

What's worth it?

Insiders offer tips on where to splurge, skimp for affordable dream wedding



STOCK, XCHNG PHOTOS

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You want nothing but the best for your wedding, from the big-ticket items right down to the minute details. But for most couples, the sky is simply not the limit when it comes to planning a dream wedding.

Deciding where to allocate the big bucks and where to cut back is tricky, especially when you have to consider the desires of all those contributing to the pot.

The latest figures compiled by TheKnot.com reveal that on average, the couple foots 40 percent, the bride's family 46 percent and the groom's family 12 percent of the bill of a typical wedding, which runs about \$28,888, not including the honeymoon, according to TheKnot.com Senior Editor Anja Winiikka.

Winiikka says that in post-wedding polls, couples offer telling hindsight that can help future newlyweds decide where it's worth it to splurge a little and where to subtly skimp.

TOP SPLURGES

Photography and entertainment top Winiikka's splurge list, which can basically be summed up with, "Don't skip the professional."

Having a friend who's a really good photographer shoot the wedding just doesn't cut it, Winiikka says, and neither does an "iPod DJ," both of which are common post-wedding regrets.

Samantha Goldberg, a New Jersey-based celebrity event planner and wedding television personality, concurs and adds videography to the splurge list.

"Nobody ever says 'I had it and I really didn't need it,'" says Goldberg, adding that the small percentage of the roughly 1,300 couples she has served who skimped on or skipped the videographer regretted it.

The wedding venue is another important line item, Winiikka says. Choose a classy, elegant venue in

which the décor speaks for itself and doesn't need to be covered up with pricey chair covers or draped walls.

Goldberg offers a creative solution to enable splurging where it counts, especially for couples who already have all the necessary household items. Consider putting things like the videography tab on your gift registry, Goldberg says.

No one will suspect you skimped on . . .

THE GUEST LIST Cutting 10 people from the guest list doesn't just eliminate the cost of 10 dinners, Winiikka points out, but 10 invitations, a centerpiece and more. "It's really the easiest way to save since most venues and caterers charge per head," she says. "It really adds up, and you can save thousands."

CATERING Goldberg and Winiikka say couples are getting more inventive these days when it comes to the menu. Try offering four courses instead of five, having a dessert- and champagne-only event, or buffet stations throughout the room with offerings larger than hors d'oeuvres and smaller than dinner. Or, consider serving a taste of two different items. Rilet mignon and chicken together can be less expensive than straight filet, Goldberg points out.

THE CAKE Consider renting a prop to serve as your wedding cake and have servers slice up a sheet cake in the kitchen, says Goldberg. Winiikka suggests giving half servings to each guest, as many are full by the time the cake comes out.

THE ACCESSORIES Similar to rent-a-cake sites, Winiikka says, there are lots of online services that will rent you your shoes, handbags and even diamond jewelry.