



## PLANNING THE CELEBRATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE MAIN EVENT

### **The Shower**

A symbol of the dowry that a woman once brought to her marriage, the purpose of a shower is to help a couple outfit their new home or assemble a trousseau. It was traditionally an all-female afternoon tea or luncheon. Not anymore.

Friends, bridesmaids, maid of honor, or even the best man might throw a single-sex or coed party, often for the bride *and* groom. There may be more than one shower during an engagement. Showers tend to be informal, held in a home, restaurant, or hotel. They are most often a lunch, but might be a brunch or a barbecue; they may feature party games, or might even be a coed cocktail party. Shower guests should be those close relatives and friends who will also be invited to the wedding. However, not all the guests may be invited to the wedding if it is a work or school related shower.

Not every shower has to go the traditional route of a chicken salad and fruit luncheon. They can have fun, modern themes by highlighting the special interests and/or hobbies of the couple or the bride, such as:

**A Garden Party** with a flower or plant theme, seed packet favors or invitations, fresh vegetable dishes on the menu including Caprese salad, ratatouille, fresh fruit, and pasta with asparagus. Gifts might include gardening supplies such as water cans, a rosebush, sundial, gardening clogs, or lawn furniture.

**The Wedding Night** with “Do Not Disturb” signs as invitations. Include champagne, fine cheeses, breads, and chocolates. Gifts would be things that could be used on the Honeymoon like perfume, an overnight bag, bubble bath, scented candles, and lingerie.

**Chef Entertainer** may have guests bringing their favorite recipe for the bride and groom. You could print the invitations on recipe cards as well. Collect some favorite recipes from guests in advance and serve a sampling at the shower. Gifts can be for the kitchen, including serving pieces or trays, knives, cocktail napkins, or decorative place card holders.

**Happy Traveler** may ask guests to bring gifts associated with a particular country. It may be countries that the couple has visited, or that they will visit on their Honeymoon. Serve international fare including mini pizzas, fajitas, sushi, and falafel.



Gifts can include either travel accessories such as luggage and books, or things that represent the countries, like French perfume, a Swedish massage, or a wok.

**Day at the Spa** is perfect for a day of female bonding. Hire a masseuse to provide neck and foot massages, and maybe hire another that can give manicures. Serve herbal teas and flavor-infused waters, garden salads, and fruits. Gift ideas can be massage oils, a terry-cloth robe, monogrammed towels, yoga videos, and a manicure set.

**Country Time** could have pretty paper fans attached to the invitation. It can consist of picnic fare, including fried chicken, potato salad, brownies, and lemonade or iced tea. Shower gifts can be a picnic basket, picnic blanket, straw hat, Frisbee, or portable CD player and can be held in the back yard or a park.

**Movie Time** with movie ticket invitations, you may decorate with “wedding movie” posters, such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, and *Father of the Bride*. Serve hot dogs, popcorn, and pizzas with soft drinks refreshments. Gift options are a VCR, popular DVD’s, subscription to an entertainment magazine, or theater tickets.

**Fitness** can be a great theme for a health-conscious couple. Equip the couple to stay in shape by giving handheld weights, new tennis racquet, golf membership, or a gift certificate for a personal trainer. Set up a juice bar and buffet with raw vegetables, salads, and a big fruit platter.

**Tea Time** would be a classic shower theme once again popular, particularly if the bride will be having more than one shower. Serve platters of finger sandwiches, assorted cookies and small cakes, scones, with jams or lemon curd, and offer two or three varieties of tea in pretty tea cups. Gifts could include cookie or cake plates, tea pot and/or tea set with cups and saucers, an assortment of gourmet teas, and decorative napkins.

When planning a shower, don’t feel that you have to schedule every minute. Think more in terms of a fun, leisurely party than a traditional shower. It can be as simple as eating during the first hour, opening gifts in the second.

## **Bridesmaids’ Parties**

Bridesmaids’ parties are the perfect time to introduce out-of-town attendants, schedule final dress fittings, display wedding gifts, and distribute presents to thank attendants for being in the wedding. However, couples might choose to give all their attendants’ gifts at the rehearsal dinner. It is customary for the bride to treat her bridesmaids to a party. Traditionally, this was a lunch or afternoon tea, but today the bride might treat her bridesmaids to margaritas and Mexican food at a favorite restaurant. If this gathering is more formal, it is held at least two weeks prior to the



wedding, but informally the bride will spend time with her bridesmaids by taking them to lunch after a fitting, or through alone time throughout the days leading up to the wedding.

## **The Bachelor Party**

The bachelor party gives the groom and his attendants a chance to release pre-wedding tension, celebrate the groom's final days as a single man, and spend time with close friends and relatives. Typically hosted by the best man or a relative of the groom, it is preferable at least two weeks prior to the wedding.

## **The Bachelorette Party**

Pre-wedding revelry is not for men only. The bridesmaids, along with close friends and relatives, may want to take the bride out for one final night alone with them, as a single woman. While some bachelorette parties have the same raucous feel of a stereotypical bachelor party, many are quieter celebrations of female bonding. This party can be hosted by a roommate, sister, cousin, or close friend. This party should be held at least two weeks before the wedding, and may be on the same night as the bachelor party. The guest list should include only those invited to the wedding.

## **Working Wedding Parties**

Getting organized for your wedding day doesn't have to be hard work. One way to lighten the load is to invite your wedding party and closest friends to enjoy a buffet dinner (or order take-out food) while they help get important tasks done. Usually hosted by the bride, these parties can be scheduled throughout the engagement to help the bride complete tasks such as assembling guest favors, creating hand-made place cards or menus, assembling centerpieces, or other wedding related tasks.

## **The Rehearsal or Groom's Dinner**

The rehearsal dinner is an occasion for attendants, family, and sometimes out-of-town guests to get acquainted, reminisce, and wish you well. This event will make all arriving guests feel a part of the wedding excitement and give them a chance to get acquainted with other guests. The rehearsal dinner is traditionally hosted by the groom's parents and is held immediately after the practice run of the ceremony. It is most commonly held the night before the wedding. Participants go directly from the ceremony site to the dinner location. However, if all the major players are in town, you may want to schedule the rehearsal dinner two or three days before the wedding so everyone is well rested. The guest list usually includes attendants, parents and



immediate family of the bride and groom, the officiant, and his or her spouse. You may also decide to invite out-of-town guests. This gathering can be anything from a formal dinner, poolside gathering, a potluck dinner, or cocktail party at home. It can really be as formal or as informal as you would like. Some like to have this gathering represents the groom's interests, such as a baseball game or a round of golf with dinner at a club.

### **The Wedding Day Breakfast**

The wedding day breakfast or brunch is a wonderful way to gather guests who are especially close to the bride and groom in an informal setting and give them a chance to wish the couple well, and to distract them from any pre-wedding stress. A friend, neighbor, or relative may host this event that would include family, friends, and out-of-town guests, as well as anyone else close to the bride and groom.

### **The Gift Opening Brunch**

The day after the wedding is traditionally a time when the close family will gather for the opening of the gifts. Many times this is accompanied by a brunch, which can be hosted by either the parents of the bride or groom, or can be held at a favorite restaurant, followed by the opening of the gifts at a private home of a close family member or friend. This gathering is to allow immediate wedding party participants to unwind and enjoy watching the bride and groom open their gifts, so you should plan a gathering that would be most relaxing for you.

We hope this list is helpful in your wedding planning process and feel it will provide a thorough collection of traditional parties and celebrations that accompany weddings today. The Lake Elmo Inn Event Center welcomes any questions you may have or requests for additional ideas to host these gatherings, either catered by us, or on your own. Give us a call at 651-779-5994 today.