

By

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GREEN FASHION: Some eco-minded brides opt for second-generation dresses. (Photo: [Pink Cloud Events](#))

Some couples are adding a new ending to the traditional wedding jingle.

Something old. Something new. Something borrowed. Something reused?

Sarah Shewey, founder of Los Angeles-based [Pink Cloud Events](#), a green event production company, says brides and grooms are getting over misconceptions that a green wedding can't be big and fabulous.

"We find that now more than last year, and definitely more than two years ago, people get really excited," she says. "There's more options now than there were before. There's more businesses that are popping up and offering eco-friendly services or highlighting the eco-friendly aspects they were doing before."

Wedding planner Lynda Barness says the events rack up a big expense and involve many items that typically are discarded, so some couples are paying greater attention to using resources well and considering the Earth.

"It's a sense of caring about the environment and doing the right thing," says Barness, owner of

Philadelphia-based [I Do Wedding Consulting](#).

One couple incorporated green details into a Pennsylvania wedding with an “enchanted forest” theme. The invitations were printed on recycled paper. The centerpieces included plants instead of cut flowers, plus candles made by the bride and groom. The guests received organic tea and chocolates.

It’s possible to have a green wedding on any type of budget, Shewey says, but the couple needs to prioritize how they want to spend their money. Barness says couples need to be aware that if locally grown food and flowers are desired, there may be fewer vendors to choose from. With organic fare, the food budget might need to be increased.

Another food trend Shewey has noticed is caterers' use of local produce and a decrease in portion sizes — both in response to seeing so much food waste.

Some couples find other ways to lessen their wedding day impact, whether by planting trees to make up for out-of-town guests’ carbon emissions or buying wedding day dishes and glasses at thrift stores or registering for organic, eco-friendly and plantable gifts.

Shewey and other wedding planners say they would like to see more eco-friendly choices in terms of transportation, invitations and venues.

A lasting impact

Denver couple Jeff and Bonnie Smith’s 2007 outdoor wedding at Morgan’s Rock Hacienda and Ecolodge in Nicaragua, near the Costa Rican border, was that venue’s first wedding.

“It is a ground-up eco-friendly experience, from growing all the food to 5,000 acres of conservation,” says Jeff Smith, president of GRI Studios, a fine art reproduction company.

“We loved the fact that it was an eco-friendly destination,” adds Bonnie, a speech therapist in the public school system.

They had stayed at the lodge the year before their wedding, and decided that the flowers and food, such as mangoes, dragon fruit, shrimp and lobster, grown and caught on site, and other environmentally friendly touches would be perfect for their big day.

Their 20-plus guests gained an ecological education while touring the property. The bungalows where they stayed and the furniture inside were made from indigenous hardwoods.

Some couples are rethinking the honeymoon by visiting locales focused on ecotourism or even redirecting some of their honeymoon dollars elsewhere, Shewey says. One couple she worked with planned a honeymoon on a smaller scale and used the remaining money to install bamboo floors in their home.

Bridal registries also are becoming greener, with couples choosing products such as organic towels and bedding. This also educates guests about shopping for gifts. Shewey offers her clients a custom registry at Los Angeles-area eco-boutiques.

The brides, in particular, are learning that gowns and makeup also can get that special touch. Shewey's company has an "ethical fashion stylist" who helps choose the right dress, which could be vintage couture or made out of responsible materials, she says.

"There's an education process that affects the bride's lifestyle after the wedding, which we get really excited about," Shewey says. "The wedding is a small reflection and projection of what our lifestyle is going to be, so being able to incorporate things like fashion and makeup and hair, something all of us girls do every day, is cool."

The Smiths realize their eco-friendly wedding had an impact on their daily life. They're now more conscious about their electricity usage, buy green cleaning products and drink water from a refrigerated pitcher with a filter instead of bottled water.

"Before this, we didn't do anything," Bonnie Smith says. "It didn't even cross our mind."

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