of weddings in the U.S.,

2,011,044. But it does show the popularity of Vermont as a location for weddings as the Vermont population was only 0.1996% of the country’s total population.

California leads the nation in volume with 208,178 weddings in 2025, followed by Texas (175,052) and Florida (158,764).

Why does Nevada have such a high wedding volume relative to its population?

Despite being a smaller state, Nevada (79,271 weddings) remains a major outlier due to its status as a destination for elopements and quick-ceremony services, particularly in the Las Vegas market.

Vermont is slightly above average in the Wedding Guest Count; it was 136 in 2025. The national average number of guests at weddings was 127.

Which state has the largest average wedding guest count? Maryland with an average of 169 guests per wedding, followed by New Jersey (168) and New Hampshire (164). The Wedding Report assesses that this reflects strong regional traditions of larger, multi-generational community celebrations.

Nevada (48) and Hawaii (79) show the lowest guest counts because they are primary destination hubs. The travel and logistical requirements of a destination wedding naturally result in smaller, more intimate guest lists.

The Wedding Report that in 2026, the guest count will be the primary driver of total cost for weddings. Every additional guest adds significant variable expenses in catering, rentals, and bar service, with the average cost per guest now ranging between \$200 and \$250 depending on the venue type.

— John S. McCright





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3 tips to create a reasonable wedding budget ● ● ● ●

Weddings are momentous occasions in the lives of couples. Recently engaged couples likely know that weddings can be expensive. The experts at the online wedding resource Zola estimated that couples would spend around \$36,000 on their weddings in 2025. If that figure produces some sticker shock, couples can rest easy in the knowledge that such estimates reflect a host of variables, not all of which are applicable to each wedding. It also can calm couples' nerves to develop a budget as the first step in wedding planning. Once a budget is worked out, couples can then use that to guide their decisions.

The need to budget for a wedding may seem obvious, but couples, particularly those tying the knot for the first time, might not know where to begin. Couples facing such a situation can consider these three budget-building tips for their wedding.

1. Identify where funds are coming from. Parents of the bride were once the traditional sources of wedding funds, but that's less common than it used to be. According The Knot Real Weddings Study, the average age of marriage in 2024 was 32 years. That means many couples are now on relatively firm financial footing by the time they get married, prompting some to pay for the entire affair themselves. Couples looking

to establish a wedding budget can first identify who's helping to fund it. If couples are going it alone, then this is a simple step in the process. If parents and other relatives offer to pitch in, couples can count such offers toward the total amount of money they have to fund the big day.

2. Consider working with a financial planner. Another strategy to building a budget is to work with a professional to determine how much you can afford. Many couples now live together prior to getting engaged, and Zola notes that more than half (53 percent) even shop for rings together.

3. Identify your priorities. The Knot reports that venue and rentals accounted for slightly more than one-quarter (27 percent) of couples' wedding budgets in 2025. While venues and rentals are typically the biggest expense when planning a wedding, couples building a budget should identify their biggest priority. Some might want a stunning venue, while others might feel a backyard ceremony is perfect for them. Identifying your biggest priorities and then devoting enough funds to those areas can guide the budget-building process.

Weddings can be expensive. Budgeting can help couples get the wedding they want without breaking the bank.

— Metro Creative



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Caterers

(Continued from Page 3)

service, later expanding with a restaurant and event space at 51 Main St. in Middlebury.

Over the years their team has grown into a 20-person staff that Urban noted is instrumental to Crooked Ladle's work.

That team continues to offer catering services, working around 100 weddings in addition to other celebrations since starting in 2022. Couples can peruse a few different packages and menu inspirations on Crooked Ladle's website, which can be customized and built off of.

"It just depends on the couple and what they want," Urban said.

Crooked Ladle's offerings range from Asian to French-inspired fare, and the team has worked with couples on anything from slider sandwiches to 184-person plated dinners. In addition to food, Crooked Ladle also offer bar service.

Past wedding menus have included gnocchi with fresh market vegetables, seared duck breast, flatbread bites, and pasta with kalamata olive and fire-roasted tomato chicken.

"Often we'll start with the question of, 'What's you and your fiancé's favorite food to eat,' or 'What's food that you like to celebrate with,' and then we'll design a menu based on that," Urban said.

Each celebration has its own flavor, from smaller gatherings to elaborate wedding dinners. Urban highlighted some memorable moments from this past wedding season, such as whipping up espresso martini shots while guests danced to Sabrina Carpenter's "Espresso" and catering a few fully-vegan weddings.

"That was a cool challenge for us," Urban said.

Regardless of what's on the menu, one of Urban's favorite parts of the job is connecting with couples. She noted those connections often last long after the vows are said.

"(Crooked Ladle recently hosted) a

birthday party for somebody who had gotten married with us in our very first year catering as Crooked Ladle in 2022," Urban said. "It was so fun to see the people that were at the wedding and meet the baby and hear about their life, and knowing that you're part of their life at that very beginning part of the wedding day is kind of fun."

Working with local couples is also a highlight for Andy Buxton of Mave Catering, formerly Buxton's Store catering. The former Buxton's Store owner has offered catering services for around 15 years, both on his own and as part of other establishments.

Buxton noted that he likes to specialize in smaller venues, with parties of up to 100 guests being the sweet spot. As for the menu, Buxton works with couples to build the lineup of food offerings from

scratch.

"I like to say to my clients, 'The slate is clean, I will build you any kind of menu you want,'" he said.

Buxton works within couple's budgets and can provide examples of menu options if that's what they're looking for.

He noted that with each bill he sends, he'll make a note listing all of the local producers he sourced ingredients from.

"I write down when I send the bill that 'I used cream from Monument Farms and cheese from Cabot and local beef from so and so,'" Buxton explained. "We really focused on, as long as it was within the client's budget, really supporting local as much as possible."

His favorite part of the job is watching a couple's plan become reality and helping inspire their wedding day menu.

"The best thing is definitely being able to work with the customers one on one and seeing what they wanted (come together)," he said.

Those interested in learning more about Mave Catering can contact Buxton at 802-989-8720.

"We really focused on, as long as it was within the client's budget, really supporting local as much as possible."

— Andy Buxton



THE CROOKED LADLE Catering team whips up a meal for guests. Crooked Ladle is one of several local catering options for couple's planning to say, "I do," and the team's offerings range from slider sandwiches to 184-person plated dinners.

Photo courtesy of Crooked Ladle Catering



AMONG THE OFFERINGS of the catering team at Farmers Market Pizza are grazing tables, such as the one pictured here, filled with charcuterie, fruits, veggies, cheeses and other snacks.

Photo courtesy of Farmers Market Pizza



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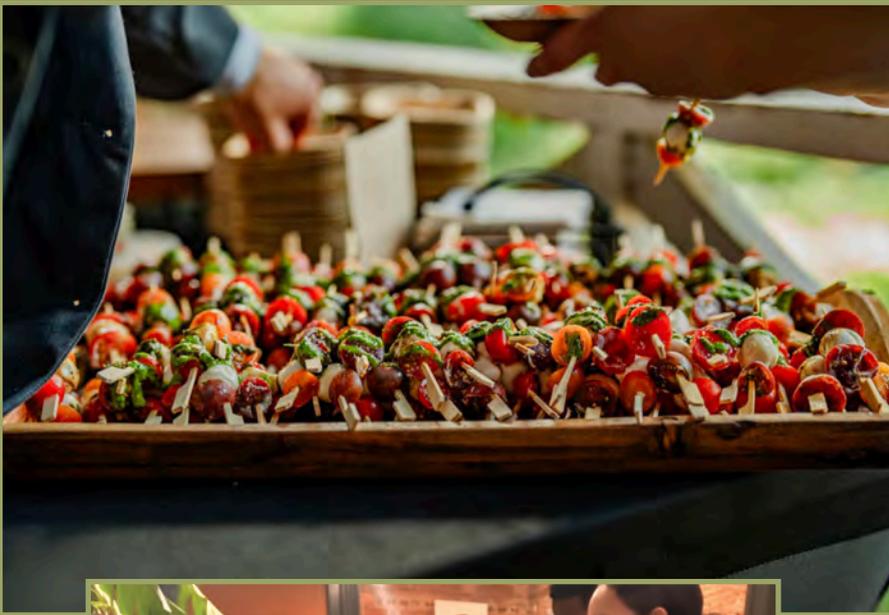
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Farmers Market Pizza



Wedding fare

WHEN IT COMES to weddings, the menu is a key ingredient to a couple's big day. Local caterers offer a plethora of options for celebrations of all sizes and styles, whether it be wood-fired pizza and dessert tables from Farmers Market Pizza, pictured right, or cheese boards and French-inspired fare from Crooked Ladle Catering, pictured left.

Photos courtesy of Crooked Ladle Catering and Farmers Market Pizza



Crooked Ladle Catering



Tips to streamline a wedding day

Marriage is a social institution that is thousands of years old. Marriage has undergone changes over the years, but plenty of people are still tying the knot and hosting amazing wedding celebrations.

A total of 2,065,905 marriages were

recorded in the United States in 2022. Statistics Canada indicates 98,355 registered marriages took place in 2020. Prospective brides and grooms may be inclined to host more simplified and streamlined weddings in order to

(See Streamline, Page 10)

State offers some help with promoting Vermont's best side

Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing promotes weddings in the Green Mountain State through its Vermontvacation.com website.

"Say Yes to Vermont," the site trumpets.

It pitches Vermont as the ideal wedding destination:

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That's a pretty good summary of the benefits of a Vermont wedding.

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How to navigate wedding transportation

On a couple's wedding day, some effort will be required to transport the bride and groom and wedding party participants and guests. Coordinating transportation is a task couples must add to their planning checklist.

Wedding transportation is perhaps best broken down into three categories: transportation for the couple and the wedding party, transportation for guests, and transportation for unique situations. These tips can make navigating wedding transportation needs go smoothly.

Transportation for the couple and wedding party

Ensuring that the couple and wedding party participants arrive to the ceremony (and later the reception venue) on time is essential. Couples and their attendants

traditionally arrive in some sort of hired car, whether it's a limousine or vintage/classic ride. It's important to find a service that will pick up the couple (separately) and their bridesmaids and groomsmen as well as parents of the bride or groom and bring them to the ceremony site. Drivers usually wait for the ceremony to end before taking passengers to photography locations and eventually the reception venue. Vendors typically price for hourly service with a minimal rental period. Larger vehicles will have a higher hourly rate.

Transportation for guests

Although it's not customary to offer transportation for all guests to the ceremony or reception venue, in the event of circumstances like hotel room

accommodations close to the reception, couples may want to offer shuttle service between the reception center and hotel. If the wedding reception will be non-traditional, and take place at various stop-off spots, like a bar crawl, party buses or trolley service could be considered to keep all guests together.

Unique situations

Couples may want to enhance their wedding festivities with some specialized details that might require unique transportation situations. For example, a wedding that takes place on an island would require a ferry service or water taxi. Couples tying the knot during the picturesque winter season can go the extra mile and commission horse-drawn sleighs. Rustic weddings have grown in popularity. A charming hayride can complete the picture for a wedding reception held at a farm or in a converted barn.

After the festivities

The couple also may need to consider transportation once the wedding has ended. Those going directly to a honeymoon may need a hired car to take them to the airport. Transportation also will be needed for any wedding party participants who did not take their own vehicles to the wedding, but rode in party buses or limousines.

Wedding transportation may not be the most glamorous aspect of wedding planning, but well-coordinated transportation is a necessity that couples, their friends and family will appreciate.

— Metro Creative



Streamline

(Continued from Page 9)

save money and time. Finding ways to streamline a wedding is not necessarily that challenging.

• **Keep the ceremony short.** While this may not always be an option for couples who are having a traditional religious ceremony that is beholden to the rules of the faith, some couples can opt for a shortened ceremony that is more direct and to the point. A

streamlined ceremony can stick strictly to the exchange of vows, rather than including readings, musical interludes, candle lighting ceremonies, and more. Couples who want religious ceremonies can speak with their officiants to see how they can stick to tradition, but keep the ceremony more succinct.

• **Communicate roles for the wedding party.** Having designated people to handle a variety of tasks at the

wedding fosters efficiency and can save time by moving things along. It also allows for smooth transitions during parts of the ceremony. For example, the maid of honor traditionally holds the bride's bouquet during the ceremony. But other bridesmaids can be enlisted to hold items or fix the bride's train or veil as well.

• **Select one venue.** Holding the wedding ceremony and reception in the same place cuts down on travel time and logistical issues for both the guests and those involved in the wedding. It also reduces necessary costs for transportation.

• **Choose a nearby location.** Asking guests and vendors to travel great distances can add time to the wedding festivities. Selecting a centrally located ceremony site and reception hall will streamline many of the steps people would have to take to attend. It also might remove the need to arrange overnight accommodations for the wedding.

Streamlining a wedding and making it more efficient can save time and money.

— Metro Creative

A wedding checklist

Planning a wedding is a significant undertaking.

After the question is popped — and accepted — the couple has the monumental task of choosing a wedding party and a guest list. Consult family and friends for help with that.

And then there's planning the nuts and bolt of the big day.

Though many tasks associated with wedding planning are enjoyable, the number of variables that must be coordinated can make the process feel a little overwhelming at times. Staying organized can make wedding planning a lot easier, and this checklist of vendors can be used by couples looking to stay calm as they plan their big day.

- Wedding venue
- Reception venue
- Caterer
- Bakery
- Photographer
- Videographer
- Florist
- Officiant
- Entertainment
- Jeweler
- Transportation
- Hotel
- Salon/hairdresser
- Makeup artist
- Wedding planner
- Bridal gown retailer
- Groom's attire
- Favors vendor

One suggestion is to get a blank book, and keep lists of everything you are thinking about and working on in this book. It is not only a good way to keep organized by providing a single place to turn to when looking up a detail you are working on or have already decided, but it is a nice keepsake the couple can treasure for years after their wedding.

— Metro Creative



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Helpful suggestions for choosing a wedding officiant

Many things come to mind when couples are planning their wedding. Brides-to-be may envision walking down an aisle decked with beautiful flowers in a space populated with their closest loved ones, while grooms may anticipate the moment they first see their beloved in a beautiful gown.

One person who will be there to witness it all may not garner too much of a couple's planning energy, but officiants are nonetheless notable components of a couple's big day.

Wedding officiants come from a variety of backgrounds. Many are representatives from a couple's house of worship, such as a parish priest or the rabbi from their synagogue. Others are friends of the couple who get certified to officiate weddings just for the occasion. Many more are officiants who couples meet for the first time in advance of their wedding.

For those going that latter route, knowing what to ask when vetting an officiant can increase the chances of finding the right fit. No two couples are the same, so some of the following questions may not apply to every couple, but many can come in handy and help couples identify the right officiant to preside over their nuptials.

- How long have you been officiating?
- Are you a legally recognized officiant?
- What inspired you to become a

wedding officiant?

- What is your fee?
- What is included in your fee?
- Do you ever book more than one wedding in a day?
- Can we write our own vows?
- Can you share remarks you've prepared at previous weddings you officiated?
- Can you share references from past couples whose weddings you officiated?
- What is the biggest challenge to arise during a ceremony you officiated and how did you handle it?
- Is it possible to customize our ceremony?
- Are you available on our wedding day?
- When do you typically arrive at a ceremony venue?
- What is your availability during the season we want to tie the knot?
- How far will you travel to officiate a wedding?
- How often do you meet with couples in advance of a wedding?
- How long is the average ceremony you officiate?
- Are you familiar with unity ceremonies?
- Are you available for the rehearsal?
- Do you perform religious ceremonies?
- Do you perform inter-faith ceremonies?

• What do you typically wear during a ceremony?

- Do you plan to stay for the reception?
- Do you have a backup officiant on call in case you cannot make it at the last minute?

• Do you have any specific requests

of the couple?

Choice of officiant is a significant decision, and these are just some of the questions couples can ask when vetting prospective wedding officiants.

— Metro Creative



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Just in case — create a backup plan for outdoor wedding

A wedding day is a magical and memorable day for a couple and their family members. Months or even years of planning may go into making a wedding day special.

For some, an outdoor wedding and celebration amid the beauty of nature is the ultimate setting in which to tie the knot. When Mother Nature is your decorator, the setting can be hard to match. Perhaps that's why 62 percent of couples opted for outdoor nuptials in 2023, according to The Knot 2023 Real Weddings Survey. However, there may be some extra

work involved when exchanging vows outdoors, hosting a reception outside or both. That work includes having a contingency plan in place if the weather does not cooperate. Here's what couples should know about having a backup plan for their outdoor weddings.

- Identify a second location. Couples who book outdoor receptions at catering halls can inquire how they handle inclement weather. Many will have a clause built into the agreement to move the party indoors in the event of bad weather. Others may enable the wedding

to move to a different space for an added fee. Smaller, less formal weddings taking place at other locations may require a bit of ingenuity when looking for a backup space. Perhaps a friend has a large house where everyone can gather, or an employer may have a warehouse, loft or even a barn that can be transformed into unique venues at the last minute?

- Choose outdoor spaces with covered areas. The wish might be to have blue skies overhead, but it's impossible to control the weather. So it's safe to select outdoor spaces that offer a measure of

weather protection, such as a pavilion in a park or a covered deck at a lakeside locale. Such sites offer a little security without detracting from the ambiance.

- Look into a tent rental. A tent is a great investment because it keeps everyone out of the elements rain or shine. Even on a lovely summer day, the blazing sun can make being outdoors uncomfortable. A tent is the solution. Couples should coordinate with a wedding planner or the venue itself to be sure that a tent is allowed on the grounds.

- Hire a wedding planner or enlist a family member or friend to play that role. The Knot suggests hiring a wedding planner or coordinator who can pivot to plan B in the event of bad weather. This helps take some of the stress off of the couple so they can enjoy the day.

- Plan wardrobe and hair/makeup accordingly. Brides and bridesmaids can choose fabrics for dresses that will be comfortable and not become blown around or see-through due to rain and wind. The wedding party can ask hair stylists to create a wedding hairstyle that is somewhat weatherproof. Experienced makeup artists likely know some tricks to keep makeup looking flawless even when the weather isn't.

Outdoor weddings can be beautiful events, but it is important to have a backup plan in place in case weather doesn't cooperate.

— Metro Creative



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