

## THE PLEASURES AND PITFALLS OF A HOME WEDDING

The father of the bride movie comes immediately to mind! Escalating expectations and costs, wind, rain, heat, emergencies and potential disasters.....Help!

As to the pleasures of a home wedding.....ahhhhhh! The gorgeous couple sharing their special day with family and friends in the most meaningful of locations: your own beautiful home and garden.

Which scenario will be reality for your outdoor wedding depends on the knowledge and care of planning that is put into the whole of the event. After 40 years of planning beautiful weddings and receptions, many of them outdoor events in private homes and estates, we offer the following pointers:

One of the biggest challenges of having your wedding at home is the amount of work it will take to get ready for the big day. The advantage: your home and yard will look the best it's ever looked! To accomplish that, you will be committing significant labor and costs to make everything "just perfect."

We suggest you start the previous year with an assessment of the yard during the same month as the coming wedding. What is blooming? What needs to be filled in? What backdrop do you want for the ceremony? Allow ample time for any major projects and plan to have everything completed 2 weeks before the wedding.

As to the weather: plan for the worst and hope for the best! Start with a rain plan as part of your budget. Tenting for rain or extreme heat can be costly, and should be allowed for in advance. Most tent companies require a deposit to hold tents. Policies on releasing or confirming your rain plan tenting vary. Be certain you have a quote in writing and understand the policies. If the weather gets nasty, everyone else in the area will be wanting tents and you may not be able to secure them at the last minute. A professional caterer will handle the details of tenting questions for you.

For a wedding of any size, you will need to rent tables, chairs, linens, china, etc. Full service caterers will handle these details for you. If you are having a small event and you choose to order the rental yourselves, place your order at least 6 months in advance. If you wait until the last minute, you may not be able to get the equipment you want.

Décor for the yard can be as simple or elaborate as you choose. White mini-lights in trees and shrubbery can add sparkle with minimal cost. Luminarias and candles in charming containers can mark paths and yard features. An arbor or trellis entwined with greenery or flowers can be a charming backdrop for the ceremony.

Your photographer may want to visit your home in advance to plan for photo locations. Your caterer certainly will do a site visit during the planning stages to help you with the “flow” of the event.

Bathrooms - vs- portable restrooms: If you do not have adequate bathroom facilities for the number of guests you are expecting, or if you are on a septic system, you will need to plan for portable facilities to be brought in. There are several levels of portable restrooms available. Ask about the choices as well as the costs. We suggest screening the facilities with lattice or fabric draping to soften their industrial look. Some units have a hand-washing feature for an additional cost. If you choose a unit without hand washing, large size baby wipes are a good alternative and don't leave hands sticky. Put them on a small table, perhaps with a nosegay of flowers and a pretty wastebasket nearby.

Both the food and the cake need to be out of the sun and covered to protect them from birds and insects. If your home has room, locate the buffet indoors or choose a small tent or market umbrellas as protection. Your caterer will need a work area and access to sinks for hand and dish washing. A clean garage can be used for equipment and staging using rented tables.

Don't forget the garbage! It's always amazing how much trash a party can generate. Splurge and buy new garbage cans (some are in pretty colors) and have extra liners available. Plan to keep the garbage away from animals and have it removed promptly to avoid odors.

Good planning and attention to detail will enable you to have the wedding of your dreams at a private home or rented estate. Small weddings (under 75 guests) are very doable without professional help. Larger groups and logistically challenging events are easier for you when you choose a team of event professionals that are accustomed to more complicated events.

We want you to relax, to laugh, cry joyful tears and enjoy all the family and friends who have joined you in celebrating the first day of the rest of your lives together!

Sharon Snuffin is the president of Snuffin's Catering, an award-winning caterer in the Tacoma area of Washington State. She can be contacted at [sharon@snuffins.com](mailto:sharon@snuffins.com). Menu and pricing information are available at [www.snuffins.com](http://www.snuffins.com).