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— 2011 —

A lifetime
of joy
starts with
one day to
remember.

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Great Outdoor Weddings

Having a wedding is a challenge if you want to hold it outdoors. The weather is uncertain, and it can be too chilly or too hot even in the mildest seasons.

That being said, if you dream of tying the knot in a field of daffodils or under the green shoots of a maple, there's nothing like holding your dream wedding in nature.

What can you do to prevent some of the common problems faced by outdoor weddings? Here are some tips to ensure that your day is perfect:

1. Have a backup plan. No matter what the weather forecast, you should always have a backup location for your wedding that is indoors. This could be the church, a large home, a hall — just about anywhere. Remember, it's a backup, but pick a place that you would be happy to be married in, just in case.

2. Dress appropriately. If you're getting married in a cool month, consider a wedding dress with long sleeves and made of a heavier fabric, such as satin or brocade. And don't forget your bridesmaids. They can have long sleeves, as well. If it's very cold out, wear tights under the dress to keep your legs from freezing. If it's hot, consider that with your dress selections as well.

3. Choose the right location. The beach in February, unless you live in Florida, is probably going to be pretty chilly. Look for a space that is beautiful but shielded somewhat from the elements, and your wedding party will be happy about it.

4. Secure your hair. Whether you choose to wear a veil or do your hair up, make sure it is very secure. There are often sudden gusts of wind outdoors, and you don't want your carefully prepared curls whipping around your face on this special occasion.

5. Keep it simple. If you need to move indoors, it will be far easier if you don't have a very elaborate setup. That's not to say you can't enjoy a lovely wedding setup, but simplify where you can. You'll also save money this way, which is often on the agenda, too. Often a simple bower is the ideal place for the couple to stand, while folding chairs work perfectly for everyone who is attending and are very easy to move.

An outdoor wedding can be a wonderful affair, even if things go wrong. You just need to plan ahead. When you have everything set up and backup plans in place, you'll be able to enjoy your big day completely.



PHOTO: FOTOSMURF / YAYMICRO.COM

Planning an outdoor wedding can be risky because of unpredictable weather and wind. Having a strong backup plan in place is important for making sure your big event can go on regardless of Mother Nature.

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Perfect Honeymoons



PHOTO: IOFOTO / YAYMICRO.COM

Just about everyone has heard that Niagara Falls is a big destination for honeymooning couples, but these days there are many other wedding destinations competing for the title of wedding capital of the world.

From the enchantment of Paris to the ancient wonder of Rome to the white sand beaches of Bermuda, there are as many places to tie the knot as there are couples ready to take the plunge.

The reasons why a particular couple chooses a particular wedding location are as varied as their personalities. Some brides and grooms may be drawn to a particular location for its cultural heritage or for their family's connection to the place. Those who hail from Germany may want to revisit the fatherland in order to relive the

experiences of long last relatives. Those with roots in the Mediterranean may want to use the occasion of their wedding to enjoy some sun and surf in the place their parents and grandparents called home.

Other brides and grooms are drawn to particular wedding destinations simply because they enjoy the spot as a vacation getaway. Europe is always a popular destination for weddings abroad, and the continent certainly boasts a wealth of things to see and do. Cultural attractions, the availability of

luxury accommodations and the lure of a dream wedding in front of the Eiffel Tower or the Coliseum are other great reasons why the most popular wedding destinations remain such a draw.

No matter where those wedding and honeymoon dreams may lead, it often makes sense to work with a professional travel agent to make those arrangements. Planning a wedding is difficult enough, and leaving the travel plans to the professionals can give harried brides and grooms one less thing to worry about.

Need ideas for a honeymoon?

Travel destinations

Those brides and grooms planning a dream wedding and a magnificent honeymoon may want to check out these statistics compiled by Modern Bride magazine. A survey of travel agents found that the top 10 destinations for honeymooners were:

1. Hawaii
2. Italy
3. Tahiti
4. Anguilla
5. Fiji
6. St. Lucia
7. Mexico
8. St. Bart's
9. Jamaica
10. Bali

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Wedding Dress Shopping

Shopping for a wedding dress is a momentous occasion, one that can be both exhilarating and exhausting. Many brides mull over the big decision for months, dutifully studying bridal magazines, visiting dress shops, and contemplating every possible style on the runway.

Since you're likely to be investing a pretty hefty amount of time and cash into your once-in-a-lifetime wedding dress, here are 10 great tips for keeping your sanity while you're on your mission to find the dress of your dreams.

1 Begin with the basics, and do silhouettes flatter your figure best and which styles are most suited for the type of wedding you're planning: formal, semi-formal, and so on.

2 Flip through bridal magazines and surf Internet wedding sites to get ideas. Save the ones you like best in a notebook, and see if a pattern starts to develop. Having a basic idea of what you like before hitting the dress shops will save lots of time and energy, and if you bring the notebook with you, the consultants at the dress shops will instantly have a much better idea of what you're looking for.

3 Stick to the budget. Falling in love with an extravagant dress that costs more than your next car will only make it harder for any reasonably priced dress to measure up. Shop within your budget from the get-go, and you'll save yourself a lot of heartache later on.

4 Compare prices. If you like a dress you've tried on, write down the brand and style number while you're still in the dressing room. When you get home, you can check prices online. Some bridal shops are willing to match or beat competitors' prices for the exact same items.

5 Ask for a discount. If you're buying your dress in a bridal shop, don't be shy about asking for a price break, particularly if you can find a small flaw or blemish. You never know — and the worst they can do is say "no."

6 Bring some sustenance on your shopping excursions. A bottle of water and a protein bar can go a long way toward fighting off crabby moods—whether yours or the people shopping with you.

7 Listen to the sales consultants, and be willing to try on a dress or two that they suggest, even if it isn't "you." You never know — and usually, these folks really do know what they're doing.

8 Don't feel pressured to buy too soon. Often, stores will offer a discount if you "buy today." But more than likely, that same discount will still be good when you come back, and you don't want to be stuck with a dress that you bought too hastily.

9 Take a break if you need it. If you're paralyzed by indecision, go have lunch and come back. Or give it a few days, and if you're still thinking about that certain dress, then maybe it's meant to be.

10 Don't make it a life-or-death issue. After all, you're not marrying the wedding dress. If you find a gorgeous dress that fits you well and makes you feel beautiful, you've found a keeper. If it happens to make your heart beat a little faster too, then consider it a bonus.

Finding the right wedding dress takes perseverance, patience, and planning, not to mention a hefty chunk of cash. The experience of shopping for the dress is one you'll remember forever, so try to enjoy every minute of it, and don't forget the real reason for all this hard work—you're getting married, you lucky girl!



PHOTO: IOFOTO / YAYMICRO.COM

PHOTO: GEORGE MURESAN / YAYMICRO.COM

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An Eco-Friendly Wedding

If you're looking into green weddings, you're not alone. As eco-friendly weddings become more popular, ideas and services to keep your big day environmentally oriented abound.

Here are some tips on how to keep some of your wedding basics green. These ideas, taken from eco brides and wedding planners, are a testament to the phrase "if there's a will, there's a way." Get creative and you'll easily find a way to make your wedding all you dreamed it would be, including gentle on our planet.

INVITATIONS

The most obvious option for eco friendly invitations is to use recycled paper, but many brides go beyond that first step. If being green is an aspect of your wedding theme and not just a goal during planning, consider sending a packet of seeds along with the invite.

Your invites are a perfect place to make any mentions of green-oriented plans you have for guests. Are you asking for only a certain kind of eco friendly gift? Is your dress silk free of animal rights concerns? Put a note in the invite so guests know that the environment is forefront in your wedding planning.

GIFTS

Wedding gifts are a great way to end up with way too many toasters as well as a lot of plastic products you'll never use. If you and your groom already have your household set up, consider asking for donations to a worthy cause in lieu of gifts. Or put an organization on your registry so guests have the option between a gift and a donation.

Another good way to green the gift aspect of your wedding is simply to create a registry at an eco-friendly store. Online stores are particularly good for this when there is no global or countrywide eco store all your guests can access.

GETAWAY ... BIKE?

If you're planning the classic getaway in a car bedecked with a "just married" banner, consider choosing a vehicle run on bio fuel instead of gas. If you don't know of anyone with one of these green cars, at least opt for a hybrid.

Of course, some brides get even more creative and are carried off on a horse or bike drawn carriage.

Similarly, ask your guests to find the greenest way possible to get to your wedding. Walking, biking, carpooling, public transit? Make it a game to see who created the least amount of pollution on their way to your big day, keeping the focus on your wedding and the environment at the same time.

FOOD

Local, sustainable foods are at the forefront of the environmental movement. Find a caterer and a cake chef who either regularly use local foods or are able to do so for your wedding.

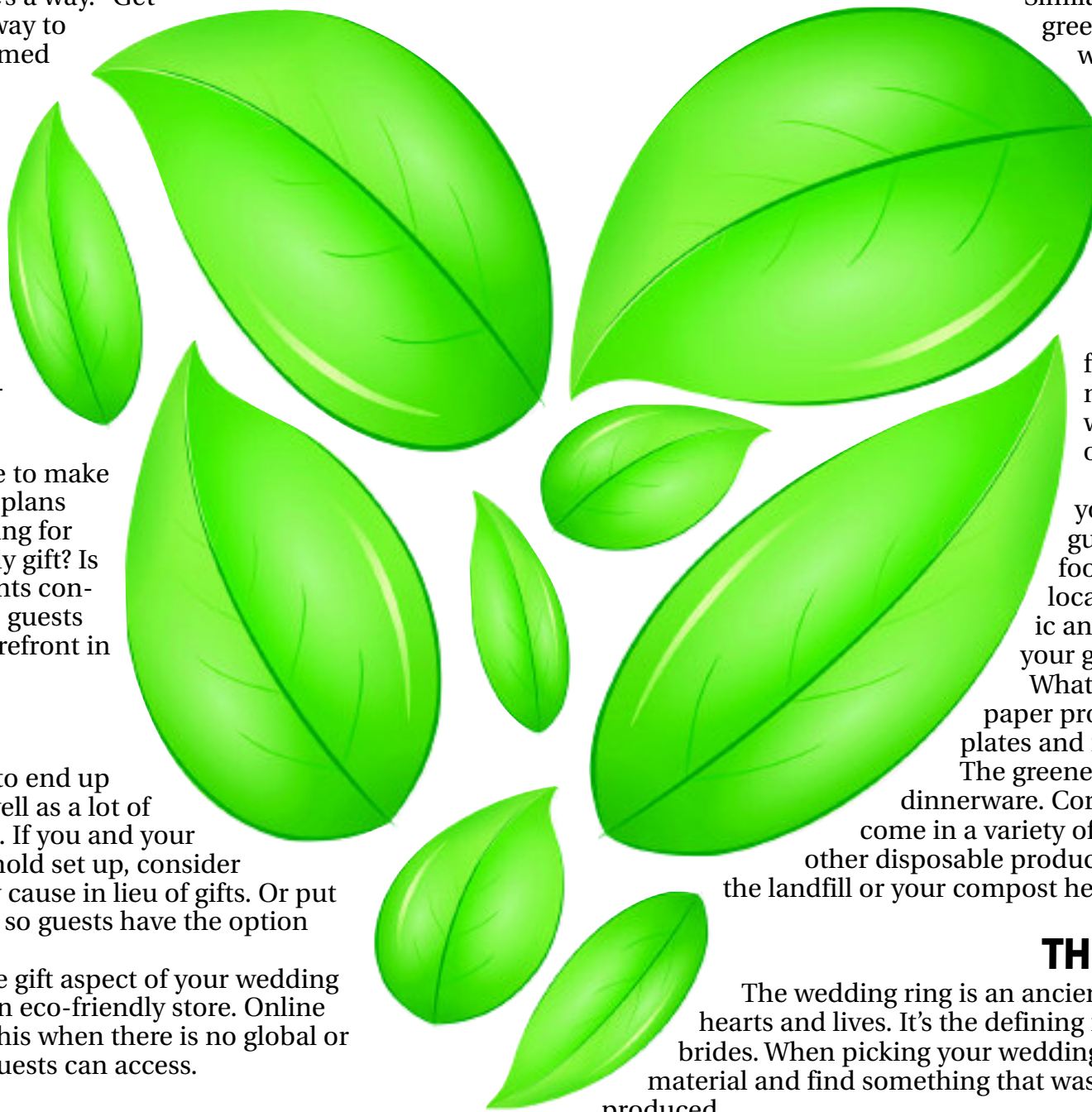
During the reception, put "know your farmer" cards on the tables so guests know their food is local. For foods or ingredients you can't find locally (sugar, coffee, etc.) choose organic and fair-trade products to stick with your green theme.

What are your guests eating on? Recycled paper products are one option, but paper plates and napkins can't be recycled once used. The greenest option is to go for biodegradable dinnerware. Corn-based plates, utensils and cups come in a variety of colors and styles, look just like other disposable products, and will biodegrade naturally in the landfill or your compost heap.

THE RING

The wedding ring is an ancient symbol of the uniting of two hearts and lives. It's the defining moment of a wedding for many brides. When picking your wedding band out, look beyond style and material and find something that was humanely and greenly mined and produced.

Diamonds and gold in particular have a long history of polluting and inhumane production practices, so ask your jeweler for details about where your rings came from. Keep your focus on the planet by buying an environmentally and socially responsible ring to unite you and your beau for years to come.



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Make a Bold Statement

There are many important decisions you must make when planning a wedding, but choosing the right wedding invitations is an essential one. The right invitations are key to so much of the wedding planning, and it is important to get those important pieces of paper out with plenty of time to spare.

If you doubt the importance of wedding invitations, just consider all the things that hinge on them. Until the wedding planner has a good idea just how many people will be attending the festivities it will be all but impossible to rent a reception hall, order the food, choose a cake or plan an accurate wedding budget.

Sending those wedding invitations out with plenty of time to spare will allow the invited guests to get their RSVPs back in time for the rest of the wedding pieces to fall into place.

TAKE YOUR TIME

Even though it is important to get those wedding invitations out well ahead of the big date, it is important not to rush this important part of wedding planning. The wedding invitations you choose should be a reflection of your taste and your style, and it is important to choose them with care.

There are of course plenty of places to turn in the search for the perfect invitations, and this makes it a snap to shop around for the best deal. From office supply stores and department stores to specialty internet sites there are lots of places to find the latest and greatest wedding invitations. In fact there are so many wedding invitations to choose from it can be quite overwhelming.

If you're looking for the very best quality and selection, often bridal specialty stores are the place to turn. Even if they don't carry your specific style of invitations in stock, they will know where to order it.

Local printing companies also typically offer a good selection of invita-



PHOTO: KVKIRILLOV / YAYMICRO.COM

tion options. Compare styles and prices, and try to feel the invitations in your hand rather than simply relying on a picture or description. You need to know exactly how it will look and feel to make sure it leaves the right impression.

It is also important for both bride and groom to agree on the wedding invitations, and that in itself can take quite a bit of time and care.

CUSTOMIZE THEM

Once the perfect wedding invita-

tions have been chosen, there are a number of ways to dress them up and make them even more special. From adding photographs and poems to including directions to the ceremony and reception, there are many ways to customize the wedding invitations you have chosen.

Of course choosing the wedding invitations is only the beginning of the process. It is also important to include an easy way for guests to RSVP. Many wedding invitations will include a tear-off card that guests

can simply mail back, while others will include a return envelope.

It is important to look for wedding invitations that will make it easy for guest to reply. Making it easier for guests to RSVP will make it that much easier to get the accurate guest count that will be so critical as the months and weeks to the wedding day tick ever closer.

If you allow yourself enough time and look at a variety of options to suit your needs, you're sure to find the perfect invitations that will set the tone for your big day.

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Capturing the Memories

Your wedding day is undoubtedly one of the most important days of your life, and it is only fitting to have the best photographs as visual reminders of that special day.

Practically anyone can take photographs at your wedding, especially nowadays when so many people have their own digital camera. However, you can't deny the difference in the results when you hire a professional photographer to do the job.

By hiring a professional, you can have wedding pictures fit for displaying in your house, keeping in albums and even posting on the Internet for your friends and relatives to see.

LOOK AT THE PORTFOLIO

In order to determine if a particular wedding photographer is the perfect person for the job, the first thing you should do is look at his portfolio. The portfolio should include samples of his previous work from other people's weddings.

By looking at the lighting, clarity and artistry of the photographs, you can easily see if his style matches your expected output for your own wedding pictures.

If you do not know a lot about professional photography, you can enlist the help of a friend who does, and ask her to go with you when you interview potential photographers.

PHOTOGRAPHER'S STYLE

Besides the technical elements of professional photography, there are also some other features you have to observe.

For instance, you should take a close look at the poses of the people in the picture. A good photographer should be able to take pictures of people wherein they look comfortable and natural and not like they are always sitting for a portrait.

You should also notice if there is a wide variety of angles and lighting used, as opposed to only a limited style. If your wedding is going to be held outdoors, your photographer should be able to take good pho-

tos in this setting. The same goes for an indoor wedding.

PERSONALITY

While the skills of the photographer are definitely the most important basis for your decision, it is also vital to hire a photographer with whom you can get along very easily.

After all, you will be working with him or her during your wedding day, and there is definitely no sense in getting stressed out during the most important moments of your life.

It is particularly important that the wedding photographer's personality does not clash with the bride's personality since they will be spending many hours together even before the wedding, and this is the time that the bride can be quite touchy due to wedding jitters.

PROFESSIONAL FEE

Once you have interviewed a number of wedding photographers, you will surely have chosen one who could work well with you. However, there is still the question of professional fees and other expenses related to processing and reproducing the photographs.

Before finalizing your deal, you should discuss with your chosen photographer the mode of payment for their services. Some photographers charge a flat fee for the entire service, with fixed inclusions. Others may charge by the hour for their services, plus an additional amount for the proofs and printouts.

Most wedding photographers are willing to work around your preferences, so feel free to discuss with them what you want. Just make sure that you include whatever it is you and the wedding photographer have agreed upon in a written and signed contract.



PHOTO: GEORGE MURESAN / YAYMICRO.COM

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Prepare for the Toast

Public speaking can be terrifying for a lot of people. There are people who love to be the center of attention and others who don't mind hiding behind a podium.

Speaking to a large audience may not be your cup of tea, but learning how to do it smoothly can prepare you for the wedding toast.

DON'T READ IT

The biggest mistake is reading your entire wedding toast from a piece of paper. It's great that you don't want to miss a word, but it's not recommended.

It's important to express your wedding toast from the heart. Write an outline of your speech onto a small note card with highlighted key points. Remember, you'll have the microphone in one hand so keep the note card on the podium or table. You can look down quickly without missing a beat to guide you through the wedding speech.

EYE CONTACT

Making eye contact with the audience will help put you at ease. Find someone that has a friendly face and hold eye contact for at least three seconds.

Turn to look at the bride and groom when ending the wedding toast. You don't want to look at the ground or hurriedly around the room when speaking. The audience can tell if you are uncomfortable.

PRACTICE IT

Practice makes perfect for your wedding toast. Make sure to keep it short and sweet. Start with speaking in front of a mirror using your eyes and a smile when rehearsing.

Memorize your speech, but have the note card in front of you. Once you've gained confidence, grab some friends or family members who will let you practice in front of them.

Rehearse to the end of the speech by making the toast with a wine glass. Be open to feedback, and make changes if needed.

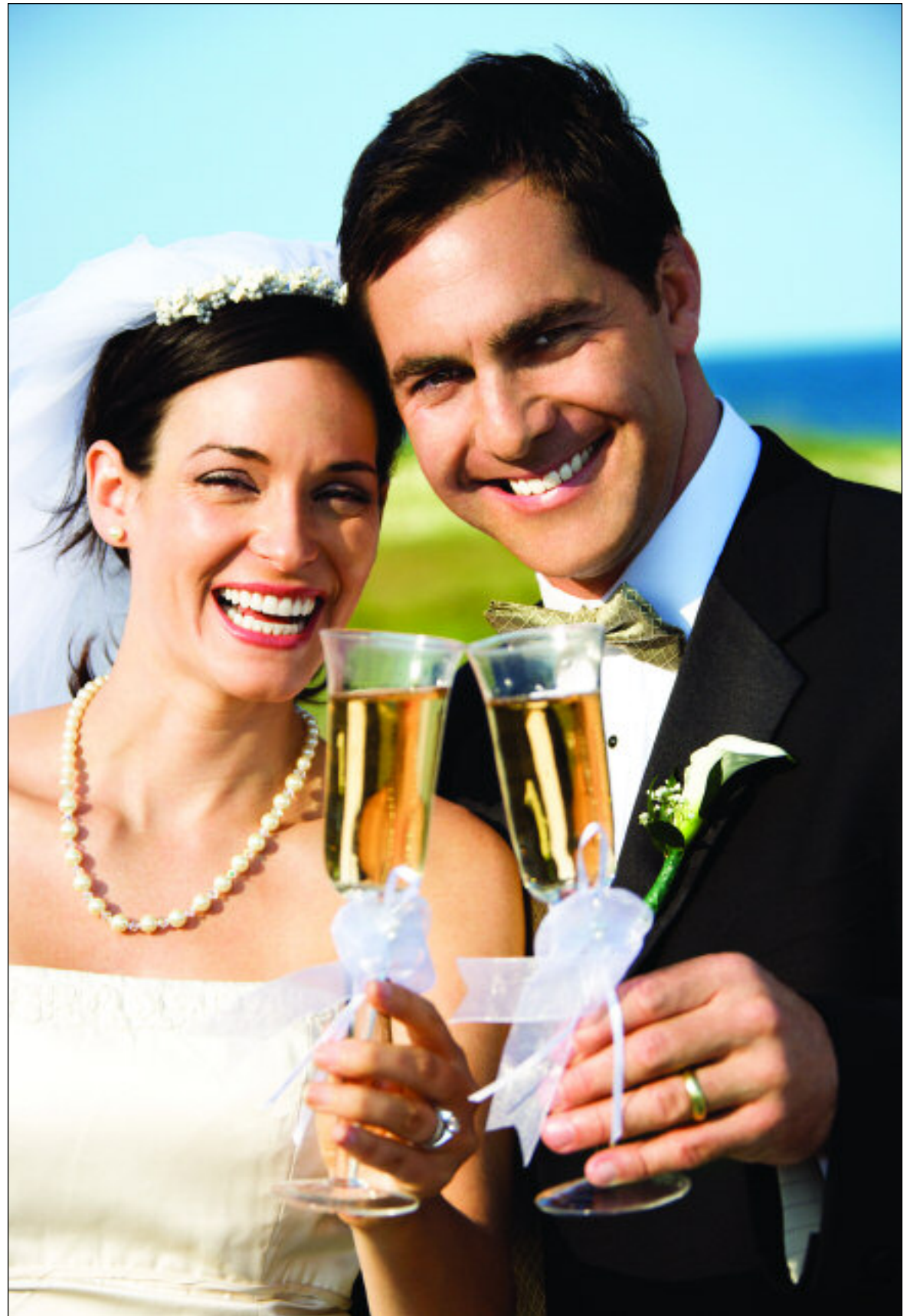


PHOTO: IOFOTO / YAYMICRO.COM