

Customs are updated for the 90's bride

You're engaged, and suddenly everyone has advice for you - your mother, his mother, friends and relatives, perhaps even grandparents. They all mean well, but as a bride of the nineties, you have the freedom to do things your way. According to Bride's magazine, engaged couples of just a generation ago followed a much stricter code of

wedding "rules" than do brides and grooms now. Today, you can choose to follow the traditions that mean most to you, and tailor the rules to suit your style.

Here, some customs updated for the new decade:

The proposal. Then: The groom asked the bride's father for her hand. Now: The couple decides to

marry, and the proposal may be dramatic - a diamond in a champagne glass, the words, "Will you marry me?" flashed across a stadium scoreboard. Nes of the engagement is faxed to family and friends.

The invitations. Then: Invitations were formal, engraved, and issued by the bride's parents. Now: Invitations reflect the spirit of the celebration. They may be etched on glass, printed on hand-painted cards, collaged from memorabilia of the couple's courtship, lettered on scrolls. Wording has changed, too, for parents who have remarried, or couples who are hosting their own ceremonies.

The bride. Then: The bride's full-time job was to work on wedding details with her mother. Now: Career-minded brides don't let wedding planning disrupt their jobs. Weekends and lunch hours are prime planning time. And according to Bride's magazine, an increasing number of professional brides-to-be hire a wedding consultant to handle the specifics.

The groom. Then: All that was expected of him was to show up on the wedding day. Now: He takes part in planning his wedding, interviewing photographers, screening bands and helping select the wedding menu.

The shower. Then: Women gathered for an afternoon to shower the bride with household items, linen, lingerie. Now: Showers may be held for the couple, and at night. Gift themes revolve around the couple's interests, such as "Handy Couple" (tools, sewing machine, furniture kits); "That's Entertainment" (VCR's, CD's, popcorn

maker); "His and Her Fitness" (running gear, exercise bike, workout videos).

The site. Then: Couples planned to marry in a church, synagogue, hotel or at home. Now: The trend is toward ceremonial sites which evoke a sense of history or possess special appeal - an elegant Victorian mansion, a museum, or a spacious loft, for example.

The cake. Then: The bride's cake was a white, tiered confection with white frosting, and a plastic bride

and groom on top. Now: Cakes are creative works, decorated expressly to complement the wedding theme. Flavors are for sophisticated palates - spice, carrot, cheesecake, lemon, orange, chocolate mocha, and sometimes all of them at once, with a different flavor for each tier. To top it off, couples choose something special: a pair of crystal swans, a miniature flower basket, Mickey and Minnie figurines, or a custom-made bride and groom painted to resemble themselves.

Preparation important for wedding day

You can spend an entire year planning your wedding day down to the letter, but unless you have a fairy godmother, there's no way to guarantee that the day will be perfect. According to the August/September issue of Bride's magazine, a little preparation goes a long way towards ensuring that wedding day mishaps don't get out of hand.

If you organize an "emergency kit," and keep it stashed nearby at the ceremony and the reception, coping with certain last-minute dilemmas will be a breeze. Bride's magazine suggests that you start with a pretty basket, decorated to match your wedding theme, then include the following:

- Needle, thread, buttons, and safety pins.
- Extra stockings for you and your wedding party.
- Spot remover.
- Nail polish - color to match your fingernails, and clear to keep stocking runs from spreading.
- Extra lipstick, powder, blusher, eyeshadow, fragrance.
- Comb, brush and hairspray or gel.
- Extra pairs of glasses or contact lenses.
- Tissues and cotton balls.
- Personal care items.
- Pen and note paper.
- Extra copies of all passages that are being read during the ceremony.
- Telephone numbers for your caterer, clergyman, organist, photographer, florist, bandleader, car service, and each member of the wedding party.

Keep in mind the most important ingredients of all: patience and a sense of humor.

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