



# SOMETHING NEW

## CREATIVE WEDDING DESIGNERS COME UP WITH CLEVER DETAILS THAT SET THEIR EVENTS APART

According to TheKnot.com, the average wedding in 2013 cost almost \$30,000. With couples investing so much in their big day—both financially and emotionally, as they continue to seek personalization and guest satisfaction—wedding designers are rising to the occasion. They're coming up with innovative ways to set their events apart. We asked four sought-after designers to tell us about something new they're incorporating into their events, whether as a response to a trend or to solve a logistical problem. Here's what they told us.

BY SARA PEREZ WEBBER

PHOTO BY ALISON YIN WEDDINGS



## FAMILY AFFAIRS



MERRILY WED ●●● [merrilywed.com](http://merrilywed.com)

Merrily Rocco, head designer and owner of Merrily Wed in Tahoe City, Calif., has seen a big shift in demand among her clients for family-style meals at the reception. "Over half of our weddings are in this style," she says. "We've totally gone away from the cocktail party-style reception." Her clients like to see their guests interacting with each other, she adds, which the family-style meal encourages.

There's only one problem, says Rocco—where to put the food. "Lush tablescapes that sprawl end to end on rectangular tables (or anything more than a single vessel on round or square tables) seem to be competing with the large food platters for precious tabletop space," she says.

As the beautiful, well-planned tablescapes are a key part of an event's design, Rocco has come up with a way to keep them intact while still providing room on the table for food platters. She incorporates sturdy vessels and vases into the design that serve as pedestals for the

*Rocco incorporates pretty vessels into her tablescapes designs to serve as pedestals for food platters, including glass cylinders filled with florals (opposite) and bark containers filled with river rocks for a rustic-themed wedding (above).*

family-style platters. Guests don't even realize that the vessels serve a functional purpose until the food is brought out.

"You can use any type of vessel for this base pedestal," says Rocco. "We have used a circular clear glass cylinder that showcased beautiful greenery and blooms inside, as well as a solid bark cylinder which used river rocks, baby's breath and a simple bloom inside for when guests caught a glimpse of the interior." While the glass cylinders are heavy enough on their own to support the platters—with the added benefit of showing off the florals inside—the river rocks weighing down the bark containers kept them sturdy while enhancing the nature-based design of a recent Tahoe wedding.

The key, notes Rocco, is to match the vessels to the overall style and décor of the event. "Our past clients have loved it," she says, adding that they appreciated the purposeful décor—and that the tablescapes could be enjoyed throughout the meal. "There were definitely no centerpieces placed on the ground!"

PORTRAIT BY CATHERINE HALL STUDIOS;  
ALL OTHER PHOTOS BY DENNIS KWAN WEDDINGS





## BRINGING IT HOME

**DYNAMIC EVENTS BY DAVID CARUSO** ●●● [dynamiceventsinc.com](http://dynamiceventsinc.com)

David Caruso, president and creative director of Dynamic Events by David Caruso in Milwaukee, is increasingly adding homespun details to the weddings he designs. "People are really into this concept of making their wedding design feel like an experience they could be having with their friends and family at a private party in their home, but doing it on a grander scale," says Caruso.

Pointing to "eclectic style" as a trend that clients increasingly favor, Caruso mixes the traditional and the contemporary to create a one-of-a-kind look for wedding clients. "It might be some vintage furniture, mixed in with modern table centerpieces," he says. "It's a way to emphasize [the couple's] personal style, instead of having everything seem so produced."

Caruso will even include a client's own belongings in the décor, such as for a Ralph Lauren-style wedding he created for a bride who was an equestrian. "We used a lot of her props—her riding helmet and riding boots, coffee table books about horses," he says. "People loved seeing that at her wedding, knowing they were her personal items."

Yet even if a client's personal items aren't available, it's easier than ever to create an eclectic style, says Caruso. "The great thing now is there are so many things available for rent from furnishing companies that have that homespun feel," he says.

For couples desiring such a look, Caruso will create seating vignettes with area rugs and furniture that looks like it came from home. He'll also set tables with various patterns of china, flatware, stemware and seating, mixing and matching for an eclectic look but pulling it all together with a common design thread—whether it's color, shape or style.

Photographs are another way Caruso personalizes events and adds a homey touch. "Recently we created a family photo wall at a wedding that had different pictures of family members and quotes that the couple loved," he says. "It literally looked like a family photo wall you would see at Grandma's house."

To emphasize a couple's personal style, Caruso added a few of the bride's equestrian-related belongings to the seating vignettes he created (top, left and right). At another event, he mixed and matched different furniture styles in white for striking seating areas (below). A family photo wall added a homespun touch at another wedding (above).



**KAT CREECH EVENTS**

●●● [katcreechevents.com](http://katcreechevents.com)

Kat Creech, owner and creative director of Kat Creech Events in Houston, knows how to help her bridal clients get everyone out on the dance floor. "At about the time guests think they're at just another wedding, we kick-start 'La Hora Loca' (The Crazy Hour)," she says. "It's a Latin wedding tradition, but it's crossing over into many cultures because of its fun and flamboyant energy."

For a wedding ending at midnight, La Hora Loca will get started at about 10 p.m. "La Hora Loca typically takes place after the wedding semantics of first dances, cake-cutting and toasts," says Creech. "You can kick-start your dance floor with La Hora Loca, but I like to wait until the guests have danced a little bit and gotten warmed up."

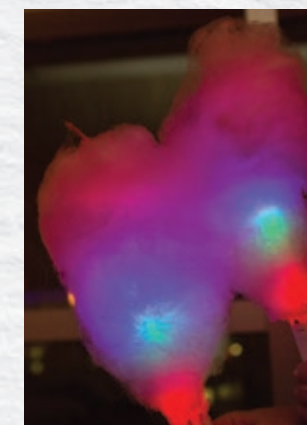
That's when the hats, masks, boas and fun glasses come out—as well as, if the client chooses, such festive add-ons as glow-in-the-dark cotton candy, hip-hop dancers, Carnival dancers, drummers, continuous confetti cannons, confetti poppers and even a tequila cart. "I think of it as a combination of Brazil's Carnival and Mardi Gras in New Orleans," says Creech. "We strongly encourage [clients to budget] some monies for ancillary entertainment and have stilt walkers and other

## GET THIS PARTY STARTED



characters dressed in fun costumes to interact with the crowd. It truly makes all the difference in world. The music during this time is a little more edgy, getting people really excited and dancing. If you weren't on your feet yet, you will be."

If a couple's reception timeline feels too tight for La Hora Loca, Creech will encourage them to forgo such traditions as the bouquet and garter toss. She'll also suggest serving such salty comfort foods as empanadas, tapas, fries and mini hot dogs. "While technically La Hora Loca last 45 minutes to an hour, the party does not stop, and I guarantee your wedding guests will walk away knowing they just went to the best wedding ever," Creech adds.



Creech's weddings often feature La Hora Loca (top), featuring such festive touches as glow-in-the-dark cotton candy (above) and flamboyantly dressed stilt-walkers (below, left and right).







## IN THE CARDS

### POSH PARTIES

poshpartiesonline.com

Heather Lowenthal's clients turn to her for ideas that will make their weddings stand out from the crowd.

So the founder of Posh Parties in Palm Beach, Fla., has found a way to distinguish a detail that many times is overlooked—the escort card display.

"This is a great place to get creative and give your wedding an interesting twist with something so simple," says Lowenthal.

While a place to display the cards directing guests to their tables is usually necessary, it's often forgettable. "Traditionally and typically, it's just a simple tent card or envelope placed on a table with a beautiful floral or candle arrangement," Lowenthal points out. But that's not the case at a Posh Parties wedding.

Lowenthal's clever display card presentations have included writing the guests' names on a mirror or chalkboard, often embellished with florals; using vintage pins to tack the cards to an oversized pin board; and placing the escort cards amidst a floral runner on a farm table, which also

displayed the giant, moss-covered initials of the bride and groom.

She's also personalized the displays by including details from the lives of the couples. At one wedding, for example, real oranges in glass trays anchored the escort card clips, a nod to the groom's family's citrus business.

One of Lowenthal's favorites was a dramatic free-standing tree draped in florals that her team created, with escort cards clipped to hanging ribbons.

"Each one has been a hit—especially the place card tree," she says. "It became something the guests talked about for months to come. They were all taking photos under the tree; it made a very big impact and gave the guests an activity." For an upcoming January wedding, Posh Parties is building a structure for guests to walk under, where they will find their escort cards hanging from garlands of orchids.

"Doing something unexpected with your escort cards just helps take your wedding to the next level and shows that you went the extra step to think outside the box," says Lowenthal. ●

*At weddings designed by Lowenthal, escort cards have been presented in glass trays and anchored by oranges (above left); tacked with vintage pins to an oversized pin board (above); placed on a floral runner (below left); and clipped to ribbons hanging from a floral tree (below, middle and right).*



PHOTO CREDITS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JONATHAN CONNELLY PHOTOGRAPHY; SERENDIPITY STUDIOS; BRETT BUTTERSTEIN PHOTOGRAPHY; BRETT BUTTERSTEIN PHOTOGRAPHY; CHRISTIAN OTH STUDIO

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