

Spring
BRIDES



Connect with Welcome Boxes

Your big day is all about you and your partner. But if guests are coming from afar or if you're having a destination wedding, you need to show some love to your guests, too.

Put together welcome bags, boxes or baskets to make your attendees feel like they're a special part of your wedding.

START WITH SNACKS

Start off with things to make your guests feel more at home on the road. These can include snacks, candies, bottled water, specialty coffees, or tiny bottles of bubbly to kick off your celebrations. Lend a local flavor to your gifts by choosing local brands. Vendors may even be willing to add a monogram and date to the labels to make your gifts more special.

GET OUT

Also include travel guides and suggested destinations for guests who aren't familiar with the area. Include directions to the ceremony and reception locations, along with transportation information. You can include tickets to popular local attractions, ideas for sightseeing and a list of your favorite restaurants. Toss in travel-sized goodies like sunscreen for a beachy locale or handwarmers



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for a snowy destination.

PARTY TIME

Another clever addition to your welcome boxes is a post-wedding recovery kit. Put in travel-sized bottles of Advil or Tylenol, cooling eye masks, do-not-disturb signs and anything else your guests might need to recover from a little

too much fun.

DROP A NOTE

Get ahead of the game by writing thank-you notes to your guests and including them in the welcome bags. Make the notes special by handwriting them and personalizing them to each guest. Tell them how thankful you are

that they traveled to be a part of your festivities.

SOWING SEEDS OF LOVE

For an outdoor wedding, consider dropping in packets of seeds or young plants that will be seen on the grounds during the ceremony. You can also include gardening gloves or a small pot with your

monogram and the date of your nuptials.

BOX IT UP

When you're looking for a container, go with something like a tote or box that can be reused. This earns you green points and also gives your guest a memory to take with them after the party's over.

Plan the Perfect Outdoor Wedding

Outdoor weddings are gorgeous and romantic. But they present a special challenge when it comes to planning.

Follow this easy checklist to make your outdoor wedding day as stress-free as possible.

- **Have an alternative location.** No one likes to think of it raining on their wedding day, but it's a possibility that must be considered. Have a backup plan if you wake up and the weather is out of sync with your plans.

- **Have a communication plan.** If anything big comes up (like that big location change), have a quick and easy way to communicate those changes with vendors and guests. This can be a note on your wedding website or on social media, or you can turn over all the responsibility to your wedding planner or coordinator. Set up a plan to have bridesmaids or other trusted friends mind the phones if you don't have a planner or coordinator.

- **Have a plan for parking.** This is especially true if you're getting married in a backyard or at a restaurant or park. If you don't have enough space, try to make an arrangement with a nearby school or church and include the parking info



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on your wedding website.

- **Check on noise rules and regulations.** Check on local laws and venue rules when it comes to volume and times for your musicians and DJs.

- **Restrooms.** Does your locale have ample restrooms for the number of guests you'll have? If not, you can rent por-

table restrooms for your guests.

- **Consider electricity needs.** Outdoor weddings usually don't have convenient power plugs hidden amongst the trees and grass. Check with your vendors to see what their electrical needs are, including the caterer, baker and florist. Then coordinate their needs with

your location.

- **Plan for hydration and shade.** If you're in a warmer locale, you'll want to provide cooling shade and drinks for your guests to keep everyone safe.

- **Plan for the pandemic.** Outdoor weddings are particularly attractive to those hoping

to gather safely despite COVID-19. Make sure you have hand sanitizing stations, consider hosting groups in shifts, and have guests that are able to stand so that there's more distance between them. Minimize sharing of items such as photo booth pops, serving utensils and guestbook pens.

Tiny Is Big

Your wedding is a big day, but what's really huge right now are things that are tiny.

Miniature foods, drinks, favors and even cakes are all the rage. Here are some ideas to help you incorporate this trend into your wedding.

FINGER FOODS

Finger sandwiches are a great idea for a garden wedding, but you can take this even farther. Mini tacos, sliders, pigs in a blanket all can be miniaturized. Serve these tiny dishes as passed dishes or on distanced tables.

A TASTE OF CAKE

Wedding cakes have been shrinking lately. Full cakes became cupcakes and are now cake pops and cake balls. These tiny treats can be stacked in layers and arranged in adorable ways to complement your decor and theme.

DRINKS

We all know a tiny drink is



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most commonly a shot. There are ways, however, that your bartender can craft little specialty shots that are more elegance and less frat party.

FAVORS

Think little bottles of local honey or wine, miniature chocolate bars with your monogram and the date, itty bitty bottles of liquor—all are great ideas for jumping on the tiny train. Keep your tiny

favors local to give your guests a great memento of the day.

CLOTHING

Even clothes are getting in on the trend, including shorter skirts that bare knees and legs for warmer days for brides and bridesmaids.

CROWDS

As the pandemic rolls on, couples are trimming guests

lists to accommodate local rules on gatherings and to make their ceremonies safer. And it's a trend that may stick, experts say.

It also plays into a more enduring trend of minimalism and choosing experiences over expense.

Cornman Farms in Michigan offers a small wedding package and noticed the trend before COVID-19. It accommodates a tiny crowd

and offers couple a stunning backdrop for their big day.

“When we first came up with this, a pandemic not being considered, we said it was designed for couples who wanted simplicity and affordability but still wanted those Instagram-worthy photos,” said Jamie Gray, the farm's marketing and communications manager, in The Detroit News. “They kind of get the best of both.”

Top Wedding Colors of 2021

Picking your wedding colors is a huge decision in planning your special day. Here are the top trendy colors for 2021 from the wedding experts at The Knot.

BLUE

In the past few years, jewel tone blues in deep blues have been all the rage. But this year, look for lighter tones to take the stage. The dark blues will stay around as accent colors to set off powder blue, cornflower and French blue hues. Light blues work great with other pastels and even earth tones. Choose light blue ribbons, glassware and flowers such as sweet pea and hydrangeas.

GREEN

A recent trend of tropical themed weddings has brought green shades back into the spotlight. For 2021, look for a more retro look with mid-range greens. Pistachio and avocado greens will give your nuptials a cool vibe. Look for green dresses, ties and other accessories because green's range makes it flattering for almost any skin tone. Look for flowers such as palms and ferns to add more green to your floral arrangements.

PURPLES

Once again, these aren't the



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punchy, bold purples popular in the past. Instead, look to pale lilac and lavender paired with pastel yellow and mint green for a whimsical, ethereal wedding palette. Incorporate these hues' namesake flowers in your bouquet and use edible flowers in your cake and treats for maximum punch.

ORANGE

Coral and peach have been the hit oranges, but this year they're making way for a darker, warmer papaya orange. This orange is also not as dark as a rust orange, making it a great middle ground if you're wary of this bold color. Think terracotta vases, orchids and lilies to work this vibrant color

into your big day.

YELLOW

Unlike other colors, yellow is going more vibrant for 2021. Look for a sunflower yellow that's also popping in roses, lemons and peonies. Accent your tables with bright yellow candles and linens or gold flatware.

NEONS

We've seen the 1980s back in fashion, now it's in wedding palettes. Look for screaming hot fuchsia, teal and cobalt blue in trendy 2021 weddings. Don't just pick one neon for your wedding, choose a whole pack of them to go together for a bold, non-traditional look.

Going Green for your Wedding

Your wedding can be green without a single splash of the color appearing. Making your big day sustainable and eco-friendly gets easier every year as the wedding industry hops on board the green trend.

Here are some tips for having a big day with a little carbon footprint.

RESPONSIBLE RINGS

Well before getting to the details of your wedding day, you can make sure your engagement and wedding bands are sourced responsibly. Use the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme to track your stones and ask your jeweler if they're committed to using conflict-free stones. Lab-created stones may have a bad rap, but they've got a lower impact on the environment. And recycling isn't just for the empty bottles of bubbly. Reusing estate jewelry is an environmentally responsible choice with great vintage vibes.

RECYCLABLE INVITATIONS

Pick wedding stationery that's printed on recycled paper or uses alternatives like upcycled fabrics or even wood. Seed paper, a biodegradable material that sprouts into flowers when planted in a pot of soil, is a great and whimsical choice for your wedding invitations, RSVP cards, thank-you notes and more.

CHOOSE AN ECO-FRIENDLY VENUE

Look for hotels and event spaces that are LEED certified and have Energy Star ratings. LEED means Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, and it's an independent verification that a



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venue was designed and built using strategies that try to improve energy savings, water efficiency, carbon emissions reduction, indoor environmental quality and stewardship of resources.

DON'T TRASH YOUR DECOR

Find ways to reuse, recycle or donate the decorations you use in your wedding. Send the flowers to local hospitals, senior centers and homeless shel-

ters. Gift food and favors to your venue's service staff, family or guests. For things like lanterns or mirrors, send them to local thrift stores.

RENT, DON'T BUY

Look into renting items instead of buying single-use disposables. Some of the things you can rent are glassware, linens and more. If you do have to use disposables, try to choose paper things

that you can recycle or will biodegrade instead of plastics.

MAKE A GREEN EXIT

Instead of tossing rice or confetti, have your guests use lavender, rose petals, fresh herbs or micro flowers. These items are biodegradable and colorful, giving a pop of color to your grand exit. Put them in paper bags for guests to grab.

Go Cheesy

Cheese is definitely having a moment. As part of charcuterie boards, displays and other elegant meals, the cheesier the better. Put this trend front and center at your reception with these ideas.

GRILLED CHEESE BAR

Talk to your caterers about a custom grilled cheese bar with different flavors of breads, spreads and cheeses. Choose melty cheeses like nutty Gruyere, sharp cheddar and gooey fontina. Next, consider the bread. Think sourdough, rye and other easily sliceable breads. You can also add a variety of fruits – apple is a great choice – herbs, aromatics, veggies and more.

MACARONI AND CHEESE BAR

Similarly to the grilled cheese bar, this station combines different cheese sauces with your guests' choices of pasta and toppings. Pasta shapes to look at include macaroni, cavatappi, rotini or penne. Sauces can include a creamy alfredo, classic cheddar, Swiss and Gruyere, or blue cheese. For toppings, think about crispy bacon or pancetta, cool diced tomatoes, steamed broccoli, spicy jalapenos and chopped herbs.



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CHEESE CAKE

Instead of a multi-tiered confectionary glory of a wedding cake, consider stacking up wheels and servings of cheese for an eye-catching and delicious wedding cake alternative. Garnish with fresh fruits and flowers. This is a great idea if either the bride or groom is gluten-free

or low carb. Note: Make sure you pre-cut your cake; those wheels can be really tough to cut.

CHARCUTERIE BOARDS

Serve charcuterie boards or spreads at each table or at a giant table so guests can help themselves. Charcuterie is a French word that refers to a

type of food preparation that focuses on prepared meats like bacon, ham, sausages, confit and more. These meats are often paired with complimentary cheeses, fruits, jams and more on gorgeous boards for guests to enjoy.

WINE AND CHEESE

If your event space allows,

consider hiring a sommelier for the evening to pair wines and cheeses for your guests to sample and enjoy.

For favors, pack up tiny bottles of your favorite vintages and mini wheels of cheese for your guests to take home. Or, if you prefer, pair up cheese with different kinds of beer.

Setting Up a Charity Registry

A charity registry gives your wedding guests the option to give to your selected charity in lieu of giving you a wedding gift.

With more couples opting for minimalist weddings and lifestyles, charity registries are growing in popularity. Furthermore, couples are living together before marriage and getting married later in life. These couples don't need or want the traditional wedding gifts on most registries, but donating to charity can give them an auspicious beginning and give their guests a great way to honor their love.

Here are some things to consider when looking for charities for your guests to support on your behalf.

EVALUATING CHARITIES

The charity evaluation site Charity Navigator said to make sure the charity you are considering is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charity. You can ask for the organization's Employer Identification Number and check their site to confirm the status.

Take a look at the charity's finances. Healthy organizations are financially efficient and sustainable. The organization should also be accountable and transparent. Charities should be an open book, the site says, and follow good governance practices.



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Other than that, make sure to choose an organization that supports causes that are close to your heart.

CHOOSE A SITE

There are several websites that can help you set up a charity registry that's easy for you to use and for guests to

give. MyRegistry.com allows you to add charity links using a simple browser button. The Good Beginning allows couples to choose organizations and gives them a simple dashboard for identifying, giving and tracking gifts. Blueprint allows guests to give a custom cash gift that

you can donate to the charity in your own name.

GETTING MORE DONATIONS

Brides says the average goal for charitable registries is just under \$900, but the actual amount is a little less than half of that. One way to boost

donations, if your budget allows for it, is to offer to match donations up to a certain amount. That option can also give you a larger tax write-off for the year. Remember, even the smallest donations can make a huge difference at a charitable organization.