

Prepare for the rehearsal dinner



Many couples find their wedding rehearsal dinners to be relaxing respites from the whirlwind of wedding planning. Such dinners enable the happy couple to slow down and enjoy themselves in a relatively casual gathering with their closest friends and family members.

Rehearsal dinners typically take place in the night or two before the wedding. The couple, members of their wedding party, the parents of the bride and groom and others involved in the wedding typically attend this dinner. The couple generally takes the time at the dinner to thank everyone for their contributions to the wedding and to offer some small gifts of appreciation. No rules govern rehearsal dinners, so couples have the freedom to plan the dinners as they see fit.

Rehearsal dinners often come immediately after the ceremony rehearsal, when the wedding party and the officiant go over the timing and details of the wedding. Make arrangements with the ceremony site and officiant prior to making dinner reservations.

Parents of the groom traditionally host the rehearsal dinner, so they will be integral in planning the event. That means couples should keep an open and gracious mind. Remember,

the rehearsal dinner doesn't have to be a lavish affair, and it can be customized to any budget or preference.

Some couples feel that hosting rehearsal dinners in casual settings can make the dinner more comfortable for members of the wedding, who can use the dinner as an opportunity to mingle and get to know one another before the wedding. This will help to tame nerves and enable the wedding party to loosen up and enjoy themselves even more. Some people may be more inclined to socialize and have fun when they're not worried about putting on airs.

Restaurants that have special meaning to the couple often make for great places to hold rehearsal dinners. The bride and groom can suggest their ideas, but ultimately it is the person handling the bill who has the final say. Couples who want greater control over the rehearsal dinner festivities can suggest hosting it themselves.

Despite its name, the rehearsal dinner doesn't actually have to be a dinner, as couples can opt for meals at a different time of the day, like brunch or lunch. An earlier occasion gives guests plenty of time to get home and rest up for the festivities of the wedding to come.

See **REHEARSAL** page 11

Planning floral arrangements

One of the big decisions couples must make when planning their weddings concerns their floral arrangements. The right flowers won't break the bank but will add substantial aesthetic appeal to ceremonies and receptions.

It can be difficult for couples to achieve that balance of cost and look on their own, so the following are a few helpful hints for couples when choosing their wedding day floral arrangements.

Work with a florist you trust and like

All florists are not the same, so finding one you can trust and will enjoy working with can make all the difference. Many couples have little or no experience with floral arrangements prior to planning their weddings, so it can calm couples' nerves to work with someone they trust in such situations.

Florists with significant wedding experience will no doubt make a host of recommendations based on couples' budgets and preferences, so couples might be more inclined to listen to that advice if they are working with someone they trust. Ask relatives, friends or coworkers if they can recommend any florists whose wedding work they are familiar with.

Choose in-season or native flowers

Couples working with tight budgets may want to choose in-season flowers or those native to the area where they will be tying the knot. In-season and native flowers won't need to be ordered or shipped in from afar, which

can be costly.

In-season and native flowers tend to be more abundant as well, and the greater their availability the less couples are likely to pay for them.

Go big

Some flowers simply bloom larger than others, and choosing such flowers may help



you save money since you won't need to buy as many flowers as you would if you were to go with smaller blooms.

Once you find a florist to work with, discuss your options with regard to doing more with less. Many florists embrace the challenge to be creative within a budget, so you might just be surprised and impressed by what they come up with.

Repurpose floral arrangements

Another way to save on floral arrangements is to repurpose flowers throughout the day.

Once bridesmaids no longer need their bouquets, use them to decorate gift tables or cocktail areas. Floral arrangements on display during the ceremony can be removed once you have both said "I do" and moved into the reception area where they can be enjoyed through the night.

Go over any repurposing you plan to do with your reception hall manager prior to your wedding day so he or she knows where and when to move the arrangements.

Floral arrangements can set the mood for a wedding ceremony and reception, and even couples with little or no experience choosing arrangements can end up with stunning displays. —Metro