

10 Tips for a Green, Small Wedding

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Miguel and I just celebrated our wedding on May 20th with a small group of family and friends. It was a beautiful, simple wedding in the historic gardens of Annapolis Royal. The tulips were blooming and the cardinals were singing! We managed to both enjoy the wedding and stay low stress. How did we do it? Here I will share some tips that I learned from my experience with organising our small, eco-friendly wedding. Hopefully they can help you or a friend in planning your own wedding.

Tip #1: Plan your own wedding

Save yourself a pile of cash by doing your own wedding planning. The smaller and simpler you make the wedding, the easier and less stressful organizing will become. Keep track of expenses and guests in Excel spreadsheets. Make checklists that will be useful closer to the wedding.

Tip #2: Keep your wedding guest list to a minimum

Sit down with your partner and make a list of the people who you absolutely need to have at your wedding. Consider keeping the number as low as possible so that it simplifies the organizing and reduces costs like catering. We had 15 people at our wedding. Miguel's side of the family was not able to come since they live in Colombia. We invited people who lived in Nova Scotia which helped to reduce travel, saving people money as well as greenhouse gas emissions.

Tip #3: Choose your ceremony venue and reception venue carefully

Depending on if your wedding ceremony is outdoors or indoors, there can be a great difference in the effort and money required to decorate and set up. We opted for an outdoor wedding because we both love nature and it offered a simple and beautiful setting. We booked the historic gardens for \$250 and they were able to provide chairs, a table, as well as two 10' X 10' tents in case of rain. Our reception was in a restaurant called Bistro East and they offered us a private rate of \$500. We were so happy with both of these choices as they supported our values and they were also very close to each other.

Tip #4: Buy or borrow a gently used wedding dress or suit

Wedding dresses can easily cost over \$1000 and I didn't have any desire to have a white dress in my closet that wouldn't be used after the wedding. I opted to buy a gown-like dress with blue, red and black patterns over a white background that was elegant and non-traditional. I found it at Frenchy's and paid \$8. I love reusing clothes and so this dress really spoke to my values. I bought a white bolero for \$50 to cover my shoulders. Miguel wore a purple blouse that matched my dress that he had been given. We both went with (mostly) non-traditional and used clothing.

Tip #5: Decorate with simplicity in mind (or don't decorate)

It can be really beautiful having carefully thought-out centerpieces with flowers on tables and lights and ribbons hanging on the walls. But in order to reduce stress as well as unnecessary use of materials we can also opt to minimize decorations. We had no extra decorations at the ceremony besides the beautiful flowers in the gardens. There were two baskets full of rose petals which were tossed on Miguel and I as we left the ceremony. At the reception, we sprinkled rose petals around the cake and bouquet of flowers. There was a table for gifts for the guests consisting of beeswax candles and books that Miguel and I had made about our love story. I bought some LED lights to weave around the candles. It looked very pretty.

Tip #6: Invest in the little details that make the wedding special

Every couple will have different priorities for the details that will make their wedding day special. For us, we really wanted to give our guests a special experience and show our gratitude. We invested a considerable amount of time and money into producing special books about our story as gifts for our guests. It had pictures from various points of time in our relationship and several stories about how we met and adventures we had together.

Tip #7: Stick to a budget (or almost)

Weddings can easily cost thousands of dollars so having a budget can help to keep your wedding simple and small. We decided to have a budget of roughly \$1000 for our wedding. We ended up spending just under \$1300. We saved a lot of money by opting out of several traditions. Instead of live music we used a Bluetooth speaker connected to a phone. I paid for a beautiful hairstyle but I did my own make-up. We couldn't find a photographer so my Uncle and other family members took pictures for us.

Tip #8: Involve your family in helping out with the wedding

Weddings are about families coming together and celebrating love. Allowing one's family to contribute to the wedding can be a great show of love. My parents were extremely generous in helping us out with the cost of the reception, including meals. Mom also bought the beautiful, delicious lemon raspberry buttercream cake. One of my uncles bought the bouquet of flowers and my other uncle took pictures. The wedding was a joint effort and it was made that much more beautiful by the show of support from family and friends.

Tip #9: Forgo traditions that don't speak to your heart

A wedding is meant to be a unique celebration of love, so why not tailor it to exactly what will make you happy? Leave out the traditions that don't resonate with you. We didn't have the means or the desire to have diamond wedding rings. We bought a beautiful moss-agate stone and silver ring for me and a silver ring for Miguel, both costing less than \$70 each. We decided to not have bridesmaids or groomsmen. We also opted to not have those little flower arrangements that people sometimes wear at weddings.

Tip #10: Stay organized, stay relaxed, and enjoy!

A small, simple wedding can reduce one's stress because there is less to organize. However, there are still a lot of little to dos that add up as you get closer to the wedding. I started to feel a little stressed three days before the wedding. I did what I usually do when I feel overwhelmed, make a list! The list included all the tasks I needed to do the three days leading up to the wedding. Once I had that list I felt in control and I could relax a bit. One of the things on that list was to confirm with people about their different roles. For example, the ring-bearer and the person to turn on the music. Once the wedding day arrived, my to do list was very small on purpose so that I could just focus on enjoying the special day.