

# Add Personal Touches To Your Big Day

When it comes to wedding receptions, couples are looking for ways to give a unique, personal flair to their celebration, says Beverly Clark, wedding book author, and designer of the Beverly Clark Collection. "More and more brides and grooms want to express their own style, and they don't want to have a cookie-cutter wedding," she says. "So they are branching out to more elaborate and unique receptions, locations and themes." For example, Clark says that, most recently, her

No. 1 selling wedding collection has been her beach-themed Seashore Collection, with many couples opting to get married on the beach and then tie in sand and seashell décor with their reception.

How can you add some personal touches to your wedding?

- Slideshows. During the reception, present a slideshow set to music with photos of you and your spouse from birth to present.

- Themes. Incorporate you and your spouse's heritage into

the décor and food. Some possible wedding themes may also stem from your favorite hobby, a season, a historical period (such as the Roaring '20s or Renaissance eras), or a fairytale theme complete with a castle-shaped wedding cake.

- Creative table numbers. Instead of using numbers to iden-

tify tables, name your tables after phrases or words that have special meaning to you as a couple, such as your favorite travel spots.

- Monograms. Make your name part of the day. For example, wedding planner Tracie Morris had a client whose new last name started with an "M," so the couple put the

letter "M" on top of their wedding cake and on their cocktail napkins. They also used a video projector to project an "M" onto the dance floor during the couple's first dance as husband and wife.

- Poetry. Write letters or poems to one another and read it during the reception.

## Debating Live Music Vs. DJ

Every couple wants their wedding to be perfect. From choosing the right wedding dress to making the guests comfortable to picking the right menu at the reception, choices have to be made at seemingly every turn.

And music for your wedding is no exception. This decision essentially comes down to choosing a DJ or a band for the wedding reception.

Both a DJ and a band come with their advantages and disadvantages. To help you make a more informed decision, here are some things to consider:

- Price: If you're worried about how to afford the music, you might want to go with a DJ. DJ's are almost always less expensive than a

live band. The asking price for a DJ might start out around \$1,000 for a typical four-hour reception.

If the DJ has a stronger reputation and is known to involve audiences more, this price can double.

Meanwhile, most bands can command between \$2,500 to \$5,000 for the same four-hour period. Plus, with a DJ, you'll only need to provide a courtesy meal for one or two people. A band can have five or more players. That adds up to more out-of-pocket expenses.

- Length of the wedding: Most receptions last in the neighborhood of four hours, which can be a long time for a band to keep up a full head of steam. They may supplement with pre-recorded music during breaks. If you know your reception might run longer than that, perhaps a DJ is the way to go.

- Size of the reception hall: Many times the size of the reception hall can help make the decision of a band versus DJ easier for you.

Some reception halls aren't quite big enough to hold a band and a dance floor. Such halls may also restrict the type of music that can be played as well.

- Atmosphere: The degree of formality of a wedding can also dictate which way to go. If you're getting married a little later in life and your guest list is older, then a band is likely the way to go.

But if you're getting married in your 20s and your guest list is made up mostly of people of a similar age, then a DJ can be a more fun and

suitable option for you and your guests.

- Talk to the DJ/Bandleader: A good DJ or bandleader can be the emcee of a reception. On the other end of the spectrum, a less-than-personable DJ or bandleader can bring down the mood of what is supposed to be a fun night.

Interview a DJ about his music selection and his overall attitude during a performance. To see what a bandleader might be like, ask him about his schedule and try to catch his band's performance at another wedding.

You can also ask married friends about bands or DJs they might have used.

There are also many types of bands you can choose from. A band known as a "General Business" band, for instance, is typically very versatile, capable of playing several different styles of music.

If your wedding will have a particularly ethnic flavor, there are also numerous bands catering to every ethnicity imaginable.

- Decide early on: The type of music will likely have to be one of the first decisions you make with regards to your wedding. This is thanks to talented bands or DJs being in high demand come wedding season.

Oftentimes, a DJ or a band will have their schedule booked at least a year in advance, meaning you need to know far ahead of time which route you want to take.

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