

14 Essential Tips for a Perfect Wedding

We met with experienced wedding experts to gather tips, advice, & ideas to help you perfect your day. After orchestrating innumerable weddings & working with countless brides, here's what they had to say.

7. PERSONALIZE YOUR CEREMONY

"There are so many ways you can personalize your ceremony," says **Barbara Biziou**, an interfaith minister with **Blue Lotus Productions**. "My background is cross-cultural ritual so I like to weave many personal components together to make each ceremony special for the couple.

"When a couple first meets with me, we discuss aspects of their relationship that are significant to them. What do you most love and cherish about him or her?

"Then identify how you want to be married," says Barbara. "Are there family traditions you want to include in your ceremony? What religious aspects or family traditions would you like to incorporate? How much do you want to include your guests?

"You can mix traditional and non-traditional," says Barbara, "but you still want it to be personal. I always encourage the bride and groom to write their own vows."

In one wedding Barbara orchestrated, both the bride and groom's grandmothers poured different colored sand into a vase. They created a colorful combination that represented past lineage and the coming together of two families.

"At another wedding," explains Barbara, "the groom had spent his childhood near a river and the bride was from a long line of fisherman and farmers. The bride's mother brought water from

her home in Croatia, and the groom's mother carried water from England. The couple spoke about how important water was to each of them, and then we merged the waters. It was simple and beautiful."

Another wedding Barbara coordinated was at a firehouse



near Ground Zero. "The groom and his fellow fireman were extremely close," she explains. "The firemen got together and built the altar, turning the firehouse into a sacred space. During the ceremony, the Battalion Chief lit a candle and said a prayer for the couple. Afterwards, the bride wanted rose petals thrown at her, but we didn't have anywhere to put them, so the firemen happily filled their helmets with petals!

"Sometimes while planning a wedding, the focus is

mainly on the food, the flowers, and the music. These are all important, but the core of the event is the wedding ceremony. Think about what is important to you individually and as a couple, what your personal and combined spiritual values are, and present those views as you present yourselves." The wedding ceremony is the gateway into the sacred mystery of marriage. Personalizing your wedding, however simply you do it, will add a very special touch to your day. — N.M.

Barbara Biziou, Blue Lotus Productions
212.741.3358, www.joyofritual.com