

ADDING A TWIST: LOCAL COUPLES CHOOSE UNFORGETTABLE THEMES, PAGE 8

Boston Sunday  
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Romantic  
looks bloom.  
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# Brides

SOMETHING  
NEW,  
SOMETHING  
GOLD

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STAFF PHOTO BY TED FITZGERALD

Wedding gifts from Neiman Marcus include St. Louis Crystal glasses, Buccellati sterling silver flatware, and Haviland and C. Parlon china. Above right, Tiffany & Co. recently introduced Lucida, a new diamond cut and ring setting.

# BUY, BUY LOVE

Dream celebrations worth any price

By CARA NISSMAN

Six gold-lame-clad gospel singers trilled "This little light of mine" as Carole Crittenden strutted down the aisle toward her groom, Tim Reed. Their 25 attendants and 300 guests clapped along. The spirited ceremony was the icing on the cake of a three-day wedding extravaganza, replete with a talent show, croquet tournament and lobster and clam bake.

The Reeds, who live on Beacon Hill, held their wedding weekend in Southampton, N.Y., where they fell in love.

"We planned it how we wanted it, not how others wanted it. That's the most important thing for any couple," said Carole Crittenden Reed, curator and director of acquisitions at the House of Blues in Cambridge.

Her husband, Tim, owner of the special events

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STAFF PHOTO BY GEORGE MARTELL



STAFF PHOTO BY LAURIE SWOPE

David Fox of Ashland, a recent groom, models clothing from Kaps at the Burlington Mall.

Katrine Straume of Ford Model Management wears a dog collar choker, \$250; Letty earrings, \$115; tiara, \$600, and Regalia veil, \$675, all from Yolanda.

# POSH AT ANY



# PRICE

From preceding page

company Voice Promotions, added, "We wanted to milk the occasion because it would be over before we knew it. The worst part of a wedding is you barely remember seeing (your friends) then, boom, it's over."

The Reeds, who are still paying for their June wedding, aren't alone in going over the top to celebrate their union. Whether they have a large "destination" wedding or a small, hometown affair, couples are spending an average of \$25,000-\$27,000 to unite. Many weddings hit the \$75,000-\$100,000 range and involve hundreds of people.

"It's wild," said Rob Moran, special events design manager at Winston Flowers in Boston. "People take out second mortgages to pay for their weddings. They're like 'Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.'"

"People are doing more," agreed Boston's premier party planner, Bryan Rafanelli, owner of Rafanelli Events. "People are considering other places and extending the experience."

Some brides are dropping \$5,000, \$10,000, even \$20,000 on a drop-dead dress by Vera Wang or Reem Acra.

"They can cost thousands of dollars," said Yolanda Cellucci, owner of Yolanda's in Waltham, citing the work of hot designers Badgley Mischka, Richard Tyler and Peter Langner. "It gets pretty expensive."

Cellucci even once sold a bride a bright red dress to match the red-and-yellow hot-air balloon in which she got hitched.

"For a girl who wants to be creative, she can do anything. If they have the money and the talent, the sky's the limit."

As brides gleam in increasingly bold gowns, grooms remain reverent in classy tuxes.

"They have a luxury look to them," said Joel Kapelson, principal of Kaps Stores in Andover. "There's definitely a huge turn toward quality in tuxes and accessories. There are shirts with highly twisted fibers and (jackets with) highly spun wools of 120-150 count, with fine herringbone running through them."

Grooms are gravitating to names such as Dolce and Gabbana, Ermenegildo Zegna, Vestimenta and Canali, said Kapelson.

"Our tuxedos range from \$695 to \$2,400, but they're flying out the door (at) \$1,200 and up," he said. "Clothing is becoming more important to depict lifestyles. We are seeing older grooms, waiting till they have their lives in line."

Flowers also are becoming a costly must-have wedding attraction.

Two years ago, the average cost for floral design and set-up \$3,000-\$7,000,

said Moran at Winston. Now, it is \$8,000-\$15,000.

Moran, who has worked at Winston for 14 years, said couples are ordering elaborate arrangements in large urns and French wire containers, and centerpieces for every table.

"There's a lot of money out there," he said. "People want the most they can possibly get no matter what their pocketbook says. If it's their dream to have it over the top, they will get it."

As elegant ends to wedding feasts, compact cakes designed for each guest are popping up. But teeny does not mean easy, or inexpensive. Traditional wedding cakes cost an average of \$8-\$10 per person. Mini cakes cost an average of \$25-\$30 each, depending on the work involved.

"The pricey cakes look like miniature wedding cakes with three tiers and specific themes," said Ursula Argyropoulos, owner of Ursula Art of the Cake Inc. on Newbury Street. "If I do a large cake, I can use normal size sugar flowers. But if I have to scale it down to a tiny cake, it means six or seven tiny flowers per cake and six or seven times the work."

Although classic engagement rings continue to reign, some brides are wielding wild styles.

Cartier and Harry Winston, among others, are jazzing up traditional styles with bold gems, such as sapphire, ruby and peridot, and shapes that would stand out in your grandmother's jewelry box.

To welcome guests in

style, expensive, elegant invitations are showing up in mailboxes.

"They're going for more of an upscale look, with bows and handmade papers, which are more unusual," said Lauran Niegous, store buyer and store manager at Papyrus in Boston.

For a recent wedding, Niegous crafted 450 classic invitations in white with black printing for \$4,000. Weddings invitations usually cost \$600-\$1,000.

"A wedding's a big production now," she said.

And the couples executing extravagant weddings generally register for lavish gifts.

"It's crazy," said Cara Oyabe, bridal manager at Neiman Marcus in Boston. "The average registry amounts to \$8,000-\$10,000 a couple."

A five-piece place setting can cost from \$500 to \$1,900, but Haviland & Parlon peddles a \$4,000 hand-carved, 24-karat gold pattern. "We have a real push toward opulence," she said. "Eighty percent of brides register for \$300-\$400 place settings," from companies such as Buccellati and Faberge.

"People are moving away from floral (china) patterns," said Oyabe. "They're in their late 20s and 30s and getting away from mom's florals for a more contemporary look of platinum and gold rims with plain patterns. People are also taking more chances mixing and matching china patterns."



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANTHONY ISRAEL

their union with events that spanned

dings cost more than \$500,000, industry some ways you can show off your riches:

- black-and-white photojournalism-style pictures; and professionally produced "this-is-your-life" videos to play at your reception.
- Buy platinum rings, which are two to four times more expensive than gold.
- Commission your own song.



Wedding invitations from Papyrus, Boston, often incorporate bows and handmade papers for a custom look.

At the Fair top, \$2,090 finish the l



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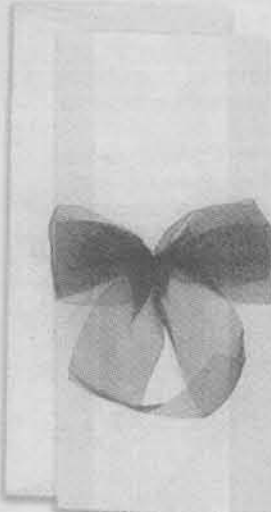
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At the Fairmont Copley Plaza, Katrine Straume of Ford Model Management models a Reem Acra pant, \$2,640 top, \$2,090.95, and queen-bee style tiara, \$735, all from Yolanda. Barefoot sandals from Paris, above left, \$8 finish the look.

STAFF PHOTO BY GEORGE