

Ask Us Anything

YOUR WEDDING WORRIES SOLVED.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF: (LEFT TO RIGHT) OUR SHOP, PHOTO BY JUDD SATHER PHOTOGRAPHY; STILLWATER BALLOONS.

Q My mom is having a tough time finding a dress for my wedding. Do you know of any local shops with a variety of mother-of-the-bridal outfits?

A Fortunately, the Twin Cities is home to several stores packed with a variety of looks—fresh, traditional and unique—with something sure to appeal to your mother.

One option is *dugo* in Edina's Galleria, which offers off-the-rack and customizable dresses and separates. "We're experts at helping women work through their needs and wants," says owner Nancy Shank. "Our favorite line is Marisa Baratelli. We can do special ordering with this line to the point where you can just about design your own dress."

A second option, also in the Galleria, is *Whymys*, which offers an ever-changing

selection, says owner Karen Hughes. "The inventory changes quickly because most items are produced once and never cut again," she says. "Several jewelry pieces are also one of a kind." Hughes points to designs by Lee Anderson, in which all pieces are sold separately, as an example of custom options.

Another sure bet is *Our Shop* in Stillwater. "When we first started 13 years ago, mothers wanted to be in the background. Times have changed! Mothers are expressing their personalities at their child's wedding," says owner Carol Sudheimer, whose store carries designers like Jovani, Montage and Jade Couture. "Many who come to Our

Shop haven't worn a formal gown in years—or ever. We help select dresses in her comfort zone."

If you're looking for instant gratification, pop into *Get Social by Glitz* in the Mall of America. "With our vast inventory—we have more than 350 gowns on the floor—many mothers walk out with a gown," says owner MaryAnne London. "We are a special-occasion boutique, similar to the days when sales associates actually assisted you in dressing rooms. It is not unusual to have more than one sales associate pulling gowns and ideas for each client," says London. getsocialbyglitz.com, ourshopmn.com, dressupgoot.com, galleriaedina.com

Q I want to offer an unforgettable activity for my guests at my reception this fall—something above and beyond photo booths or dancing—but I'm stumped. Do you have any ideas?

A How about hot-air balloon rides? Husband-and-wife team Steve and Ann Jacobs of *Stillwater Balloons* can incorporate a gravity-defying experience into any part of your nuptials.

"Stillwater Balloons arranges for both standard rides, private rides and custom rides—really, if you can dream it up, it's likely possible," says Ann.

You could include the balloons in your wedding photos, take a ride with your new spouse after the ceremony, depart from your reception with a huge "Just Married" sign and yes, even offer your guests tethered rides during the reception.

Just one caveat: Ann recommends having a back-up plan in case bad weather is an issue—something all outdoor brides should consider anyway. stillwaterballoons.com

Q I would love to have "wish cards" at my reception (in which guests write down congratulatory advice and wishes for the couple), but my friends have tried them at their weddings and didn't get much of a response from guests. Is there a better way to tease out more participation?

A Even shy guests will have trouble resisting *Write On Riot's* creative fill-in-the-blank wish cards.

Owners Rob and Debbie Dalton, who are based in Minneapolis, created the cards to place on reception tables at their daughter's wedding in place of a guest book. Every card has prompts such as, "On this special day I wish for you enough ____ to last a lifetime" or "I wish for you a relationship like the one between ____ and ____."

"Couples are fascinated by what guests will say about them," says Rob. "The prompts help them express something they know about the couple, and the bride and groom love reading the cards." The reaction at his daughter's reception was great: "It was probably the least expensive addition, but had the greatest impact."

Write On Riot's reception wish cards are available in four designs, with three color options, available in 25-card packs. writeonriot.com

Q My fiancé and I moved in together when we got engaged. Wedding planning is going well, but we're starting to discover lots of differences in the way we live: He's a neat freak; I'm more relaxed. He wants to order takeout every night; I'd rather we cook together and save money. Little things like that are starting to drive me crazy. Would it be weird to get counseling before we're even married?

A Not at all! In fact, we highly recommend it. You can find your own counselor, or consider making an appointment with *The Engagement Coach*, Adrienne Laursen, MA, a Minneapolis-based licensed marriage and family therapist offering counseling for individuals and couples who are dating, engaged, newlyweds and more.

"With the divorce rate above 50 percent, being proactive is always a good thing," Laursen says. Her services specifically focus on the engagement and newlywed stage, "so couples feel comfortable talking about how hard it can sometimes be. My approach helps couples learn about their relationship and doesn't just focus on negative issues."

As an added perk, completing a specified number of hours of counseling also qualifies you for a reduced marriage license application fee. theengagementcoach.com

Q The morning after the last wedding I attended, I woke up with aching feet, a bad sunburn and a pounding headache. What can I do to ensure my own guests stay comfortable at my reception and always remember it for the great party it was—not the painful next morning?

A While it's impossible to prevent all post-party aches and pains, it wouldn't hurt to set out a "comfort table," like the one wedding planner Nicole Walesch of *b.inspired events* in Minneapolis devised as a place for guests to get a little TLC.

Think of your guest list and reception location to brainstorm what should be offered at the comfort table. Outdoor wedding? Try sunblock, umbrellas, shawls and bug spray. Lots of children present? Keep them occupied with coloring books, crayons and snack packs. Offerings for any crowd could include aspirin, flip-flops for tired feet, taxi numbers and water bottles.

"Guests go crazy over the comfort table!" says Walesch. "It really makes them feel appreciated and the evening more meaningful. Often weddings can be a full day or weekend event and making your guests comfortable will never be forgotten." b-inspiredevents.com *

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