

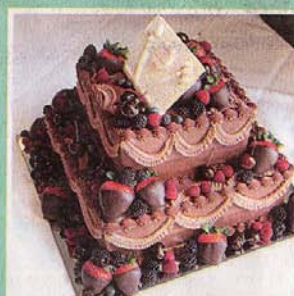
Austin American-Statesman

50 cents Williamson

statesman.com

CENTRAL TEXAS

Wedding Planner



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Look inside for the latest wedding trends, newest fashions and audio information on local businesses. Plus, have some fun playing Celebrity Wedding Trivia and win one of 18 great prizes. See back page for details.

AWEC

Austin Wedding & Event Coordinators

Who is YOUR wedding coordinator?

Planning your wedding is not something you do everyday – but we do! If you want to save time, effort and money, and if you want to execute the wedding of your dreams, then you need Austin Wedding and Event Coordinators (AWEC). AWEC's members are professional, reputable, reliable and experienced wedding coordinators. Check out our Web sites and see which one of us is right for YOU and YOUR special day!

www.awec.org

Amy's Platinum Weddings Coordinating and Consulting Firm
www.amysplatinumweddings.com
512.346.6193

A Perfect Touch Wedding and Event Coordination
www.a-perfecttouch.com
512.250.1302

Austin Wedding and Event Coordinators
www.awec.org
512.860.AMOR

Austin Weddings & Events
www.austinwed.com
512.771.3300

Barbara's Brides
www.barbarasbrides.com
512.259.8201

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www.clinkweddings.com
512.236.0264

Elite Weddings
www.eliteweddingplan.com
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Event Design House
www.eventdesignhouse.com
512.740.5802

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www.jennystonedesigns.com
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In Style Weddings and Destinations
www.instyleweddingsanddestinations.com
512.266.1008

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www.saladoweddingwishes.com
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www.ownfairygodmother.com
512.644.6886

Wedded Bliss for 2006 *New Trends for the New Year*

Your heart skips a beat when that special someone asks for your hand in marriage, knowing this is the person with whom you want to live "happily ever after".

Now starts the roller coaster ride of your life as you make those all-important plans for your picture-perfect wedding. Just for starters you'll need to determine where to hold the wedding



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and reception. In addition, there are a sundry of details including invitations, color scheme, menu, cake, music, photographer, flowers and honeymoon, just to name a few. As one recent bride so aptly said, "before we knew it we were only six months from our wedding date, and we had next to nothing done." That's where the concept of wedding planners has come to the rescue.

Once considered a luxury for the rich and famous, they are now growing in popularity as a necessity for all newly-engaged couples. The Austin Wedding & Event Coordinators (AWEC) organization, founded in 1999, is a group dedicated to providing professional assistance to wedding couples and ensuring their wedding dreams become a reality, proof of this upward trend. Members of AWEC include both certified wedding consultants, as well as a variety of wedding-related vendors ranging from caterers to florists to musicians. Each member of the organization maintains a separate wedding and/or event planning business. The common thread woven throughout the fabric of AWEC is matching couples with planners that uniquely bond with their personalities, wedding plans and needs.

Given that one size doesn't fit all, wedding planners generally customize their fees to the couple's needs. While some couples seek the planners' expertise from shopping with the bride for her wedding gown to helping until the last guest leaves the reception, others prefer having the planner with them only the day of their wedding. For couples choosing a planner's "soup to nuts" approach, budget takes center stage to achieving the wedding of their dreams.

As most couples expend a significant portion of their budget on the reception venue and photographer, the planner then shares her ideas on where compromises can be made with all the other details, while still ensuring a wedding to be remembered. If the couple is set on a specific reception venue after sampling their top-of-the-line wedding menu, they should consider sitting down with the venue's catering manager and discussing how the same feel can be attained for less money.

Denise Silverman, owner of Soirée and Chairperson for AWEC's marketing committee, noted that couples who can be flexible with the time of year or day of week for their wedding are more likely to be able to negotiate prices from the various vendors due to their availability. She also shared that utilizing up-and-coming vendors can be cost effective, but recommends due diligence in reference checking.

Today's couples continue to break with tradition, choosing to personalize their weddings with their distinctive personalities. Barbara Hearne, owner of Barbara's Brides and this year's AWEC President, cited how one of her recent wedding couples chose to incorporate the theme of rabbits into their wedding, celebrating the fiancé's Chinese

heritage and birth in the year of the rabbit. Wedding planners agree more and more couples are choosing to honor each other's cultural backgrounds and traditions by integrating them into their wedding.

For couples who might be looking at the non-traditional end of the spectrum, Ms. Hearne shared how two of her wedding couples were able to create a fun atmosphere for their guests; one with a relaxed, lounge-type reception complete with bar tables, stools and a cigar box shaped cake, while the another bride known as the "life of the party" dancer, changed from her bridal gown into a svelte dress so that she could kick up her heels and dance the merengue. Ms. Hearne also divulged some of this year's hottest trends include allowing bridesmaids to wear assorted dresses to reflect their unique personalities, long tables rather than the traditional rounds at the reception, and the use of monogramming. Many couples are giving their guests a CD of music from the wedding with the couple's picture on the label. And, she added, "Yes, ice sculptures are making a comeback!"

The secret is out on trends in linens. Leslie Esparza, owner of Austin Weddings and Events, conveyed that this year's colors are buttercup



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yellow- and European blue (a mix between tiffany blue and light blue). Tone-on-tone using mattes and metallic is still quite chic. Lace, lace and more lace is finding its way to chair covers and ties; while matching chair pads to the tablecloths is gaining in popularity. Although taffeta is still very much in the running, bengaline moiré and

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pink are becoming the fabrics of choice. The latest buzz for cake tables is the hooped petticoat skirt look.

Christine Gerlach, owner of Elite Weddings, finds this year's bridal couples want the "wow" factor in their floral arrangements with an endless array of choices and combinations. While some couples prefer splashes of color, others choose a monochromatic color scheme. Using embellishments such as fruits, pearls, rhinestones and branches add texture that helps set the mood and uniqueness of the wedding.

Seventeen percent of today's brides hire a wedding planner; however, that percentage is on the rise. Word is getting out that the benefits of working with a planner outweigh "going it alone". Couples find wedding planners know the best vendors in the area and help steer them away from those that are questionable. Other key benefits include relieving stress, soothing rattled nerves, acting as mediator, reducing planning time, honing the finite details, giving honest opinions and ensuring dollars are well spent.

And, that's just the tip of the iceberg. Tammy Goral, owner of Sparkling Engagements, summed it up best by saying, "Couples are often able to recoup a portion of a wedding planner's fees simply through the discounts the planner receives from their vendors." At AWEC's recent annual media luncheon at Fleming's Prime Steakhouse and Wine Bar in downtown Austin, one soon-to-be-married bride said, "Hiring a wedding planner is the best investment she has ever made."

Indubitably, the bond of trust and friendship built between a wedding couple and the wedding planner helps ensure that picture-perfect wedding, and puts the "happy" in "happily ever after".

— Donna Herbert