

Planning the Wedding of Your Dreams on a Shoestring Budget

They say money can't buy love - and it also doesn't necessarily have to buy the wedding of your dreams. On the contrary, you can get the wedding of your dreams even when you're on a budget!

From the time they are born, little girls dream of their wedding day. They envision sparkling lights, a princess gown, a handsome groom and a giant party thrown in their honor. When the big day finally approaches, however, brides begin to realize that the wedding of their dreams might be out of reach financially - or so they think!

The truth is you don't need tons of money to have the wedding of your dreams. A wedding is the first amazing adventure that you'll take as a couple, and planning it will be wonderful - with or without a huge budget.

First and foremost, don't hire a wedding planner. Sure, it will be nice to have someone coordinate your big day, but think about it - it's your big day, not someone else's! Why wouldn't you want to have your hands in the dirt when it comes to planning your wedding?

Save yourself some money and do the planning yourself. Set a schedule of what you need to accomplish month by month and plan out how much each month will cost so that you don't find yourself with tons of bills to pay, come wedding day. Consider doing just about everything yourself - and of course, with the help of your loving friends and family.

Consider having your wedding in your own backyard, or perhaps, in a park or on the beach. You can have it at your parent's home, or even at your best friend's apartment. Who says you need to rent somewhere to boogie down with your loved ones after the ceremony? Renting a place is an unnecessary expense, especially when you're on a budget. Remember that your wedding is about the person you're marrying, not about where you have it.

You can also save money when it comes to your wedding gown - consider going vintage, or even wearing and repurposing your mother's old gown. Designer wedding gowns can cost thousands, and even more inexpensive gowns at bridal retail stores can run you upwards of \$500. A vintage dress could cost \$20. Online retailers like Ebay and Etsy are great places to find vintage clothing.

Remember, this is your wedding day, and you don't have to wear a big, frilly gown if you don't want to. If a simple sheath that you saw at the thrift shop for \$10 is calling your name, don't be afraid to wear that on your big day.

Another way to save money is to do your own invitations. These days, you can create just about anything on your computer. Microsoft Word has a surprising amount of templates, or you can write your invites by hand and then make photocopies. If you're good with Photoshop, you can craft something stunning.

Consider sending out an email instead of paper invites - you'll save yourself money on stamps, and you'll

be saving the planet! E-vites are all the rage with parties these days, so why not capitalize on their popularity by applying them to your wedding day? This option is good for both big and small weddings and doesn't cost you a dime!

Instead of hiring an expensive caterer on your big day, consider coming up with a low-key meal that your friends and family can pull together. Instead of a sit-down dinner, go for a buffet-style meal, where your guests can help themselves. This sort of dining situation will also save you money on waiters - an unnecessary expense, especially if your loved ones can cook!

The same goes for the alcohol - buy it in bulk at a big box retailer and have that bartender friend of yours mix up some drinks. Or, if you dare, go buffet style on that end as well, and let your loved ones mix up some liquid courage for themselves!

Some of the best wedding desserts come from couples that have thought outside of the box. Don't assume that you need a traditional three-tiered wedding cake that will cost you hundreds of dollars. Maybe you love ice cream - why not set up an ice cream sundae stand for your guests?

If it's cupcakes you adore, have each guest bring a set, and then choose which one you and your hubby will split. Maybe whoopee pies are your future husband's favorite food. Why not do a tower of whoopee pies instead of a cake? Almost anything is cheaper than a professionally made cake - and something that's made with love will undoubtedly taste better than something concocted by a stranger in a bakeshop.

As you can see, there are plenty of ways to get the wedding of your dreams on a shoestring budget. Money doesn't buy happiness, nor does it buy the perfect wedding.

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