How to choose a wedding Reception site

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General information

If possible, both bride and groom should attend all interviews.

Always carry a note pad and pen to write down important information and questions that may arise during your interview.

Actually, choosing the wedding site that is just right for you is a lot of fun.

Before you start looking, you should brainstorm. As you do, take into consideration your chosen wedding date and at least 2 alternate dates, budget, the style of reception you desire, your wedding theme, the atmosphere you want at your wedding, and your invited guests.

The location is one of the most important aspects of your wedding. So consider carefully what will make yours a special, one-of-a-kind wedding event. You have many options including a do it yourself wedding (friends and family contributing of course.) Following is a list to get you started. Ideas for wedding sites include:

- A Home do it yourself or privately catered wedding,
- Auditoriums usually on a rental basis, •
- Beach public domain. You may need a permit and or a license, •
- Bed and Breakfast full service, •
- Camp Grounds do it yourself wedding, •
- Club Houses do it yourself wedding or privately catered wedding, •
- Country Clubs most offer full service. •
- Conference Centers- some offer full service, some are on a rental basis, •
- Convention Centers - some offer full service, some are on a rental basis,
- Hotel: Ball Rooms, Grounds and/or Gardens. A Gazebo makes a wonderful setting for a wedding • ceremony- full service
- Houses of Worship Churches Synagogues Temples Mosques etc...some offer full service, some • are on a rental basis and some can only facilitate the ceremony,
- Mansions full service
- Museums -some museums offer celebration rooms and may even help with special wedding themes, • especially historical - usually on a rental basis though some offer full service,
- Parks Great Outdoors do it yourself wedding, •
- Patio Garden do it yourself or privately catered wedding, •
- Presidential Libraries –such as the Nixon Library in California, provide a complete service, •
- Ranches usually on a rental basis. •
- Resorts full service •
- Rented Halls usually on a rental basis, •
- Stadiums usually on a rental basis though some have facilities for a full service. •
- Yachts or Cruise Ships full service, •
- You can probably come up with some more ideas.

Important Notes:

Compare packages and prices. Before signing any contract, be sure you understand exactly what is included in each package presented to you, and what is not. Beware of Those little things that if not included you will have to pay for separately. This way you can more easily compare packages by different banquet halls and avoid frustration and additional expense later.

Secure your wedding gifts. Be sure to appoint someone to collect the gifts and store them while you are on your honeymoon.

Bride's Name:_____Groom's Name:_____Wedding Date:____

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Options

Unless the location is your top priority, choose the dream location and a few alternative sites that will be just right for you, so that if necessary you can be flexible. Some locations are natural for weddings and offer all the amenities you need. Others rent the space and leave the rest to you, still others are free but you have to make all the arrangements. So, consider your budget, your time, the work involved and your guests and choose the site that will afford you your dream wedding. The information you gather ahead of time, is actually a wonderful preparation for your interviews.

Full service wedding sites and facilities

These are venues that can take care of every little detail regarding your ceremony and reception, even coordinate with your wedding colors and style. Whether your style calls for a buffet, a sit-down served meal, or a dessert reception, they will provide the catering, decorations and possibly cake(s) and flowers too. Some have packages that include the music and entertainment, photographer, videographer, and transportation, usually limousine, as well. You'll still need to attend to your personal needs. You'll need to attend to the attire, wedding accessories, and wedding gifts for each other, family, and wedding attendants. You will also need to provide the favors for your guests. Interview them to assure that you can work well together, as you will need to work with these vendors extensively.

Semi-full service wedding sites and facilities

These are venues that can take care of every little detail regarding your ceremony and reception that pertains to the venue itself including flowers, decorations and catering, all in coordination with your wedding colors and style. You will still need to attend to your personal needs and hire a DJ or band, a photographer a videographer and transportation. Most often, the venue management may be able to recommend appropriate service providers they have had good experience and work well with.

Sites available on a rental basis

Of the many wedding sites that are available on a rental basis, some provide the space; others provide tables and chairs too, while still other provide linens, tableware, flatware and glassware as well. There are also rental based sites that have a working relationship with selected caterers, are familiar with other wedding service providers and vendors and can make recommendatios.

Public sites

Public parks, beaches, gardens etc., make great wedding sites and are perfect for do it yourself weddings though you may engage a caterer. They offer you the opportunity to express yourselves in an unconfined atmosphere. Most are free to use but you'll need to do the majority of the planning and contracting. Your first step is to find if you need any permits and or licenses. If you do, obtain them.

Home

Many apartment complexes, condominiums, mobile home parks and gated communities have club houses for their residents' use. So whether you choose to have your wedding in a club house, a home or a home garden, you'll need to be in charge. Do recruit your family and friends and assign them appropriate tasks. Most will be honored to be asked and excited to be a contributing part of your wedding.

Notes and Comments:

Bride's Name:_____Groom's Name:_____Wedding Date:____

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Choosing the exact Wedding Site that is perfect for you

Once you have chosen the type of wedding site you want for your wedding, do the following:

- Ask your family, friends and acquaintances for recommendations.
- Attend bridal shows. •
- Search the yellow pages under the appropriate category. •
- Check the internet for local wedding sites and go to their websites. •
- Do you like the look and feel? •
- Does it provide you with the information you are looking for? •
- Does it show or tell about unique one-of-a-kind weddings? •
- Can you find free gifts, free articles or free information on their web site? •
- Is the web site helpful?
- Did you find a clearly posted name, address, phone and email contact?
- If you did not, skip it and go to another site. •
- Bookmark (favorite) the websites that are agreeable.
- Call at least 3 possible wedding venues and schedule a visit and an interview with the manager. •
- When you visit a facility, request the manager's business card and a brochure specific to weddings.
- You want only the best! Be selective! •
- When visiting or calling, were you greeted cordially? •
- Were you able to obtain the information you requested in a timely manner? •
- Were the people you spoke with helpful? Too helpful and eager? •
- Given the approximate number of quests, did they quoted you the prices for complete packages, or just the basic prices where you will incur additional costs for services, items, foods or beverages?
- Do not commit to hiring any location until you have interviewed 3 or more prospects. •
- Attach the card to its corresponding brochure and place it in a folder until you are ready to choose.
- Review all your possibilities and choose a "first choice", a "second choice" and a "third choice".
- Proceed with your selection. •

Wedding Site, Basic Requirements Checklist for Our Reception on: (Date) _____ (Time) _____

Kitchen: Refrigerator:, F	Freezer:, Stove: _	, Oven:	_, Sink:	, Trash Bin:,
Preparation Work Area,	Our Wedding venue als	o must have:		
Music: Sound System:	, Microphones:	, CD Player:	, Power	Outlets:,
Dance Floor:, Stage:	, Our Wedding venu	ue also must have:		
Hospitality				
Tables: Bride Groom, Parents	& Bridal Party:, (N	Number: of) Gu	est Tables:	, Music Player:
Parents if not seated with the b	ride and groom:,	Cake:, Gue	st book:	, Gifts, Other:
Meal: China:, Flatware:	, Drink ware:	, Tablecloths:	, Napkins:	, Decorations:
Who will provide				
Hall Decorations:	, Centerpiece	es:	, Favo	rs:

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Finding the Right Reception Venue

Based on recommendations, meeting in bridal shows, and searching the Internet and the Yellow Pages we contacted various Reception venues.

We screened them and chose those that greeted us cordially, provided the information we requested in a timely manner, the people we spoke with were helpful but not too eager, yet followed up.

We feel that they will accommodate us well and within our budget.

- We also judged them by their web sites. We liked:
 - ✓ The look and feel of the web site.
 - That the information we were looking for was right there.
 The site was situated in an inviting setting.

 - ✓ The facilities were perfect for us.
 - ✓ That they were helpful and neither over powering nor over selling.
 - ✓ That they included clearly posted name, address, phone and Email contacts.

We plan to interview the following Reception facilities:

Company Name:		Person in charge	9:	
Address:				
City:		State:	Zip:	
Phone:	Fax:		Email:	
Web Site:		Appointme	ent Date / Time:	
Name:				
Address:				
City:		State:	Zip:	
Phone:	Fax:		Email:	
Web Site:		Appointm	ent Date / Time::	
Name:				
Address:				
City:		State:	Zip:	
Phone:	Fax:		Email:	
Web Site:		Appointment Date / Time:		

Bride's Name:______Groom's Name:_____Wedding Date:_____

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What to Expect of the Representative of the Facility:

- ✓ A brochure that explains what is offered and any exclusions, rules, regulations and options
- ✓ References
- ✓ The business card of each person you may work with within the facility.
- ✓ A tour of the facility so you may check their amenities

Questions for the representative of the facility:

Please note that not all questions apply to all. Each question will indicate what venue(s) it is directed to.

Public sites

- Are there bathrooms on the premises?
- Are there garbage receptacles on the premises? •
- Are there electric outlets on the premises? •
- What are the hours available for a wedding? * •
- Is there a parking area close by? •
- How long have you been accommodating wedding parties? •
- **Full Service** •
- Do you offer a bridal package? •
- What are your rates for the different packages and what are the options available? •
- Do you provide an insured and bonded babysitting service?** •
- **Full Service or Rental Basis** •
- How many wedding clients have you served? •
- Do you offer any guarantees? •
- Do you have an in-house wedding coordinator? •
- Can you recommend wedding vendors and service providers your customers had a good experience • with?
- Do you offer any discounts? What additional expenses may be charged? •
- How much and by when will we need to put down the deposit? •
- What is the latest time frame for making changes? •
- Full Service, Rental Basis or Public site •
- Will you provide us with a written contract? •
- Does the contract include a 3 day cancellation clause?

*Most public sites are available only on certain days and certain hours.

** If you plan not to include children in your reception, do not alienate guests who'd rather bring children than miss your wedding. You should provide a babysitting service for such guests.

Once you made your choice, you need to receive a written contract that is signed and dated by the person in charge, The contract must include all of your responsibilities and all of the responsibilities, warranties and guarantees offered by the facility.

Caveat Emptor - Buyer beware! Read each contract very carefully, on, under and above the line. Be sure that you understand it fully and agree with all the terms. If you have questions, concerns, or are uncertain, contact them for clarification.

In most parts of the USA you have 3 days to examine the contract and if you need to, cancel with no penalties.

Planning the Wedding Reception

Reception site fee

The reception is a party where all your guests come together to celebrate your new life as a married couple. It should reflect and complement the formality of your ceremony. The selection of a reception site will depend on its availability, price, proximity to the ceremony site, and the number of people it will accommodate.

There are two basic types of reception sites. The first type charges either a per person fee which includes the facility, tables and chairs, linens, silverware, china, food, beverages and so forth, or a basic fee to which they add fees for specific services, items, foods or beverages. Examples: hotels, restaurants, wineries, catered yachts and cruises. The second type charges a room rental fee and you are responsible for providing the food, beverages, silverware, china, linens, and possibly tables and chairs. Examples: clubs, halls, parks, museums, and private homes.

The advantage of the first type is that most everything is done for you. The disadvantage, however, is that your choices of food, china, and linen are often limited. Usually you are not permitted to bring in an outside caterer and must select from a pre-determined menu.

In either case you still need to hire the service providers; music and entertainment, photographers, videographers, florists, and if your wedding cake is not included in the package, bakers as well.

Options:

Private homes, gardens, hotels, clubs, restaurants, halls, parks, museums, presidential libraries, yachts, and wineries are some of the more popular choices for receptions.

Things to Consider:

When comparing the cost of different locations, consider the rental fee, food, beverages, parking, gratuity, set-up charges and the cost of rental equipment needed such as tables, chairs, canopies, and so forth. If you are planning an outdoor reception, be sure to have a backup site in case of rain.

Beware:

Some hotels are known for double booking. The bride and groom may reserve the largest or most elegant room in a hotel for their reception, only to find out later that the hotel took the liberty to book a more profitable event in that room and moved their reception over to a smaller or less elegant room.

Also be careful of hotels that book events too close together. You don't want your guests to wait outside while your room is being set up for the reception. And you don't want to be "forced out" before you are ready to leave because the hotel needs to arrange the room for the next reception. Get your rental hours and the name of your room in writing.

Notes and Comments:

Reception site Worksheet

Questions for the Site Manager

Page 1 of 3

Questions	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Notes
ABOUT THE SITE & MANAGEMENT				
Are you available on our wedding date?		1	İ	
May we have your business card, brochure and a rate sheet and explain?				
Do you have a web site?				
How long have you been doing weddings?				
What percentage of your work is with weddings?				
How many wedding did you serve in the past year?				
Can you provide us with references we may contact?				
Can we see portfolio(s) of events at your facility?				
Can we observe an affair at your facility?				
Do you offer a detailed price sheets and available options?				
Do you carry full liability insurance?				
Are you and the people assigned to our wedding insured and bonded?				
Do you and your people work well under pressure and with other service providers underfoot?				
Do you provide us with a contract?				
Does it include all of your responsibilities, warrantees, and guarantees?				
Does it include all of our responsibilities, as well as all the restrictions, rules and regulations we need to be aware of?				
When do we receive a signed and dated written contract,?				
Does it include a 3 days cancellation clause?				
What are your terms of cancellation after the 3 days?				
What is your refund policy?				
What assurances do you provide?				
What happens if you back out?				
Do you offer VALUE ADDED wedding packages such as flowers, cakes, photography, etc.?				
Do you offer a choice of bridal packages?				
Do you offer any specials, perks and - or giveaways?			İ	
Do you carry and Health license?				

Bride's Name:_____Groom's Name:_____Wedding Date:_____

Reception site Worksheet Questions for the Site Manager

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Questions	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Notes
ABOUT OUR RECEPTION and FEES				
How many events are scheduled for our date?				
Will anyone utilize the room we order before or after us?				
Will we have the exact room we ordered?				
How much time will be allotted for our reception?				
What is the minimum number of guests?				
What is the maximum number of guests for a seated reception?				
What is the maximum number of guests for a cocktail reception?				
What is the reception site fee?				
What is the maximum number of guests for a cocktail reception?				
Is a dance floor included in the site fee?				
Can you provide furniture such as tables and chairs, chair covers and decorations, and coordinate appropriate lighting if needed? Are they included in the site fee?				
Do you provide linen, china, silverware and glassware? Are they included in the site fee?				
Do you provide the table settings and serving pieces such as the coffee and tea urns etc? Are they included in the site fee?				
Do you set and decorate the room and the tables?				
What do you charge for overtime?				
Are there changing rooms available?				
Do you have a coat room? Coat room service? Is it included in the fee?				
Is there handicap accessibility?				
How many parking spaces are available for our event?				
What is the cost for parking, if any?				
Are there any music or entertainment restrictions?				
Are there any restrictions regarding photography?				
Are there any restrictions regarding videography?				
Are there any restrictions regarding flowers and decorations?				

Bride's Name:_____Groom's Name:_____Wedding Date:_____

Reception site Worksheet Questions for the Site Manager

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Questions	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Notes
HOSTING				
CATERING, BAKERY AND BAR				
Do you offer in-house catering? If so,				
What is the price range for a seated lunch?				
What is the price range for a buffet lunch?				
What is the price range for a seated dinner?				
What is the price range for a buffet dinner?				
Does your crew's have set uniforms? Can you accommodate themes and time periods attire?				
What is the ratio of servers to guests? If applicable.				
Do you allow outside caterers?				
Are kitchen facilities available for outside caterers?				
Can leftover food be taken off the premises?				
Are you licensed to serve alcohol?				
Do you provide a bar?				
Are there any alcohol restrictions?				
Is there a corkage fee? If so how much is it?				
Can you bake our wedding cakes and baked goods? If so refer to the Baker Worksheet.				
Do you allow baked goods to be brought in?				
Is there a cake-cutting and serving fee? If so, how much is it?				
What is the reception site fee?				
How much do you charge for overtime?				
Is bar tending included in the price?				
Are gratuities included in the price?				
Are taxes included in the price?				
What additional expenses can we expect?				
How much and by when will we need to give a deposit? What do we get for the deposit?				
When is the final payment due?				
Do you accept checks and credit cards?				

Reception site - Costs Worksheet for _____ Guests

Payment For	included	Number needed	Cost Each	Total Cost
Reception site fee for			\$	\$
hours				
Set-up and Clean-up fee				
Dance floor fee			\$	\$
Stage fee				
Fee for tables, chairs and chair covers			\$	\$
Equipment rental fee				
Decorating and decorations fee			\$	\$
Fees for linens			\$	\$
Fees for china, silverware & glassware			\$	\$
Fees for coffee and tea urns etc			\$	\$
Your charge for overtime			\$	\$
Changing rooms fees			\$	\$
Your charge for Coat room service			\$	\$
The cost for parking			\$	\$
The cost for valet parking			\$	\$
The cost for security deposit			\$	\$
The cost for security personnel				
HOSTING	CATERING,	BAKERY	AND	BAR
The price per person for a seated lunch			\$	\$
The price per person for a buffet lunch			\$	\$
The price per person for a seated			\$	\$
dinner				
The price per person for a buffet dinner			\$	\$
The price for a wedding cake			\$	\$
Cake-cutting and serving fee			\$	\$
Coffee serving fee			\$	\$
Bar set-up and clean-up fee			\$	\$
bar tending fee			\$	\$
Corkage fee			\$	\$
Cost of soft drinks			\$	\$
Cost of champagne			\$	\$
Cost of Beer			\$	\$
Cost of mixed drinks			\$	\$
Cost of straight drinks			\$	
Other			\$	\$
Are gratuities included in the price?			\$	\$
Are taxes included in the price?			\$	\$
Any additional expenses can we expect			\$	\$
TOTAL			\$	\$
Our reception budget is \$			\$	\$

Package 1 Includes: _____

Package 2 Includes: _____

Package 3 Includes: _____

Wedding site Worksheet Review **Impressions Following the Interviews with the site Representative**

On a scale of 1-5 (1 being the best 5 the least) they rated:

Interview results	Representative Site 1	Representative Site 2	Representative Site 3
Name:			
We liked their reception facility.			
We liked their menu.			
They are available on our chosen wedding day.			
They merit good references.			
They offer us what we want on our terms.			
They guarantee that once we book, we'll receive the services we ordered for our reception.			
We were happy with the customer service we received.			
We were happy with the foods we tasted.			
We liked the pictures in their portfolio.			
We liked the original, creative presentations.			
They seem energetic.			
They were courteous.			
They were accommodating.			
They were helpful.			
Their prices are competitive.			
They offer a cake table, a guest book table etc.			
They offer full description of their services including: their food serving crew, bartenders, cake service, table setting etc.			
They offer SATISFACTION GUARANTEE and provisions for unsatisfactory food, and or service.			
We feel comfortable working with them.			
We checked out their reputation by contacting others.			
We are satisfied.			

Based on our interview

Our First choice is_____

Our Second choice is_____

Our Third choice is______

Notes and Comments:

Impressions, Notes, Comments and Remarks

Bride's Name:_____Groom's Name:_____Wedding Date:_____

Reception Site Contract Checklist Worksheet

Page 1 of 2

We received an itemized list of what our payr	ment will cover and we agr	ee with it: Yes: No:
Prior to the contract we received a detailed bill for o	ur package and we agree with	it: Yes: No:
We received the contract on: Date:	Time:	Location:
From: Full Name:	Title or Position in Company:	
Contract is signed by:	Title or Position in Company:	
Contract includes date: Yes No	appropriate signature(s):	Yes: No:
Contract includes description and full details of the:		
Specific room we agreed to. For example "The Pres	idential Room" or "Ballroom #	5" Yes: No:
Number of hours we anticipate we need: Yes:	No: and the fee for	overtime: Yes: No:
Policy regarding payment refunds in case of cancell	ation: Yes: No:	we agree: Yes: No:
Contract specifies total payment due for our packag	e: Yes: No: w	e agree: Yes: No:
Contract specifies tax due for our package: Yes:	No: we agree: Ye	es: No:
Total amount of deposit(s) Yes: No:,		
Method of payment: Check number: Crea	dit card: Other:	Receipt
Total amount of balance due: Yes: No:	_ Date full payment is due: Yes	s: No:
Date by when we need to confirm and review all arr	angements: We	e agree: Yes: No:
We were given a detailed price sheet including optic	onal and added fees to take ho	ome for a certain length of time
so we may review it. Yes: No:	we agree: Yes: N	0:
Date of entering the contract:	_	
Rooms, date, time and number of hours reserved for	or our wedding at the	facility
A list of all the amenities provided for our wedding (dressing rooms, rest rooms, va	alet etc) Yes: No:
A list of all the items provided for our wedding (dres	sed up guest tables, dance flo	or etc) Yes: No:
A list of all services provided for our wedding from s	et up to clean-up Yes:	No:
A list of all catering details provided for our wedding	from set up to clean-up Yes:	No:

Reception Site Contract Checklist Worksheet

Page 2 of 2

Details about having our color choices presented in items such as table cloths, napkins etc). Yes: No:
A complete list of all the menu items and desserts provided for our wedding guest Yes: No:
A complete list of all the non-alcoholic beverages provided for our wedding guests etc Yes: No:
A complete list of all the alcoholic beverages provided for our wedding guests Yes: No:
All the services relating to our wedding cake(s) such as baking, cutting and – or serving Yes: No:
Last date to add, or make changes Yes: No:
Dates the payment are due as follows: Deposit by: Payment in full by:
Names of the personnel and the details of their responsibilities regarding our wedding yes: No:
The number of servers, if they cater Yes: No:, Servers' attire Yes: No:
The number of bartenders, if they have a bar Yes: No: Their attire Yes: No:
All possible back-up services if needed Yes: No: we agree Yes: No:
A 3 days cancellation clause allowing us to cancel within 3 days with no penalties Yes: No:
Full cancellation policy should we cancel after the 3 days grace period Yes: No:
Detailed venue's guarantees and stipulations: Yes: No: we agree Yes: No:
Contract includes provisions for Un-satisfactory service, poor quality etc Yes: No:
Full cancellation policy, rebates and procedures should the venue cancel: Yes: No:
Disclosure of venue's guarantees that the company staff is insured and bonded Yes: No:
Disclosure of the venue's guarantees that the company holds a current health license Yes: No:
A detailed list of additional charges that may be incurred Yes: No: we agree Yes: No:
We have reservations about this contract Yes: No: We agree and accept this contract: Yes: No:
We signed and dated the contract on: Date: Time: Location: