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2018 Bridal Issue

Cover model is wearing dresses by *The Elizabeth Bridal*.

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KEEP IT LOCAL, CENTRAL VALLEY!

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIE NICOLE PHOTOGRAPHY

I was 17 years old when I photographed my first wedding. I charged \$100 and the client bought the film. Yes, the film. I was scared that I wouldn't remember to load my film properly or set my meters correctly and that the bride's memories were in my hands; it was baptism by fire.

I made it through that day and I remember getting in the car and heading back home to tell my family about it. I had mixed feelings about that experience, as the pressure for being great was there from the very first commitment I took. Maybe that's my nature, as that momentum has never really left me; one could say it is stronger than ever. I went on to shoot hundreds of weddings and eventually there was no gamble, but just a streamline of steps and motions that were repeated countless times. The equipment got better, my experience grew stronger and the visions and creativity had room to blossom. Needless to say, it is just a matter of doing the work.

People ask if I miss shooting weddings; the answer is no. I love weddings and I love the industry but I like being home Saturday night with my family more than I'll ever like "YMCA" playing at the ten-o'clock hour. To all of you young

entrepreneurs just starting in that industry, do the work, meet the people, hone your skills and enjoy it.

To all of the soon-to-be brides picking up this magazine, you may have seen the gorgeous bride on the cover, Tyler Murdaca, and you're wondering where to get that fabulous gown (it came from The Elizabeth Bridal), or maybe you're looking for design ideas, color trends or floral concepts. Whatever it may be, let me leave you with this: Shop local, girls! Yes, that is really my advice above everything else. Roughly \$48 of every \$100 spent will stay here in the Central Valley when you use local vendors. That isn't only the money you spend on your wedding; all of your guests who come to stay here in the Valley will spend money to support the area as well. I want to tell you that there are so many resources and talent right here that you can tap into. And with that said, there is also a large amount of accountability to the local vendors when they are doing business with people who live and work in their own communities. They are more likely to be on time and go the extra mile for you because they are invested in your referrals and repeat business. You'll only get this kind of

commitment to service from local vendors.

Ask for referrals on everything; ask your friends and family for referrals and ask other vendors for their recommendations. Most of the time the great vendors will know the other great vendors, so ask. If you're looking to save some money, consider booking your wedding in the off season or on a Friday or Sunday. Most vendors should be offering discounts on these dates; if they're not, then you should ask for those discounts. Seriously consider hiring an event planner as they can save you money with these industry tidbits. Lastly, don't skimp on food, photography or music! Food and music are the glue that keeps everything together in the evening and photography is the only thing you have left when the whole thing is said and done.

Have fun and enjoy the image-rich pages of the 2018 Bridal Issue.

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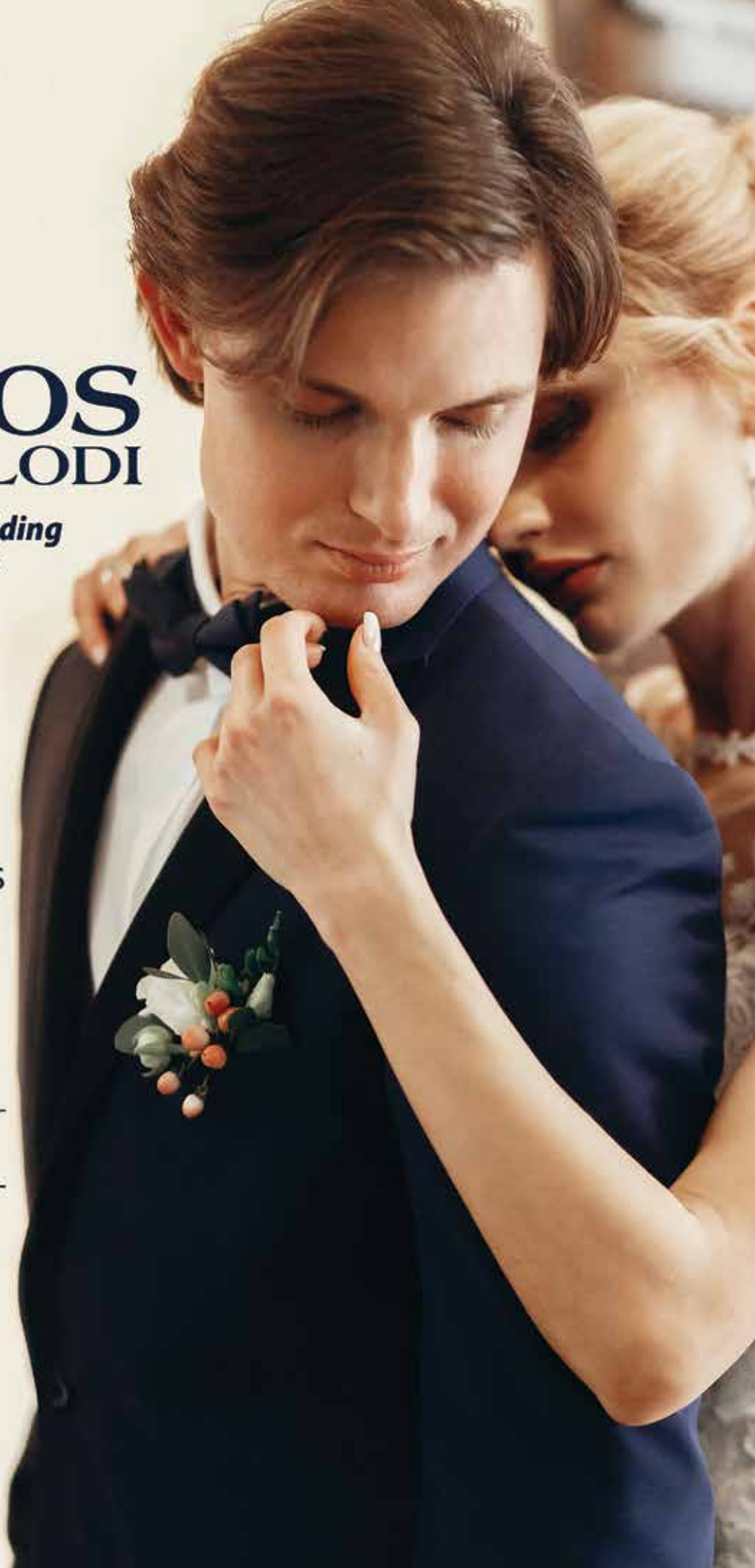
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CODE RED: KNOW YOUR CARDIAC RISK FACTORS

Thank goodness! We're finally talking clearly and openly about women and heart disease. It's almost unimaginable that it's taken us so long to understand that heart attacks aren't just a man's problem.

WRITTEN BY LISA TARANTO BUTLER

In truth, women account for more heart-related deaths than men. Cancer isn't the number one killer of women. It's heart disease. The good news is that 80 percent of heart issues can be prevented by simple lifestyle changes. Knowing your risks can decrease your chances of having a heart attack.

Get to Know Your Numbers

The American Heart Association recommends everyone be aware of and discuss with their healthcare provider these five key numbers: total cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol, blood pressure, blood sugar and body mass index (BMI). Knowing these numbers and what they mean allows you and your doctor to determine your risk for developing cardiovascular disease. Additionally, women should be aware of other major risks.

Smoking

If you need even more reason to stop smoking, look no further than the potential for heart disease. Alone, cigarette smoking increases the risk of coronary heart disease, but the risks become staggering when coupled with other factors. Smoking increases blood pressure, decreases exercise tolerance and increases the tendency

for blood clots. Not only that; women who light-up have a 25 percent higher risk of developing heart disease than men who do the same.

Physical Inactivity

You hear it all the time. "I don't have time to exercise." No matter what your situation, exercise is important for overall wellbeing, but essential for heart health. Women may actually feel fine if they don't exercise regularly, but their heart may be saying otherwise and they don't even know it. Lack of physical activity creates a domino effect on health. Not exercising enough may cause high cholesterol, high blood pressure and weight gain, all extreme contributors to heart disease.

Obesity

One major culprit in heart disease is obesity. Being grossly overweight leads to an increased risk of premature death due to cardiovascular problems such as hypertension, stroke and coronary artery disease, which is the most common type of heart disease and occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart become hardened and narrowed.

Many people don't even realize they are obese. A woman is considered overweight if she

has a BMI of 25 or more, while a woman with a BMI of 30 or more is considered obese. To figure your BMI, multiply your weight in pounds by 700 then divide that number by the square of your height in inches. And if math isn't your thing, numerous BMI calculators can be found online. Women with a waist of 35 inches or more are considered at risk for heart disease.

Diabetes

Diabetes increases the risk of heart disease in women more than it does in men, perhaps because women with diabetes more often have added risk factors, such as obesity, hypertension and high cholesterol. Although women usually develop heart disease about ten years later than men, diabetes erases that advantage. In women who've already had a heart attack, diabetes doubles the risk for a second heart attack and increases the risk for heart failure.

Depression and Anxiety

Research suggests that depression increases the likelihood of developing heart disease and stroke. And since women are almost twice as likely to develop major depression than men, their risks are greater. When people are stressed, anxious or feeling down, their choices

are often compromised because they are overwhelmed by their feelings. Other physiological issues are occurring in the body, including increased stress hormones, higher levels of cortisol and higher glucose levels. Taking care of overall wellness is just as important as eating healthy and exercising.

Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy

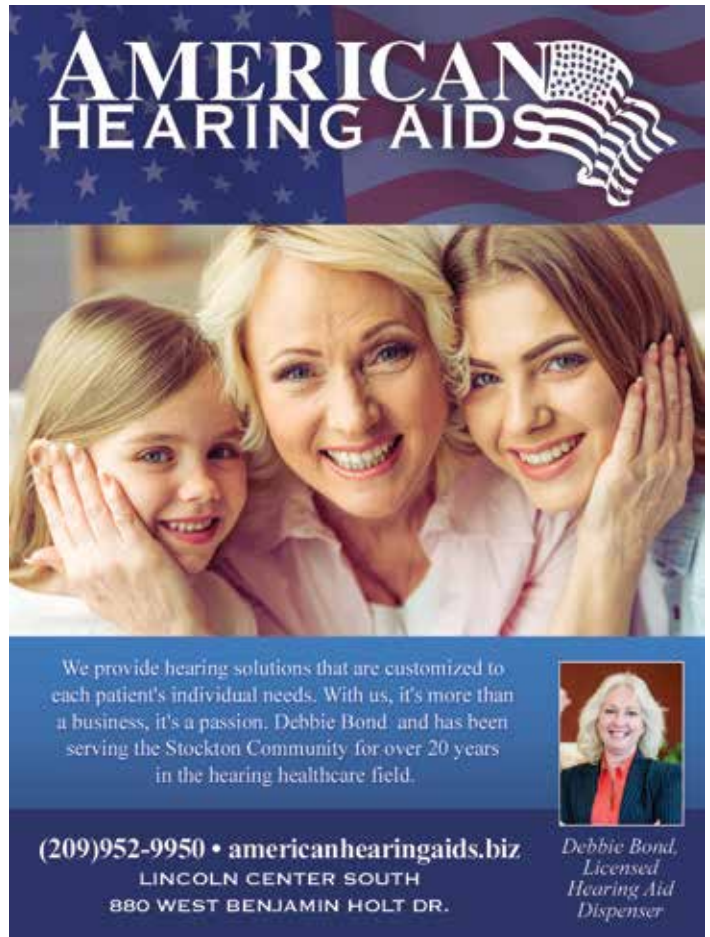
Takotsubo cardiomyopathy, also known as takotsubo syndrome, is a condition in which the heart muscle becomes suddenly weakened. The left ventricle of the heart changes shape and expands, causing the heart to pump improperly.

Often called acute stress-induced cardiomyopathy, broken heart syndrome and apical ballooning syndrome, takotsubo cardiomyopathy was first diagnosed in Japan in 1990. The word “takotsubo” means “octopus pot” in Japanese, as the left ventricle of the heart changes into a shape similar to the pot with a narrow neck and a round bottom. Although the condition can happen at any age, more women than men are affected. Researchers believe that the condition is caused by the sudden release of stress hormones. The good news is that often the condition is temporary and reversible.

Take Charge

In the last several years, women have finally started to concentrate on their own risk of heart attack rather than focus all of their attention on the heart health of the men in their lives. The good news is that we can avoid heart problems in the future by adopting a healthy lifestyle today. ■

Sources: heart.org, prevention.com, womensheart.org and health.harvard.edu.



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PHOTO BY DARIO LEVENTINI

PLASTIC SURGERY CENTER OF STOCKTON: PROVIDING LIFE-CHANGING TRANSFORMATIONS

WRITTEN BY NICOLE STRACEK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DARIO LEVENTINI AND AARON NELSON

In a recent report produced by the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, statistics show that in 2016, more than 17 million people in the United States used both surgical and minimally invasive cosmetic procedures as a path to improving their appearance.

With an emphasis on reconstruction and remodeling all exterior elements of the body, plastic surgeons around the country are applying their highly skilled craft combined with cutting-edge technology to change lives. A wide variety of new and innovative surgical and non-surgical options make it clear that plastic surgery provides benefits that can have a profound influence on improving appearances across the nation.

More Than 30 Years of Service

Located in the heart of Central Valley, the

Plastic Surgery Center of Stockton is an ultra-modern medical facility that provides patients with a path to improving not only their appearance, but also their quality of life. Founded by Dr. Joseph R. Burlin in 1982, the practice is now owned by fellow surgeon Dr. Nathan A. Kludt. With accreditation from the prestigious American Board of Plastic Surgery, Dr. Kludt is one of the leading plastic surgeons in the nation. Dr. Kludt completed his undergraduate training at the University of California, Davis, where he earned a degree in biochemistry and molecular biology. He went on to earn his medical degree from Eastern Virginia Medical School with High Honors and was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha, the National Medical Honor Society.

As a board-certified plastic surgeon, he is trained in the most advanced and innovative techniques in the industry. His dedication to his

patients prevails through his pursuit of delivering the highest level of medical expertise and personalized care in the industry. "Providing patients with the highest level of care, both before and after surgical procedures, is a vital aspect of how we deliver the best possible care at our facility. It provides a level of trust and shows how much we care about the patients' personal experiences and needs," confirmed Dr. Kludt.

He stresses the importance of educating patients to ensure they are equipped with the right knowledge to make the best choices based on individual needs before undergoing surgical or cosmetic procedures. "Educating patients on the importance of training and the value of experience is imperative to ensure they feel cared for and valued," he asserted. With so many plastic surgeons to choose from, it can be difficult to decipher the overwhelming

“Plastic surgery can have a huge impact on a patient’s self-esteem and quality of life. Whether I am helping them achieve their aesthetic goals or restoring their sense of wholeness after having breast cancer, each patient deserves the best care possible,” he noted.

choices. At the Plastic Surgery Center of Stockton, patients can take solace in Dr. Kludt’s extensive experience, education and expertise.

The Value of Teamwork

The Plastic Surgery Center of Stockton is a renowned practice backed by over 30 years of experience helping patients look and feel their best. With three integrated facilities, it is fully accredited by the American Association of Accreditation of Ambulatory Surgery Facilities and offers patients a safe, confidential and comfortable place to visit with Dr. Kludt and his team. This state-of-the-art facility includes on-site board-certified anesthesiologists, an exclusive aesthetician, three injection specialists and over a dozen support staff that are truly dedicated to providing patients with a level of care unparalleled in the industry.

Alongside his team, Dr. Kludt is devoted to providing patients with results that are natural and beautiful. “Plastic surgery can have a huge impact on a patient’s self-esteem and quality of life. Whether I am helping them achieve their aesthetic goals or restoring their sense of wholeness after having breast cancer, each patient deserves the best care possible,” he noted.

Trending Surgical and Cosmetic Procedures

Sagging breasts, fine lines and wrinkles, age spots and an abundance of fat can take a toll on anyone’s self-confidence. While breast augmentation continues its reign as one of the most popular plastic surgery options, many people are taking advantage of injectables to enhance their appearance. Soft tissue fillers such as Juvéderm Voluma®, Kybella® and Botox®, to name a few, are non-surgical injectable options utilized to address a variety of aesthetic issues such as sagging skin underneath the chin and fine lines and wrinkles on the face and neck. “Our practice is ranked in the top 1 percent nationwide of all Allergan accounts, the company that makes Botox, Juvéderm and other fillers. We are in the top 3 percent of their high-volume accounts nationwide,” affirmed Dr. Kludt. This ranking exemplifies the Plastic Surgery Center’s expertise in this area.

Additional cosmetic and surgical services offered by the Plastic Surgery Center of Stockton that are in high demand are body contouring and the Brazilian butt lift. This technology combined with acute surgical skills can provide a lasting, natural effect for those who are searching for a path to improving the firmness in their backsides and reducing overall body fat.

Plastic surgery is often a personal choice based on a variety of individual reasons. From combating the signs of aging, repairing the body or face after trauma or cancer to addressing a specific area on the body that needs improvement, plastic surgery and cosmetic procedures can provide life-changing transformations. ■

To learn more about The Plastic Surgery Center of Stockton, visit plasticsurgerycenterofstockton.com.

PHOTO BY AARON NELSON





CARING FOR ADULTS WITH MEMORY AND COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS

At some point in our lives, many of us will most likely become caregivers, or perhaps even need one.

WRITTEN BY ANN E. BUTENAS

A caregiver can perform a multitude of tasks to help someone with daily life activities, such as shopping, going to appointments, bathing, eating, dressing and paying bills. Many American families care for an adult struggling with brain impairment and cognitive limitations. Those who are cognitively impaired have trouble with issues such as memory, concentration, perception and reasoning skills. Cognitive impairment can be brought on by many issues, including stroke, brain injury, Parkinson's disease, a brain tumor and dementia.

Cognitive limitations can greatly alter how a person thinks, acts and feels. Such changes can create unique challenges for the families and caregivers. People with moderate to severe cognitive impairment may require special care and supervision along with specialized communication techniques. Those who are cognitively impaired may have a variety of behavioral issues that can be challenging and frustrating for caregivers. The afflicted individual could have problems communicating, may exhibit aggres-

sive or impulsive behavior, suffer from memory problems, lack motivation, execute poor judgment and so on. There will be good days and bad days; the journey requires caregivers to remain patient and compassionate and to keep a pretty good sense of humor to cope with these challenges. Most importantly, caregivers must remember the behaviors are caused by the disease, not the person.

Communication between the caregiver and the patient is crucial. This is where patience and simplicity come into play. Ask one question at a time; instead of asking, "Would you like to come over here and sit down and have a snack," break the question down into parts: "Sit down here" and "I have a snack for you."

A few simple steps can create a solid foundation of caregiving. While cognitive decline is common with age, certain types can be more concerning than others. Consider reaching out to a specialist who can address some of the patient's thinking skills. Meet with your primary care doctor to decide if a referral to a

neuropsychologist is needed. This is a licensed psychologist with specialized training in assessment and treatment of cognitive problems typically associated with dementia and other neurological issues.

Information is empowering, so educate yourself. Talk to doctors, health and social service professionals and even those who are facing similar challenges. Read books, study information online and familiarize yourself with all aspects of the disease causing the memory issues and cognitive impairment in your loved one.

Determine the needs of your loved one. In the beginning, she may only require assistance with tasks such as paying bills or grocery shopping, but as the disease progresses, the care required may extend to bathing, dressing and eating. The primary categories of care include personal, household, health, emotional and supervision.

Be sure to outline a plan of care, which will change as the disease progresses. If needed, enlist advice from a healthcare professional to

establish this plan, making a strategy to provide the best possible care for your loved one and yourself. At the beginning, list what your loved one is currently capable of doing and then list areas he may need help with in the future. Determine sources of informal support help, such as siblings, family members and friends who are willing to step in as needed. Also establish a list of formal support services such as those offered by the community, paid home care workers and day programs.

Financial issues must be addressed. What can the patient afford if professional help is necessary? You may want to bring in an attorney or financial planner to assist; it may be uncomfortable, but it's a necessary step to plan for continued care. A specialist in elder law can help you figure out if the patient is eligible for Medicaid or other low-cost services. At the same time, review legal documents your loved one may have that address her needs, desires and wishes for care.

Safety-proofing the home is a highly integral part of the caregiving plan. Take into consideration fire hazards, sharp objects, loose rugs, furniture, secure exits, poisons, clutter and other areas of physical concern.

Finally, as a caregiver, make it a point to take care of yourself. This includes getting regular medical and dental checkups, getting plenty of sleep, and eating nutritious meals. Take some time away to recharge and allow someone else to fill in for you. This may simply translate to going for a walk or enjoying lunch with a friend.

Organizations that provide information on aging include the National Institute on Aging, the National Council on Aging, The American Society on Aging, the Administration on Aging and the American Psychological Association. There are many resources available. This is not something you have to endure alone. ■

Sources: caregiver.org and apa.org.

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NATURAL AND NEUTRAL BEAUTY TRENDS

Bridal beauty for 2018 is all about neutral hues, natural styles and looking like the best version of yourself on your wedding day. Minimalistic makeup paired with sleek styles, textured hair and messy braids will complement your dream dress and complete your look.

WRITTEN BY MEG KRAFT

Two months before the big day, brides may find themselves choosing between an elegant up-do or a side-swept chignon, a bold lip or a smoky eye. Brides emphasize the little details because they make up the finished product, and no bridal style is complete without the perfect hair and makeup. Whether you're considering a chic and simple look or daring to jump outside of your comfort zone, these 2018 hair and makeup trends are sure to inspire you.

Beige, Brown and Bold Brows

Designers from Bridal Fashion Week 2018 opted for an overall minimal makeup look for their runway models, an unpredicted decision that worked so well. When your goal is to show off the dress of a lifetime, a clean canvas is the best way to accomplish that. Bold brows accentuated by brown and beige eyeshadows allow your eye color to pop in your wedding photos.

Dramatic Eye Detail

With such a rich, versatile eye palette, you can accentuate your lids with a minimal addi-

tion of metallic eyeliner that will really make your eyes pop. A shimmering sweep of gold or rose gold will highlight the inner corner of your eyes and open them up. Finish them off with dramatic false lashes or a voluminous waterproof mascara. Brides should consider eyelash extensions as the perfect alternative to reapplying mascara throughout their emotional wedding day. Lash extensions are long-lasting and easily applied and removed by a professional.

Clean Nude Lips

Nude or brown tone matte lips pair perfectly with a natural face and hints of bronzer for a warm glow. Dewy highlights and pops of neutral pink gloss complete the look and last throughout your wedding day, eliminating the need to exit your reception to reapply. A pearly, light lip will neutralize heavier eyes and still keep your overall look bright, fresh and beautifully bridal.

Straight Manes and Sleek Ponytails

While romantic curls are usually the go-to bridal style, straight tresses are a hit this sea-

son. This is a favored style for brides with short hair who want to show off their fashion-forward cuts. Playing off the widely popular minimalist beauty trend, brides who are planning a modern wedding can pull off a more casual style. Sleek ponytails also dominated the runway in an effort to prove that simple doesn't mean lack of style. Brides can accessorize their ponytails with pearl hair ties or crystal ponytail holders for added elegance.

Playful Headbands and Textures

Jeweled headbands, in lieu of veils, lend extra shine to your locks without masking any part of your bridal beauty. Featuring rhinestones, opals and floral structures, headbands are the perfect balance between playful and posh, adding a dreamy touch to any hairstyle.

The bridal runway was filled with natural styles that emphasized lush textures. It's deemed unconventional for brides to show up on their wedding day rocking their natural hair style, but why don't a tight bun if it's something you would never wear on a regular basis? You don't have to choose something completely

dramatic or different to look special. In 2018, it's all about the unexpected. On your big day, go laissez-hair! You'll thank yourself later, when you spend the final hours of your wedding day toasting your new husband instead of cringing while removing dozens of bobby pins.

Messy Braids

Whether it's in crown form, defining a half-up half-down 'do or a flexible fishtail, braids are always a popular bridal style! There's something about the fuss-free, intricate style that is both ultra-romantic and youthful. Braids are a favored summer wedding hairstyle, keeping hair, and the heat, off your neck without committing to a full up-do.

Messy, loose braids are a great option for brides planning a whimsical or rustic wedding. They are easily accented with headpieces or veils and they're a fabulous canvas for showcasing stunning accessories such as vintage earrings or a diamond necklace. If a side braid isn't your style, you can incorporate the look by defining your topknot or opting for loose Dutch braids to accent an intricate gown.

Small-Scale Floral Accents

Flower crowns were a style staple for the past few years, but this season, small hints of florals cascading through curls and braids are the new trend. Add dainty baby's breath to your chignon or scatter daisies throughout locks for the ultimate outdoor-inspired detail.

This season, bridal hair and makeup trends emphasize brides' natural beauty, so primp accordingly and celebrate your unrefined features! ■

Sources: brides.com and marthastewartweddings.com.

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BODY CONTOURING: LIPOSUCTION VS. COOLSCULPTING

WRITTEN BY DR. NATHAN A. KLUDT

Q *What are my options to get rid of unwanted fullness around my waist? Is there a difference between liposuction and CoolSculpting™?*

A The quick answer is that both liposuction and CoolSculpting™ are effective at permanently removing fat for people who are good candidates. However, for some, one option is better than the other.

Liposuction

Liposuction is a surgical procedure that removes your unwanted or excess fat from a number of different areas of the body. An incision is made in the treatment area. A small tube, known as a cannula, is placed through the incision and used to break up fatty tissue. The fat is then suctioned out of the body, thus providing significant contouring to the treatment area.

It is commonly used to remove fat from the neck, backs of the arms, abdomen, thighs, buttocks and other regions. With excess fat deposits removed through liposuction, a slimmer figure is created and body contours and proportions dramatically improve. Liposuction can be used to treat isolated small areas or multiple larger areas where pockets of unwanted fat exist, reshaping what diet and exercise alone cannot always achieve.

CoolSculpting

CoolSculpting is a noninvasive fat-reduction procedure that eliminates stubborn fat safely and effectively without surgery or the associated down time. This fat reduction treatment is the only FDA-cleared procedure to use controlled cooling to safely target and eliminate diet- and exercise-resistant fat.

CoolSculpting technology safely delivers precisely controlled cooling to gently and effectively target the fat cells underneath the skin. The treated fat cells are crystallized, or frozen, and die. Over time, your body naturally processes and eliminates these dead fat cells, leaving a more sculpted you. The CoolSculpting fat-freezing procedure is completely non-surgical, so you can typically return to work and normal activities immediately.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The advantages of liposuction over CoolSculpting are that it can provide a more aggressive and complete fat reduction, more precise contouring and the ability to be combined with other surgical procedures. However, it has a greater down time and carries the potential for surgical risks.

The advantages of CoolSculpting are that it is a noninvasive procedure with minimal down time, fewer risks and it provides an alternative to surgery option for those who cannot have or don't want surgery. ■



Dr. Nathan A. Kludt, a Diplomate of the American Board of Plastic Surgery, received a BS from the University of California, Davis, with highest honors, and his MD from Eastern Virginia Medical School, where he was inducted into Alpha Omega Alpha, the National Medical Honor Society. He returned to UC Davis, where he completed his general surgery residency before being accepted into the plastic surgery program at UC Davis. Dr. Kludt has been published in the Annals of Plastic Surgery and Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, and has presented at the California Society of Plastic Surgeons meetings and multiple other regional and national plastic surgery meetings. He is a member of the American Board of Plastic Surgery, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the California Society of Plastic Surgeons, the California Medical Society and the San Joaquin Medical Society.

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|| Tied the Knot September 30, 2017

Tyler and Pete Murdaca

WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE EDGES PHOTOGRAPHY

Is it chance? Is it fate? Perhaps all happy couples believe in both, to a certain extent. “Pete and I lived a couple of doors down the street from each other during high school, but we didn’t meet until we were in our mid-20s!” smiled Tyler (Ring) Murdaca. “We finally met in 2012 on the Mokelumne River here in our home of Lodi. We were there one warm summer day with mutual friends; we began dating and we were engaged five years later. During those years, Pete moved to Italy to attend a culinary program for six months. After he came home and started running the restaurant with his family, we both knew that we would plant our roots in Lodi.”

Tyler has spent most of her life in Lodi. She attended Lodi High School and was active in aquatic sports for her entire life. After graduating from University of the Pacific in Stockton, Tyler earned her real estate license and she has been working in commercial real estate for the past four years. She recently took on the role of director of retail leasing at Cushman & Wakefield’s new Stockton office. She loves animals, enjoys being active and being outdoors. Since her husband is in the food industry, she has a new love for dining out at restaurants.

Pete’s family has been in the Lodi area for more than 40 years. They own the popular local restaurant Pietro’s Trattoria. Pete comes from a close Italian family that is a





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deep part of the Lodi community. He loves to be active and, most importantly, loves to cook delicious food and interact with the people in the community.

Pete's subtle and imaginative proposal caught Tyler a bit off guard. "The day before Pete's 28th birthday, we had plans to have dinner with our families in Sacramento at one of our favorite restaurants, Biba Ristorante Italiano," Tyler smiles. "Pete surprised me with a limo to dinner, which I thought was strange since it was for his birthday. When we got in the limo there were a lot of gifts in the car, which I thought were for his birthday. As he opened the gifts, he asked me to help him open the last one. Inside the last gift was the ring!"

The blissful couple tied the knot on September 30, 2017, in an afternoon wedding at Oak Farm Vineyards. Tyler was attended by bridesmaids Haley Ring, Jenna Cole, Meredith Baker, Paige Geweke, Lyndsey Merrill, Lindsey Miller, Lauren McGregor Alexis Ward, Lori Woodward and Lauren Taylor. Pete's groomsmen were Rudy Vaccarezza, Casey Vaccarezza, Joey Murdaca, Kevin Gillies, Alex Cano, Alex Labeouf, Tyler Moran, David Ring, Mat Keplinger and Anthony Simi.

"My grandparents, George and Marilyn Brown, owned Oak Farm Vineyards before the Panella family purchased the property and transformed it into a wine and event center, so I grew up on the property. I have many special memories from my years there with my grandparents. We had our ceremony with the lake as a backdrop; it's the lake that my grandfather built at the property when I was a little girl, where I enjoyed fishing and playing.

"The wedding day itself was magical. Fifteen family members flew in from Italy to see us. We had a warm summer day with our family and friends and it could not have been more perfect. One of my favorite elements of the day was the open tent that sheltered the farm tables, where our guests were able to mingle and enjoy the beautiful venue around us. It turned out absolutely beautiful.

"The wedding style we chose was timeless, classic elegance. The bridesmaids wore a soft elegant gray blue, and the groomsmen were clad in classic tuxedos. We chose simple gold accents and exposed farm wood; our color scheme reflected earthy green tones with eucalyptus set off by light pink and apricot tones."

Tyler and Pete honeymooned at the Likuliku Lagoon Resort in Fiji. "We stayed in one of the over-water bures with endless views of the ocean and we truly had the time of our lives. We wanted to go somewhere where we could relax and spend one-on-one time with each other." ■

“ The wedding day itself was magical. Fifteen family members flew in from Italy to see us. We had a warm summer day with our family and friends and it could not have been more perfect.





RECIPE & PHOTO PROVIDED BY BELLYFULL.NET

CHEWY SNICKERDOODLE COOKIE BARS

INGREDIENTS

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter	2¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ cup Crisco shortening	2 teaspoons baking powder
1 cup granulated sugar	½ teaspoon cream of tartar
1 cup brown sugar	½ teaspoon salt
2 large eggs	⅓ cup granulated sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla	1 teaspoon cinnamon

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 9x13 baking dish with parchment paper, leaving some overhang for easy removal. Place butter in a large microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high for a minute, and then in 20-second intervals until melted, making sure it doesn't boil. Add shortening, both sugars, eggs and vanilla. Beat with a handheld mixer until combined. Add flour, baking powder, cream of tartar and salt. Continue to mix until well blended. Batter will be thick. Using a spatula, transfer batter to the prepared dish and spread it out evenly. Mix together the ⅓ cup of sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle it over the top. Bake for 30 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out almost clean. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely before separating from the parchment paper. Cut into bars and enjoy! Makes: 15 / Prep time: 10 min. / Cook time: 30 min. ■



RECIPE & PHOTO PROVIDED BY BELLYFULL.NET

TURKEY SAUSAGE AND CAULIFLOWER STIR FRY

INGREDIENTS

1 small head cauliflower, cut into florets	cut into 1-inch pieces
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided	2 teaspoons ginger paste
Salt and pepper	3 scallions, diced
9 ounces smoked turkey sausage, sliced ½-inch thick	¼ cup roasted cashew halves
4 ounces snow peas, trimmed, sliced in half if large	⅓ cup Thai chili sauce
1 yellow bell pepper, seeded and	2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
	Chopped fresh cilantro or parsley, for serving
	Cooked white rice, for serving

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the broiler. Toss the cauliflower with 2 tablespoons of olive oil and a few grinds of salt and pepper; spread on a rimmed baking sheet. Broil, stirring occasionally, until lightly charred and tender, about 10 minutes. Heat the remaining oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high. Add the turkey sausage and cook, without turning, for 1 minute. Stir, sautéing for another 2 minutes. Add the snow peas, bell pepper and ginger to the skillet. Cook, stirring occasionally, until crisp tender, 1-2 minutes. Toss in the scallions, cashews and cooked cauliflower. Stir in the chili sauce and soy sauce, tossing to thoroughly coat. Serve over hot cooked rice with a sprinkle of freshly chopped cilantro or parsley. Serves 4-6 / Prep time: 20 min. / Cook time: 10 min. ■

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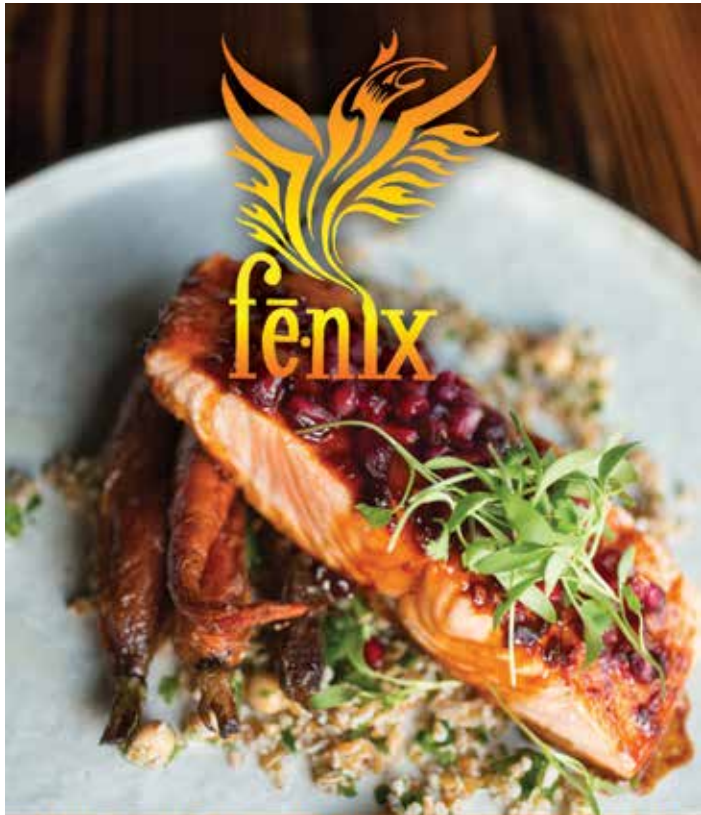
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BOUQUET OF ROSÉ

During Cupid's Valentine month of greeting cards, chocolates, romantic dinners and gifts, add in a little rosé love!

WRITTEN BY MELISSA HAINES LAVIN

Although rosé wines are lovely all year long, this month is a perfect time to celebrate the selections of rosé wines available to us. One of my favorite white wines, rosé is enjoyable with appetizers, cheeses and poultry as well as poolside during the warmer time of year.

Rosé is a beautiful style of wine with appeal across the spectrum of wine lovers. From small half-bottles to sparkling wines, rosé has found a resurgence in the marketplace and is once again at our festive tables all year around.

Rosé has worked hard for our attention. The wine has overcome the image of being too sweet and it's no longer confused with white zinfandel, which took the wine shelves by storm in the 1980s. Not all rosé is white zinfandel! Rosé can be made from merlot, syrah, mourvedre, grenache, pinot noir, tempranillo, zinfandel and many others, which makes tasting rosé so interesting!

Pretty Wine

Let's begin with the color. Rosé wines are considered a white wine, not a red wine, because

of the process. The color comes from the limited contact with the black-skinned wine grapes that impart the pink hue to the wine. Depending on the type of grape that is used and the grape skins that are imparting color, a rosé wine can range in color from a pale orange to a shade of deeper purple.

Each winemaker uses different techniques to achieve the perfect balance they are striving for. Setting out to make a beautiful rosé wine, winemakers most often use a saignée method. During fermentation, the winemaker "bleeds off" a generally light portion that is fermented into rosé. A third method of making rosé wine is to blend a white and red wine, but most winemakers call that a blended wine and not a true rosé.

When you look at the rosé spectrum, the colors range from a lovely pale pink to a rich garnet color. Be sure to enjoy your rosé wines within one to three years. Tannins keep wines aging well, and rosé wines tend to be lower in tannins due to the nature of their production.

But how does it taste? Now that you're looking for the perfect rosé, you'll notice the

variety of still wines and sparkling wines that range widely in sweetness and dryness. You can look on the wine label description for some key words as a guide, or ask your favorite winery or wine expert what they would recommend.

Dry or Sweet

If "Provençal" is listed, it will taste dry on the palate and be perfectly suited for savory appetizers and foods including barbecue. This is considered an old-world style. When you see the description "off-dry," you can anticipate sweetness: the residual sugar in the wine works its magic as you enjoy a spicier menu. If the label lists the rosé of Zinfandel or Pinot Noir grapes, you're in for a special treat; these wines lend themselves easily to a crisp, light aura of passion fruit or melon when done in a rosé style with a bit of sweetness. The new-world rosé style will be on the sweeter side.

Floral or Fruity

When served chilled, rosé wines can be immensely refreshing all year long. Essences of strawberry, watermelon, banana and mint can

be wonderful complements to creamy sauces, dips and Greek and Mediterranean foods, including the dipping sauces that accompany dolmas and other appetizers.

Savory

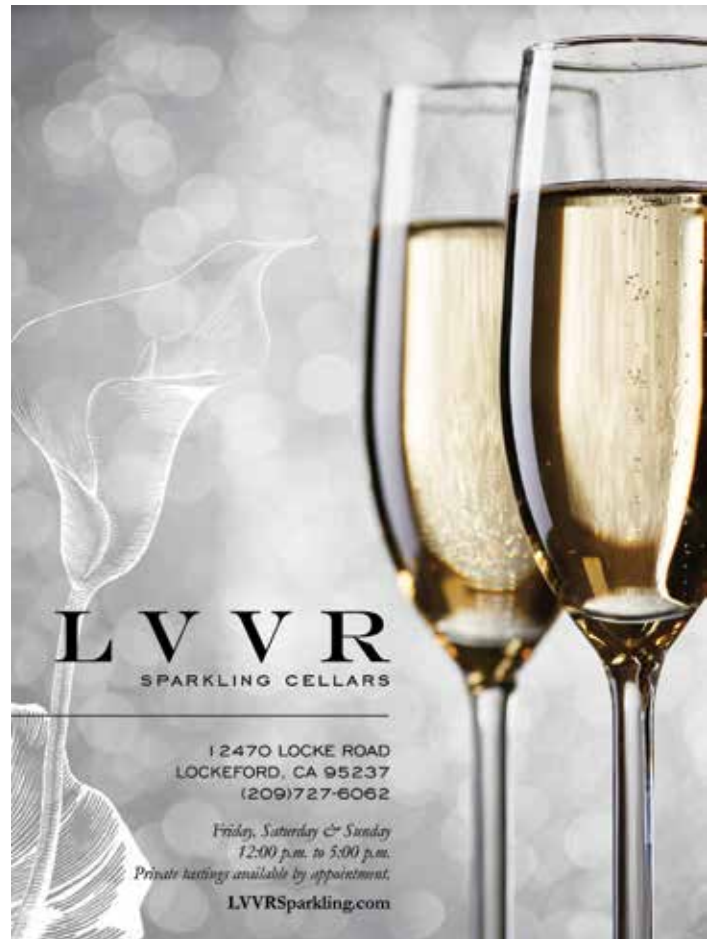
Believe it or not, when you taste the dry versions of rosé wines, you may get a sense of olive and white pepper on the tongue if the rosé was made from syrah, cabernet franc or tempranillo. Even allspice and almond or pecan flavors can present themselves.

What's wonderful about this beautifully pink wine is that it has enough muscle to go with barbecued turkey, smoked meats and fish, grilled burgers and vegetables as well as Chinese or Thai takeout. One of my favorite rosé pairings is a gorgonzola-prosciutto pizza at my local eatery.

If you want to try a rosé adventure, I'd recommend seeking out Cotes du Rhone on the label. The wines of this style and region tend to be a little drier but also a little higher in alcohol, which makes this lovely wine an easy sipper with very low acid. For a sweet finish to a meal, angel food cake and shortcake with a light creamy fruit topping have been my favorite desserts to serve with chilled rosé wines. Truffles of divinity, caramel-marshmallow creams and macadamia nuts are also a good pairing.

Make it fun and select a dozen bottles of rosé to celebrate the month of February. Your tasting adventure will be as enjoyable as the flowers in the vase! ■

Sources: buzzfeed.com and winefolly.com.



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A LIFETIME CHOICE

*Would you buy your own engagement ring? Or wedding band? According to a survey on *The Knot* and a poll by Taylor & Co Jewellery, women are increasingly willing to pay for all or part of their wedding bling.*

WRITTEN BY HOPE FERGUSON MORGAN

The reasons for this are numerous; perhaps the fiancé is not as financially stable as she is. Maybe he can't afford a rock the size she desires, or it could be that they have an overall egalitarian relationship and this extends to major purchases such as wedding and engagement rings.

In a *Today Show* poll, 46 percent of respondents said that they would be willing to split the cost of an engagement ring. An article in *The Cut* explained that because more American women are the primary breadwinner in their families, "helping to foot the bill for a fancy rock seems only fair."

Some women remain appalled that a woman would pay for her own ring, thinking it subverts the symbolism of a man pledging something valuable to his beloved. Some even questioned whether in that case it was still an engagement ring. Other women applaud the trend, saying that such things as bachelor-

ette parties and engagement rings are passé, as many couples cohabit before marriage. One commenter on a story in the *Daily Mail* explained that in Victorian times, an engagement ring was an insurance policy of sorts; if the woman became intimate with her betrothed during this time, he would not desert her after he had made such a significant investment.

The traditional scenario of the surprise engagement with the man popping the question on one knee, ring at the ready, still occurs regularly. However, according to many sources and much discussion, more women are breaking with tradition. They may want to shop with their husband-to-be to ensure the selection of the perfect ring, or as part of the bonding experience.

Millennial women are at the forefront of the trend for rings that they may select themselves, pitch in for or not. Members of the generation that eats vegan, drinks craft beer and prizes clean living often aren't as wed to the

traditional notions of what engagement rings and wedding bands should be. Couples sometimes recycle vintage rings, redesign and upscale rings from family members, or incorporate a treasured family stone, not necessarily a diamond, into a new setting, according to *The New York Times*.

One woman commenting on an article in *MadameNoire* said that although she was not engaged or about to be, she had already purchased her dream wedding set to have at the ready when she met Mr. Right. A commenter on the *Daily Mail* website said she had selected a ring herself, a simple, unique vintage ring for \$244; her comment continued, "I will never see anybody else wearing the same ring and I love that; it makes my ring so much more personal."

I noticed the trend when shopping for my own wedding band recently. My husband had bought me a beautiful 1930 Art Deco diamond engagement ring. He had earlier purchased a

gold wedding band that I traded in to get one that matched my silver Art Deco ring. However, when we finally married several years later, I decided I wanted something new, so I had no problem purchasing my Marquis wedding band myself.

As I searched online during that period, I noted that more and more women were posting reviews for engagement and wedding rings that they had purchased themselves. Some women were replacing lost or damaged rings or were upgrading. Since they were already married, they had no problem making the purchases themselves.

The engagement ring and wedding band may be the first large investment a bride and her fiancé will make together. It may seem that the surprise factor is eliminated, but on the other hand, it's an opportunity to understand the marital dynamics of cooperation, compromise and making joint decisions. It's also the perfect time to discuss the financial commitment, and since money can be a touchy subject for many people, this is one more step toward working out a future budget. It can also assure the future groom that his bride will be happy and proud of their choice. And he can still create the romantic setting in which he presents it to his love.

The bottom line? It's a personal decision based on your relationship, your finances and your values. The good news is, if for whatever reason you choose to buy your own engagement and/or wedding band, you are not alone; in fact, you are part of a growing trend. You can either be up front about it or keep how you got your ring on the down low. That's what having freedom to live your own values is all about. ■

Sources: nytimes.com, madamemoire.com, dailymail.co.uk, huffingtonpost.com, thecut.com and slate.com.



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PLAN A BRIDAL SHOWER TO REMEMBER

According to a 16th-century Dutch story, a young woman fell in love with a poor miller's son; despite her family's disapproval, she insisted on marrying him.

WRITTEN BY LAUREN HEDENKAMP

As the tale goes, her father refused to pay her dowry, the traditional transfer of property, gifts or money at the marriage of a daughter. When her friends learned of this, they “showered” her with gifts to substitute for a dowry. Today, the traditional bridal shower has evolved from a contractual tradition to a special celebratory event that every bride looks forward to enjoying with friends and family.

Hosting a bridal shower can seem intimidating, since Pinterest photos and bridal websites inundate us with images of perfect events. However, if you follow a timeline and make a checklist or two, you can plan a shower that will have your bride-to-be feeling loved!

Focus on a few elements to make hosting a shower less stressful and allow the bride and her guests to feel special. First and foremost, enjoy being creative. Pick a theme that's a reflection of the bride and allow it to guide floral décor, food and even party favors.

When to Shower

The traditional time frame to give a shower is up to two months before the wedding. If the bride lives out of town, begin planning early to make sure her schedule isn't too crowded in the months prior to the wedding. If it's a destination wedding or many guests will be

arriving from out of town, hosting a shower a few days before the wedding can ensure everyone can attend.

Guest List

The guest list needs to be created by the bride. It is crucial that everyone who is invited to the shower is also invited to the wedding. If this is a surprise shower, use your resources, such as the bride's mother and fiancé. Include close female relatives and friends of the bride and groom and the bride's closest friends.

Party Festivities

The guest list will likely span generations, and the thoughtful hostess will plan accordingly. Many may know each other well, while some guests may be more distant relatives and acquaintances. As hostess, you have the responsibility of making guests feel at home and introducing people who have similar interests to stimulate conversation. Details of food, drink and activities that make your job a pleasure will flow as you develop your timeline for the event.

Four Months Prior to Shower

Pick a date. Sit down with the bride-to-be to discuss her wishes and wants for the shower.

Would she like for it to be women only, or would she prefer to invite couples? Does she want a theme and games? Does she want a quiet, small party or a larger, inclusive affair? What is a general head count?

Three Months Prior

Compile addresses for the guest list. Send an informal save-the-date announcement in the mail or via email to ensure family and friends have it on their calendars. Finalize the theme with the co-hosts and decide on décor. Establish a budget with co-hosts and assign responsibilities for the food, invitations, décor, activities and favors. If invitations will be mailed, order them now; include information about the couple's registry on the invites.

One Month Prior

Mail invitations. Purchase décor and party favors for guests, and order any specialty food items, such as custom cookies or cake. Check in with co-hosts to make sure everyone is on target.

Two Weeks Prior

Order floral arrangements, if you're not arranging them yourself. Purchase your

personal shower gift for the bride-to-be. Pick up cake stands or serving platters that friends and family have offered to provide for the shower. Organize the shopping list for food and beverages, and purchase spirits and champagne.

One Week Prior

Finalize your head count from RSVPs and adjust special orders for food items if necessary. Confirm order pickup and delivery times. Create the party favors for guests and organize the games, if you plan to have them. If not, brush up on conversational openers to break the ice and keep guests comfortable.

Purchase groceries.

If you're having the party in your home, clean the house and organize the space, making sure your plan allows fluid movement around the room. Set up the food buffet with the serving platters, so you know where everything will be set. If you're having the shower at another venue, reconfirm arrangements with their planners. Check in one more time with co-hosts on their tasks and when they will be arriving for the event.


Day Of

Make or pick up food items and set up the buffet. Chill the beverages and pour yourself a glass. Relax, put on your best smile and enjoy a day celebrating the bride-to-be! ■

Sources: marthastewartweddings.com, missabigail.com, mywedding.com, theknot.com and thespruce.com.

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SUCCULENTS: THE LUSH GREEN BRIDAL CHOICE

Succulents, those chubby-looking plants that retain water in their leaves and stems, are one of the latest trends for weddings, and with good reason.

WRITTEN BY CATIE WATSON

Whether they're used alone or with cut flowers, their unique beauty adds a special touch to wedding décor. With hundreds of varieties to choose from, succulents are a perfect choice for a variety of wedding themes: rustic, bohemian, vintage or sophisticated.

When the weather heats up, succulents shine. Arrangements created several days ahead of time will still look fresh for the wedding, even during summer months in warm climates. Another benefit of succulents is that they bloom throughout the year in many areas, making them a competitive alternative to imported flowers and allowing you to have lush floral arrangements.

In addition to their visual impact and low-maintenance benefits, succulents are one of the best plants for weddings from a green point of view. Succulents that are sourced locally avoid the environmental impacts associated with transportation and refrigeration. Best of all, they can be repurposed by transplanting after the big event. As the plants grow, the wedding becomes part of a living memory.

Since succulents are trending, florists are

eager to incorporate them into wedding arrangements. They are often paired with big, bold blossoms such as roses, dahlias, peonies, hydrangeas and orchids. For non-traditional looks, they can be used in combination with cacti and air plants. Succulents lend themselves well to DIY decorations and can be found in almost any nursery or big box store. They're available in nearly every shade of green, blue, red and purple and in a variety of shapes, from rosettes to trailing vines to spiky spears.

Succulents are an ideal alternative for brides who want a non-traditional, eco-friendly ceremony and reception. Here are some of the chic new ways these versatile plants are showing up at weddings.

Bouquets and Boutonnieres

You can draw inspiration from the hundreds of pictures on Pinterest of stunning bridal bouquets that incorporate succulents. Many feature one or more large echeveria or aeonium rosettes with pink or purple overtones surrounded by cut flowers and more succulents. Trailing succulents such as string of pearls can be added for a romantic touch.

There are also images of one-of-a-kind bride's and bridesmaid's hairpieces made from succulents and manly boutonnieres for grooms and groomsmen created with two or three mini-succulents. Here's a florist tip: if you're making a bouquet or boutonniere with stemless succulents, use floral wire and tape to create longer stems, then wrap ribbon or burlap over the tape.

Centerpieces

There are probably as many ideas for succulent centerpieces as there are varieties of succulents. Some of the most spectacular use shallow containers for low arrangements that don't block guests' views of each other. Fill containers with cactus potting mix layered with colored aquarium gravel and then plant densely with a variety of succulents. Combine plants with different sizes, textures and colors for maximum effect, then add a matching succulent topper to the wedding cake. For arrangements in taller vases and urns, floral foam can be used to anchor taller succulents in place. Globe-shaped terrariums filled with succulents also make striking wedding centerpieces.

Guest Favors

Small succulents have become a popular wedding favor for guests to take home as a lasting memory of the event. They're hardy enough to survive the trip home from the wedding and don't mind being forgotten for a few days after. Plant them in small tin pails, terracotta pots or votive glasses. Add a name sign or calligraphy names on pots and use each favor as a place card holder, or line them up on a table or cart near the door for guests to pick up as they leave. If you want to go all out, create a succulent wall backdrop nearby for wedding guest selfie poses.

Repurposing Succulents after the Wedding

To replant supplements from a bridal bouquet or centerpiece, separate each stem and lay it out to dry for several days. For rosettes with very short stems, trim away a few layers of lower leaves to reveal at least a half inch of stem. After drying, plant stems in a container filled with cactus potting mix, leaving plenty of room between plants, or in small pots. Place in an area with plenty of light, water sparingly and allow the soil to dry before watering again. Four to six weeks after planting, look for new growth that signals plants have established roots. Over time, new small plants, called pups, will appear at the base of your plants. These can be separated and repotted to create an entire succulent garden.

For beautiful photos and detailed instructions for creating cactus potting mix and transplanting succulents, check your local bookstore for the many books on succulents or visit themarthablog.com. ■

Sources: brides.com, sunset.com, marthastewartliving.com and themarthablog.com.

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MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER PRETTY EGG

It's a lovely pre-spring day, just perfect for a little garden work.

WRITTEN BY S.E. FILOMEO

Rake in hand, I'm reveling in the warm sunshine whilst cleaning up the dead leaves beneath my bolting cabbages, when to my horror a thousand earwigs explode from under a large, yellowing leaf. My first impulse is to do the party rock shuffle over their squirming bodies, but I know I can only crush a miserable few before they scatter for the shelter of the nearest crevice. All right then, it's time to call in pest control. I give just a little whistle to the girls and they are there in a flash of feathers, ready to lap up the loathsome pests.

As more urbanites seek ways to connect with their food, they are finding their backyard chickens to be more than just egg-providers; they are also excellent organic insecticides. Imagine not having to run for a can of spray when you catch those cucumber beetles gnawing holes in your leaves, or not having to worry about Fido haplessly feasting upon toxic slug bait. Your little feathered bug vacuums are happy to clean up anything that crawls or flies, including earwigs, crickets, ticks, fleas, grasshoppers, beetles, aphids, ants, mosquitoes, slugs, pill bugs, lawn grubs, fly larvae, cut worms and even scorpions. Imagine your backyard free of these pests and more, a bonus of wholesome, home-laid eggs to boot. It does come back to the egg, as the protein gleaned

from this expansive backyard menu will result in more productive egg-laying.

However, even with this insect-rich diet, your chickens will need supplemental food. Raising backyard chickens will never be less expensive than buying eggs or even commercial pesticides, but you have peace of mind knowing that your eggs and veggies are truly organic. With raising your own chickens, there is yet another bonus—chickens can be pets. They may not be cheaper, but then, when was the last time Spot laid you a nice, fresh egg? Or you relaxed in the backyard with a glass of pinot, watching Boots peck and scratch contentedly in the soil for grubs? With names like Bella, Ariel, Anna, Elsa and Kylie (just kidding), my girls are much more than just anonymous egg-layers. They actually have personalities that I have watched develop since they were just little pint-sized pullets.

Once established, chickens can get by with a minimum of care and are the perfect project to teach kids about responsibility. Of course, city ordinances and home owners' associations must be consulted before your chickens get comfy, but once you're sure they're welcome on your block, they will need dry, draft-free sleeping quarters and an outside run for scratching and dirt-bathing, where they are protected from predators such as the neighbor's

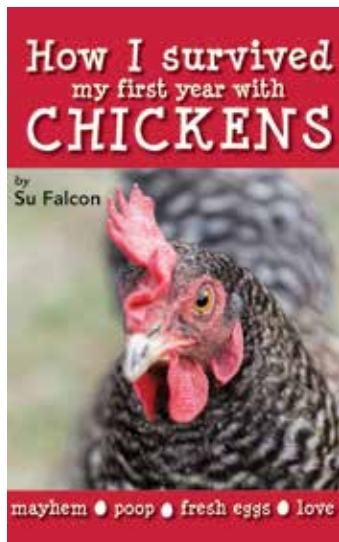
dog, coyotes, cats, raccoons, hawks and anything else that relishes chicken fricassee. If you plan to use your chickens for garden pest control, you might consider building a chicken moat, where they have run of an area directly outside the garden and are able to catch the bugs before they light inside on your valuable plants. Another option is a chicken tractor, which is a coop on wheels that can be moved about the yard. Chickens are notorious soil-scratchers and can decimate a garden in short order if not properly supervised. But then, how many times have you had to threaten the neighbors with Animal Control because their cat uses your freshly tilled beds for litter boxes?

When you're considering chickens for eggs or pest control, it is best to know which breeds are more well suited to your needs. Although most do a good job of mopping up pests, Barred Rocks, Red Rangers and Leghorns are reputed to be among the most voracious insect eaters. The more independent, brilliantly-hued Bantams lay charming, smallish eggs and are also favored as aggressive bug-getters. A few of my girls are Americaunas, a breed that lays lovely green and blue eggs but can be a bit reticent when faced with insect species they're not familiar with. It was pretty entertaining the first time I tossed a tomato hornworm into the

pen and they all just stood around, cocking their heads and craning their necks at it. Now when one of those monsters hits the ground, Penny grabs it and runs around the pen, the others tag-teaming her until it eventually disappears in a quick gulp.

Rather than run for the spray or twist my ankle trying to stomp out earwig existence, I often find myself working companionably side by side, elbow to wing, as the girls scratch cheerfully for bugs. It can be very amusing to watch Jezebel tangle with a bumblebee, acting like she's gone off half-cocked, and Henrietta, chasing after a bluebottle, running around the yard like a chicken with her head cut off. Whether you keep them as egg-layers or bug-slayers, or get to know them as pets with personalities, chickens have a lot more to offer than just another pretty egg. ■

For daily garden goodness, join me on Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr.



For a practical and hilarious look at an urbanite's first year of chicken love, read author and publisher Su Falcon's *How I Survived My First Year with Chickens*, available on Amazon in paperback and Kindle Unlimited.



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Happy New Year!



CELEBRATE THE WEDDING JOURNEY

Sunscreen? Check. Passport? Check. Buckle up for the journey of being a guest at a destination wedding!

WRITTEN BY LAUREN HEDENKAMP

Being a bridesmaid in a destination wedding in Peru last year provided me with the first-hand experience of the extensive planning that goes into being properly prepared for the trip. The ten-day Peruvian excursion took ten months of planning. Through the use of a travel agency and the bride's advance work, every guest had detailed instructions and deadlines to follow to get their travel accurately booked.

There are many important things to know about going to out-of-town nuptials. Here are some tips I learned that can help you to smoothly plan to attend someone's big day far away.

Schedule and Cost

The most important item is to check your calendar! Make sure that you can take the allotted amount of time away from work, school or other responsibilities and that the dates involved are open for you.

After you know you're available, the next step is to determine the cost of the trip and budget for it. Most likely the bride and groom have already done some planning for you and

can give you an estimate of pricing. Expenses usually include air travel, accommodations, excursions, incidentals and some meals; if the wedding is at an all-inclusive resort, all meals will likely be included.

Logistics and Deadlines

Travel agents are usually the backbone of the organization when a couple is planning such a large event. Agents typically hold a block of rooms at a special rate for wedding guests, and the rates are usually time sensitive. Being aware of the deadlines to pay for airfare and hotel at the special rates is extremely important in keeping costs down and planning for the trip.

RSVP

Although you may be working regularly with the travel agent to book flights and your hotel, do not forget to confirm your attendance for the wedding and any additional events specified on the invitation.

Documents

If the wedding is out of the country, it's

critical that you have a passport. If you don't already have one, don't delay in making application. The U. S. Department of State advises that processing time for an application is four to six weeks; expedited service takes two to three weeks and will add \$60 to the passport fee.

Do some research on the country you are visiting. Special immunizations may be needed for the region, particularly if you will be outdoors. For example, among the recommended immunizations for Peru are rabies, typhoid and Hepatitis A.

Itinerary

A detailed itinerary through the travel agent or a wedding website will tell you what to expect for the entire trip. Whether the destination is a ten-day European tour or four-day all-inclusive resort stay in the Bahamas, the couple will be planning events in addition to the ceremony and reception. There may be a welcome brunch, rehearsal dinner or an excursion that the bride and groom have planned in appreciation to guests for traveling to celebrate their big day. If it's an adventure tour or a beach

day, it is important to consult the itinerary to pack accordingly. This will also help you anticipate when your down time will be to schedule activities you don't want to miss while you're there.

Wedding Attire and Traditions

The destination may be a beach, but it doesn't necessarily mean the wedding ceremony itself is informal. Be sure to read the invitation carefully regarding the attire for each event. The wedding gift tradition can be simplified for a destination wedding; you can send something from the couple's registry before or after the ceremony. If you don't want to attend empty-handed, an option is a monetary gift in a card that's presented the day of the wedding.

Travel Mishaps

Once you have made all of these important preparations, the next thing to expect with a destination wedding is for something to go wrong regarding travel. As with any vacation, there's a possibility of encountering an issue or mix-up. Don't burden the happy couple with these issues. Keep your travel agent's information with you and contact them first to see if they can resolve the issue. As always, travel insurance is also a good idea.

Lastly, think vacation! Destination weddings are expensive; the bride and groom know that, so they likely have put together a beautiful vacation for you to enjoy as a guest. Sit back and relax, or adventure and discover.

More importantly, know that you're one of a small group of the couple's nearest and dearest who will be attending a wedding far away. Remember to soak up the moments and memories of your loved one's big day and share their happiness. ■

Sources: travel.state.gov and the experience of the author.



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MEET HERLIFE HOTTIE

DR. TEX MABALON

What's your favorite movie?

Crazy Stupid Love. It's a romantic comedy that demonstrates how we can experience different relationships throughout our lifetime. The movie has a great cast, including Steve Carell and one of my celebrity crushes, Emma Stone. Through watching them, you can relive the comedic moments of your awkward childhood crushes. At the same time, you can see the dynamics of a budding love and the challenges of meeting parents, to which I think we can all relate.

What is your favorite type of food?

This is a difficult question because I love food. Recently, my vacations have revolved around experiencing foods well-known to the area. On my last trip to New York, my friends and I sampled food from at least seven different eateries. There was so much to try and not enough time. My next food journey is taking me to Japan and I'm excited to experience fresh cuts of fish from their markets and the top sushi chefs in the world.

What makes you unique?

I'm very humble and ambitious. I want people to know me for my personality and character before my accomplishments. When dental school ended, I celebrated being done with school, but I've come to realize my learning has just begun. I'm taking weekend continuing education courses to improve and expand the services I can provide my patients. In addition, I'm involved in Toastmasters to improve my public speaking ability and leadership competency. Behind the scenes, I'm always striving to learn and improve myself and that's what makes me unique.

Tell us something funny about you.

A vast majority of my patients initially give me a weird look and stare at me for a second. Then, they realize I'm wearing a white coat and they say "Are you the doctor?" followed by "How old are you?" I've had comments asking if I was in high school. Sometimes, I try to play it off that I'm in my mid 30s and I've been blessed with great genes. Other times, I say my mom packed my lunch or I rode my bicycle to work. My patients appreciate the humor and my ability to make light of the situation.





What do you look for in a woman?

As a dentist, smile is obviously important; it is both a blessing and a curse. In addition to a great smile, I'm looking for a woman who is intelligent, adventurous and has confidence in herself.

What makes a perfect first date?

I like my dates to be spontaneous and adventurous. I like to start a date with something active such as a scenic hike or walk around the park. Once, we get to know each other, we'll find a casual place to eat followed by drinks or dessert.

Do you believe in love at first sight? Why?

No. I believe love is something that takes a lot of effort. Attraction and chemistry are obviously important when you first meet, but love is about compromise when times get difficult.

What makes you a *HERLIFE* Hottie?

I am very respectful and understanding toward women. All the credit goes to my parents, who have set a very high standard through their 27 years of marriage. I also work in a field dominated by women. My all-women staff at Hope Dental makes my job more enjoyable and interesting. They have become like family to me, and let's just say I've learned a lot about women.

How do you want to be contacted?

You can reach out to me on Facebook, Tex Christopher Mabalon, III, or Instagram, @texm3. I'm old school, so let's get to know each other in person!



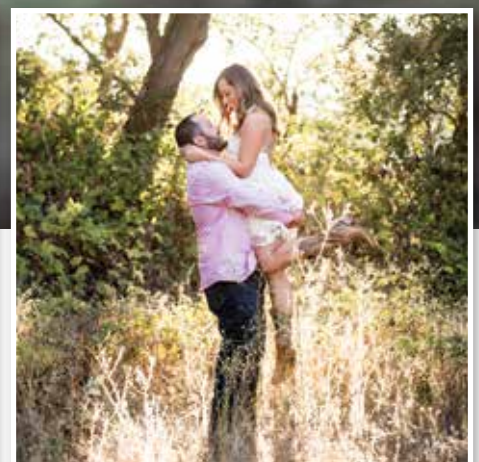
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Giana Bardo and Kristopher Huff

Date of Proposal: August 11, 2017



WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIGGS PHOTOGRAPHY

Kristopher Huff had a crush on Giana Bardo in high school, but these two friends went their separate ways until their paths crossed again at Garlic Brothers in August 2013.

“We recognized each other, said hi, hugged, and then went about our business,” Giana laughs. “About a month later he sent me a message on Facebook, and I realized that he also had made an attempt to talk to me back in 2011. We were going in different directions, but we talked back and forth for hours every day. We had our first date at the end of September 2013, and on that day Kris said, ‘I am going to marry you. Yep, you are going to be a Huff!’ I laughed it off, but in reality, I’m going to be a Huff!”

On a trip to Lake Tahoe for a family baby shower, Kris made sure he, Giana and their daughter, Rya, arrived at their cabin before oth-

er family members did. He ran inside for a fast pit stop, and Giana took Rya out of the truck and began unloading. She then went inside for her own comfort stop, and when she emerged and entered the kitchen, Kris dropped to one knee and said, holding back tears, “So, will you marry me?” After Giana burst into tears and hugged him, he then said, “You didn’t say yes!” Her response was, “Of course!”

“Kris and I don’t have a traditional relationship,” Giana muses. “We’ve known each other since high school. After three months of dating, I got pregnant, and we both decided that we wouldn’t rush things and continue ‘dating’ to see where our relationship went. We quickly became best friends; it didn’t take long for us to realize we were meant to be, although he says he knew from our first date he was going

to marry me.

“At the same time, we’re as opposite as they come! He is a hunter and fisherman and I’m a vegetarian. He’s a typical outdoorsman and I’m a city gal.”

Giana and Kris are planning a ceremony in fall 2018. “It’s important to us that our family and friends get together and not only celebrate our union, but see and experience the love we have for each other and our daughter, Rya,” Giana shares. “We’re also planning for Rya to be my Maid of Honor. Some think this is weird or nontraditional, and my response is that Kris and I are both weird and nontraditional. Plus, Rya is my best friend, other than Kris, and the maid of honor is usually the bride’s best friend. That’s who our daughter is to me!” ■



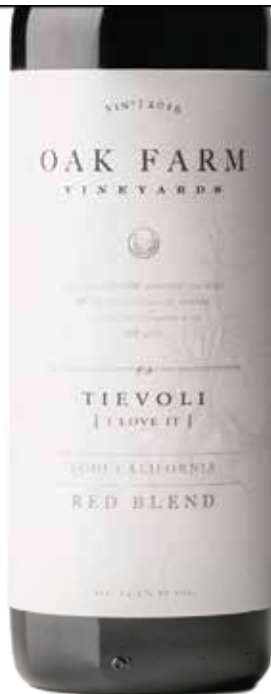
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Morgan and Lance Reece

WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

Friends help us create new connections and relationships that can endure for a lifetime. For Morgan and Lance Reece, a special group of friends helped them create a lasting love.

Morgan and Lance were out with separate groups of their friends on the night they met. After they hit it off, Lance contacted Morgan a few days later and they had their first date on Christmas Eve.

Morgan grew up in Oakdale, California, surrounded by a large family. She is a social worker and loves sports, the outdoors and being with family. Lance grew up in



Escalon, California, with a very loving family. He loves the outdoors and enjoys fishing, which was part of his proposal to Morgan.

Lance and Morgan were fishing one afternoon on Lake Tulloch in November 2016. Lance reached into his tackle box to change the lure on his fishing rod, and instead he pulled out the ring, got on one knee in the bass boat, and proposed to Morgan in the back of a quiet cove on the lake. Lance's sister and brother-in-law and Morgan's sister and brother-in-law were hiding to capture the proposal on camera and share in the celebration.

The blissful couple tied the knot July 29, 2017, at the scenic, historic Viaggio Winery in Lodi, California, in an outdoor ceremony enhanced by the riverside vista. Morgan's Matron of Honor was Mikaela Prins and Mariah Alger served as Maid of Honor. Bridesmaids were Kendra Reece, Alexa Alger, Emily Rhoda, Vanessa Dotinga, Kayla Sikkema, Macy Van Essen and Mara Van Essen. Matt Fields stood with Lance as Best Man, and Kalvin Prins, Cade Alger, Michael Fields, Travis Hill, Clayton Prins, Max Koetsire, Jon Segale and Eric Metzler served as groomsmen.

"Our wedding day was such a joy and a blast for both of us," Morgan smiles. "The ceremony and reception at Viaggio were so scenic, and the weather ended up being absolutely perfect. Everything flowed flawlessly throughout the day and we loved being surrounded by so many of our friends and family members! We loved every minute of our wedding day and felt that it couldn't have gone any better. We wouldn't have changed a thing as we celebrated and enjoyed the day with our closest friends and family."

Morgan and Lance enjoyed a relaxing honeymoon in the Dominican Republic. "We decided that with almond harvest following the wedding, we would take our honeymoon three months later, and we wouldn't have had it any other way. In Punta Cana, we relaxed by the ocean under our palapa and also by the pool. We so very much enjoyed meeting a lot of fun couples and participating the pool activities organized by the staff. We played a lot of beach and pool volleyball and enjoyed getting to know people from a variety of places." ■





Jennifer and Scott Kingston

WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

Love opens us up to the universe with all its passion, excitement and vulnerability. When Jennifer Kupka Kingston and Scott Kingston allowed her best friend, Sadie Darsie, to arrange their blind date in 2013, the couple quickly opened their hearts as well. “Our first date went from only being drinks but moved on to dinner, more drinks, and dancing,” Jennifer smiles. “The rest is history.”

Jennifer is a Lodi native; after graduating from St. Mary’s College, Moraga, California, with a degree in history and a minor in nutrition in 2011, she went on to pursue holistic medicine, Ayurveda and yoga. She moved back to the area in 2012 and began to work in the family business at the Lodi Airport Cafe, running the catering and dinners. Scott and Jennifer relocated from Sacramento to Lodi in October 2016 with their four dogs and two cats. In 2016, Jennifer opened Flow + Function Yoga | Barre | Wellness.

TIED THE KNOT JUNE 10, 2017



PHOTOGRAPHY

*Dee Yates Studios
Dee Yates, David McGladdery
& Stephanie Briggs-Wilkie*

BRIDAL GOWN

Joan Gilbert Bride

BRIDESMAIDS GOWNS

Bella Bridesmaid

HAIR STYLING

*Rachelle Kroll
Stained Hair and Nail Salon*

VIDEOGRAPHY

Stillwater Cinematography

FLORIST

*Annie Zunino
AZ Floral Design*

DJ

Elite Entertainment

VIOLINIST

Amy Lindsey

CATERER

Angelina's Spaghetti House

CAKE

Kim Duke

VENUE

Oak Farm Vineyards

INVITATION AND STATIONER

Minted

JEWELER

*Patina Estate Jewelry
David Yurman*





Scott Kingston grew up in Sacramento, attended Sacramento Country Day School and graduated from UC Davis, and works for Turton Commercial Real Estate in Sacramento. In his spare time, he races road bikes, plays with their family menagerie and loves sharing a glass of wine or two with Jennifer.

Scott's proposal included the elements of romance and surprise, a perfect combination. "We took a trip to Maui in April 2016 and Scott proposed on the beach there," reminisces Jennifer. "I could tell something was up because he was very anxious to get to the beach and after 11 hours of travel and not eating, all I wanted to was to get some fresh poke. I'm glad he made me go to the beach!"

The blissful couple tied the knot June 10, 2017. Jennifer's best friend, Sadie Darsie, served as Maid of Honor; bridesmaids were Kelsey El-

lis, Leslie Gerard, Lauren Katzakian and Jessica Burns. Standing with Scott as Best Man was John Lockwood; groomsmen were Zac Ellis, Aaron Marchand, Chris Espy and Steve Showler.

Jennifer and Scott created a feeling of intimacy with whimsical flowers, floating tea lights, a live cellist and violinist, and a lot of greenery. "Everything was very natural and the staff at Oak Farm Vineyards was phenomenal, from passing out champagne at the ceremony to making sure every detail was covered," Jennifer notes.

The couple spent ten days honeymooning in Hawaii. "Maui was on our list because it was where we were engaged, and Kauai is just a laid-back place where we could relax," they share. "We both have demanding jobs so somewhere we could really just veg out was much needed!" ■

FEBRUARY

1ST

The 95th Annual Meeting & Outstanding Citizens Celebration

5:30 - 9:00PM, WINE & ROSES, LODI

The Lodi Chamber of Commerce honors the most outstanding citizens in the community. Get your tickets at lodichamber.com or call 209-367-7840.

3RD

NorCal Science and Technology Festival

10:00AM - 4:00PM, TOKAY HIGH SCHOOL, LODI

Hosted by a collaboration of Lodi and Tokay High School students, the festival invites you to join the Central Valley community to celebrate the exciting world of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. We will have STEAM professionals, educators and students showcasing various hands-on activities and experiments, from 3D printing to computer coding, to inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers. For more info, contact Jack Atwal at jackatwal3302@gmail.com or call 209-331-9592.

6TH

Wine Maker's Dinner at Fenix, Lodi

6PM-9PM

Join us for an elaborate affair you will not soon forget! This is our first Wine Maker's Dinner at Fenix in downtown Lodi. Head chef and owner Richard Hyman of Fenix has paired each course with different varietals we are serving that evening. Cassandra the winemaker will be presenting and educating you on the different varietals as you dine on mouthwatering cuisine. Tickets \$125 available through Eventbrite.

10TH

Galentine's Day - A Wine Paired Brunch

9AM-11AM, LANGETWINS WINERY

Join us to celebrate Galentine's Day - a day all about you and your friends! Our signature brunch buffet will feature Italian frittatas, crepes, roasted red potatoes, butter leaf salad, fresh seasonal fruit, assorted morning breads, croissants and bagels, and of course our release of 2017 Sangiovese Rosé. Tickets \$55 Regular / \$44 Wine Club available through Eventbrite.

10TH

Omega Nu Crab Feed

5:30PM, CHURCH OF THE PRESENTATION COMMUNITY CENTER, STOCKTON

Enjoy no-host cocktails, dinner, raffle and dancing. Tickets are \$50 and available at Fina and Quail Lakes Nursery or from Omega Nu members.

10TH & 11TH

21st Annual Lodi Wine & Chocolate Weekend

11:00AM - 4:00PM

We're celebrating the 21st annual Lodi Wine & Chocolate Weekend and we want you to join us! Sip handcrafted Lodi wines and sample delicious chocolate treats as you travel among 50 Lodi wineries. Win big by discovering the Golden Ticket in your complimentary chocolate treat! For tickets and info, visit lodiwineandchocolate.com.

11TH

Lyle Lovett & Robert Earl Keen

6:00PM, MARY STUART ROGERS THEATER, MODESTO

Singer, composer and actor Lyle Lovett has broadened the definition of American music in a career that spans 14 albums over three decades. Paired with the equally versatile country singer, songwriter, actor and fellow Texan Robert Earl Keen, whose music can shift easily between evocative storytelling and raucous barroom fun, this very special acoustic evening promises a captivating, compelling experience you will never forget. Go to galloarts.org for tickets and information.

17TH

Mania! A Tribute to the Beatles

7:00PM, HUTCHINS STREET SQUARE, LODI

The Beatles band, Mania, is preparing to hit the Charlene Powers Lange Theatre like the Beatles hit the Ed Sullivan Show in 1964! This is a show for all generations, so get your friends and family together for a ton of fun and a memorable evening! For tickets and information, go to starbrightshows.com/the-beatles. ■

SAVE THE DATE...

MARCH 1ST

Dr. Seuss' Birthday Party

10:00AM, GRAND THEATRE CENTER FOR THE ARTS, TRACY

Join us to celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday! The party includes Dr. Seuss hat, story time, a party favor, an art activity and treats! Go to atthegrand.org for tickets and more information.

MARCH 2ND & 3RD

Junior League San Joaquin County 59th Rummage Sale

8:00AM - 3:00PM, SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, STOCKTON

This sale covers 21,000 square feet of fabulous treasures at bargain prices. Proceeds from the rummage sale benefit women, children and families in San Joaquin County. Pre-Sale Reception, March 2, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.; admission \$20. If you would like to donate quality rummage, call 209-471-1699. To buy Pre-Sale tickets, call 209-649-1172.



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STAR JOURNEYS

February brings renewal and feelings of the heart and home. For most signs, this will manifest not only as tender feelings for those they love, but for themselves as well. Taking a moment to acknowledge yourself makes you more available emotionally for those you love. Loving someone often means loving yourself, too. This is a time when the ruling planets are moving forward, bringing you along for the ride.

WRITTEN BY MELODY BUSSEY

|| CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19)

Valentine's Day is the day when most turn their hearts toward love, but you may find yourself focusing that love energy on yourself. There is nothing wrong with this, so put aside all feelings of guilt.

|| TAURUS (APR. 20-MAY 20)

This will be a significant month for you, but the universe is going to have to teach you a lesson about stubbornness unless you can learn to rein it in. Lucky breaks are going to manifest in odds-defying numbers, allowing you to deal with some issues you've been having in the area of debt. The key to making the most of this is being ready and willing to let go of those things that no longer serve you.

|| VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)

February is a time for coming together, and your sign typifies this in February. Allow yourself to become very adaptable; avoid judgmental thinking toward others, and literally you can write your own ticket. Small details may bog you down this month, so resolve yourself to being a "big picture" thinker for the duration.

|| AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18)

Taking things easy is good advice this month. Most attempts to start anything new are likely to blow up in your face. Relax, take things as they come, be willing and flexible to try new things, and challenge previously held ideas about the world around you.

|| GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20)

With ruling planets positioning themselves above your horizon, this means that it is full steam ahead for you in all areas. Even the retrogrades won't be problematic for you. The tendency is going to be to overdo it, as your energy levels will be very high. Make sure that after the 20th you allow yourself some down time.

|| LIBRA (SEPT. 23-OCT. 22)

It would serve you well to remember that inner harmony can give rise to outer harmony where that special someone and family are concerned. Most of the ruling planets are in auspicious positions to give you the needed energetic push that you've been looking for to complete tasks and projects. You may very well receive a special surprise from someone close.

|| PISCES (FEB. 19-MAR. 20)

That feeling of loving and being loved will be strong. Single Pisces stand a chance of meeting "the one" this month, while those who are in relationships will see them grow and deepen. You will also become more social, making it enjoyable to meet people. While the retrograde that happened in December might have left you feeling impatient regarding a new situation, project or idea, it will be in February that you will receive good news about it.

|| CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 23)

Long-term changes to your financial horizon will happen this month. These changes are going to have far-reaching consequences for the better. A change in jobs, careers or occupations is likely and your social calendar will be full.

|| SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21)

Jupiter is moving into your "house o' love" on the 15th, meaning that things are going to sizzle for you in time for Valentine's Day. Make sure that prior to the day you lay a good foundation for making that happen, leaving nothing to chance. You love to take risks, so why not take a chance on love this month?

|| ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 19)

You may find yourself at a crossroads this month as your short-term projects have been completed, leading to a "now what?" moment. You are going to be dynamic in dealing with people, so take advantage of it and try your hand at something new.

|| LEO (JUL. 24-AUG. 2)

This is a time of transition for you, and you are going to feel the strain of it. Remember that you are never given more than you can handle. Make sure to be kind to yourself and rest if you need to. Exercise your good humor to make it through this period.

|| SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

This is the month to let your softer, caring side shine. Set aside the stubborn streak, the need to have things your way all of the time. If you can do this, your Valentine's Day will be spectacular. On the career front it is best to just let things coast.

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