

Saying 'I Do' to the Planet

Green Weddings Embrace Sustainability

by Sandra Yeyati

From advising couples about Earth-friendly menus to reducing and reusing plastic in her business operations, wedding planner Erica Jill Razze, of Capiche Custom Events, in Wilmington, Delaware, is dedicated to environmentalism. When designing her own wedding last year, she wanted it to serve as a portfolio example of sustainability. “Our parents are a little more traditional, so there were certain aspects that we tried to respect and uphold for them, while still finding our happy place from an environmental standpoint,” she says.

Although no wedding can be totally zero waste, there are always greener options, starting with the invitations. The most eco-friendly choice is email, which Razze’s parents declined to use, so she opted for the next best thing: biodegradable, non-toxic paper directly benefitting women in India. In lieu of a response card, which would have required more paper and another mailing, she created a website for RSVPs. Bridal shower invitations were printed on botanical paper embedded with seeds. Invitees that followed the planting instructions were delighted to welcome blooming flowers in their yards.

“Find a venue that already fits your theme, so that you’re not trying to transform a space or shipping in plastic decorations that add to the carbon footprint and end up in landfills,” says Razze, who prefers horticultural centers or outdoors spaces. “The beauty and simplicity of what’s around you is what makes it so wonderful,” she says. “Don’t try to turn a ballroom into a forest and vice-versa.”

Flown-in, farmed flowers are a big no-no. “The transportation is a huge carbon footprint. If they’re growing one particular flower, they’re treated with pesticides,” Razze says. Sustainable alternatives are locally harvested, organic wildflowers; dried flowers that haven’t been sprayed or painted with toxic chemicals; silk blooms; and rented potted plants. Some local florists collect flowers after the event for composting. Heart-shaped confetti made of dried leaves is a clever swap that begins composting once it hits the ground.

Razze’s vegan meal offered another planet-saving opportunity. While real stoneware and silverware gets expensive because it requires hiring staff, single-use plastics that are gold-colored to simulate real cutlery betray Earth and believability. “You’re not fooling anybody with that stuff,” she says, recommending less costly alternatives like biodegradable bamboo and palm-leaf disposables. “Instead of fake-impress, show people something new. Thankfully, taking care of the environment has become trendy, so it’s an easier sell.”

Instead of wedding favors, most of which come from China and



are wrapped in plastic, donate meals to people that don’t have access to food, advises Emily Raezer, director of weddings at Global Gourmet Catering (GGC), in San Francisco. “A lot of times, guests don’t even take those favors home. Why not make a donation that’s going to have a social impact?” GGC also donates all event leftovers to food banks in local communities.

As the first green-certified caterer in Northern California, GGC educates wedding clients about sustainability, helping them choose menu items that are in season, organic, locally sourced,

sustainably farmed and drought-friendly. Raezer explains the reasoning behind these principles: “We don’t want things traveling very far and having CO₂ emissions. Growing things out of season costs the environment water and other resources, and some products are more drought-friendly—which explains choosing avocados over cucumbers. Sustainable fishing really impacts our oceans, so we won’t source any fish that’s on the Monterey Bay watchlist, and a lot of couples are cutting out red meat from their weddings because of the methane emissions.”

GGC goes to extraordinary lengths to minimize impacts caused by their events, including reclaiming and repurposing used vegetable oil for San Francisco’s alternatively fueled vehicles; serving filtered tap water to avoid using plastic water bottles; opting for biodegradable and reusable utensils and decorations; recycling whenever possible; partnering with local farms to compost efficiently; and using non-toxic dishwasher detergents. For every event, they donate a portion of proceeds to Terrapass for carbon offsets.

Despite all preparations, couples must be ready for the unexpected. When the COVID-19 shutdown hit last March, just two months before Razez’s May wedding, she decided to legally marry in a small gathering of fewer than 10 people and postponed her larger green reception for a year. “We want to celebrate with everybody,” she says. “In a year, it could be a vow renewal. How cool is that?”

Sandra Yeyati, J.D., is a professional writer. Reach her at SandraYeyati@gmail.com.

Earth-Friendly Engagement Rings

Among environmentally and socially conscious couples, traditional engagement rings purchased at Tiffany’s that feature the largest diamond three months pay will buy are not so cool when more ethical, sustainable and meaningful options are available. One goal is to use conflict-free or ethical diamonds that are not associated with civil wars, unfair pay, unsafe working conditions, human rights abuses and unsavory environmental practices. Earth-friendlier choices include rings inherited from family members or purchased at estate sales, as well as lab-generated gems and custom-designed one-of-a-kind rings.

According to jewelry designer Amanda Jaron, of Naples, Florida, there’s a trend in the younger, first-time wedding market toward alternative gems. “It might be a lab-created diamond like a moissanite, or what they call a salt-and-pepper diamond, which has many black and white inclusions [imperfections], giving the stone a speckled or smoky look.”

Gemstones and jewelry handed down by family members or acquired at an estate sale are also popular and represent the bulk of Jaron’s creative work. “There’s nothing more special than a gemstone that has two or three decades worth of life to tell,” she says. “I love being able to create fabulous, modern pieces that my clients can wear proudly. What’s better than a sparkly treasure that also has sentimental value?”



GROW Your Business

Contact us for special ad rates.
555-555-5555

natural
awakenings



GROW Your Business

Contact us for special ad rates.
555-555-5555

natural
awakenings