

THE CUPCAKE BRIDAL HEADQUARTERS

INDISPENSIBLE TIPS & INSIDER INSIGHTS

for memorable Weddings & Bridal Celebrations

from Professional Wedding & Event Planner, Alison Hotchkiss



DEFINING YOUR STYLE: HOW TO BE ORIGINAL AND MEMORABLE

Alison's tips for putting your personal imprint on the event

Your wedding should be a reflection of who you are as individuals and as a couple. Rather than obsessing over specific flowers and colors, you'll want to first create an overall design vision. Once you have a style in mind that will work well in your wedding venue, you can start to narrow down the details like color palette, floral arrangements and paper materials.

1 MAKE A STYLE BOARD

Gather photos of events, weddings, colors, flowers, lighting, and attire you like. Print or cut out appealing images from blogs, online resources and magazines. Create a scrap book-style inspiration board or a storyboard PDF online that you can email to vendors. You can create inspiration boards on SnippetandInk.com. Pinterest.com is also a great place to gather links to imagery you like.

2 DETERMINE YOUR COLOR PALETTE

Whichever your palette preference, adding color is a fun way to really make an impact. Choose your colors based on the venue and seasonality or something personal to you: a sea-side reception might inspire nautical or ocean tones, while an evening event in the city might evoke shimmering shades of slate or bronze. Or, maybe you have a particular color that you simply adore – fresh lavender is beautiful, combining both a pale purple and sage. Start with a core color and work in at least 2 complimentary hues: I usually aim for a muted or richer shade in the same family such as teal to compliment an ice blue. Then, I layer in a smaller amount of an accent color that pops against the other two – in the case of turquoise, I might add tangerine orange or a pale coral tone. One website I frequently reference is colorshemedesigner.com.



3 THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Check out lifestyle blogs and magazines that are focused on interior design, fashion, art and more. You can even go to the local bookstore and look at design books to get inspired. Something will catch your eye and that something is the key to building your style for the wedding. It only takes one image to let your creativity run wild!

4 MIX IT UP

Check out what your options are for tabletop and linen rentals from your reception venue or local event rental company. Consider a mix of colors, patterns and textures. I love mixing burlap fabric runners with a crisp clean white linen then adding a patterned napkin with bold colors to really pop on the table. Getting custom printed menu cards for each place setting is also a great way to add a personal touch and/or pattern and color to the tabletop. You can ask your caterer for linen and tabletop rental companies they like to work with or check out www.classicpartyrentals.com, a company that has offices around the country.

5 LITTLE EXTRAS

Visit local flea markets or your favorite restaurants and hotels, paying close attention to things like tabletop, décor and lighting. These details can inspire your own ideas for imprinting your personality at your wedding. I love putting flowers in old vintage bottles in all different shapes and sizes and even different colors. I've even spray painted the glass vases to create a more modern effect. Matte white painted glass bottles are gorgeous with bright pink flowers.

6 INVITES WITH IMPACT

Visit stationary stores or browse online to find inspiration for your invitations and other printed items (save-the-date cards, seating cards, printed menus, wedding programs, welcome packets and more). I love combining fabric, stitching, calligraphy and letterpress to make a big splash with the wedding invitation. I also really love creative save the dates, like something poster sized or sending out a bottle of wine if you're getting married at a winery. One of my favorite resources for paper inspiration is ohsobautifulpaper.com.

7 FOOD STYLE

Do you want to serve plated entrees or dishes served family style? Maybe you want to serve dinner buffet-style or have a dessert bar or assorted-flavored cupcakes versus a traditional cake. Consider other flourishes such as paper cones filled with French fries or a taco truck for late night snacks. The style of service can say a lot about a couple and their personalities.

8 MAKE YOUR MARK

To create an event that's unmistakably yours, take a moment with your fiancé to define your signature style: Write down all of the words that come to mind when you think about the kind of celebration you'd like to have -- romantic, elegant, serene, chic, modern, eclectic -- the choices are endless. Then try to narrow the list to no more than 5 adjectives. Think about the words you circled and see what pictures start to take shape. For further inspiration, check out www.stylemepretty.com—a top wedding blog that posts stylish real wedding pictures daily. You should also check out 100layercake.com and greenweddingshoes.com. I also have a wedding blog, where my team of event planners posts weddings, events and inspiration. You can check us out at alisonerevents.blogspot.com.



9 HOTEL HELLOS

Greet guests who've traveled from afar by putting together little welcome bags for their hotel rooms. Include a printed timeline for all wedding events as well as a list of fun local restaurants, points of interest and other information. Fill each bag with assorted local treats: something sweet, something salty, and something delicious to drink is a good outline. In Mexico, you can fill the welcome bag with chips and salsa, mini tequila bottles and limes, paper fans, sunblock and something for kids like a little Mexican wrestling figurine or a maraca. If you're getting married in wine country, put a bottle of Cupcake Red Velvet wine in the bag with some local homemade jams, Lula's salted caramels and house made potato chips from the famous Bouchon Bakery.



11 SIGNATURE COCKTAILS

Signature cocktails are a lovely way to welcome guests and put your personal stamp on the party from the beginning. Cocktails that mix spirits and wine are totally on trend right now. Garnishes from the garden are also making a splash – a sprig of rosemary or lavender are always beautiful in a drink. A big chunk of fresh basil also looks beautiful and adds a ton of flavor. I like my custom creation called the Blackberry Chiffon Refresher made with lemony Chiffon Cupcake Vodka, fresh blackberries, simple syrup, flavored sparkling water, a splash of red wine, and a sprig of fresh mint. (click here for recipe).



12 WINE MATTERS

Serve wines with dinner that reflect where you have traveled as a couple or hope to travel someday. Include a sentence on the menu card for each wine served explaining its significance: "Please enjoy this Cupcake Chardonnay from California's Central Coast – the place where Paul popped the question!"; or, "We love this Cupcake Pinot Grigio from Italy's Delle Venezie near Venice where we will be honeymooning!"

10 PAY IT FORWARD

In lieu of party favors, a great way to add a personal touch to your wedding day is to make donations in your guests' names to a charity you both support. You can tell guests about your donation on your website or on the menu card at the wedding.



ALISON HOTCHKISS
Founder-Owner, Alison Events
alisonevents.com

