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ASK THE EXPERTS

QUESTIONS, DILEMMAS, INSPIRATION AND ANSWERS. OUR DREAM TEAM ARE HERE TO HOLD YOUR HAND

I'm looking for something a little different for wedding favours - any tips?

DAWN MARIE: Five sugared almonds are the traditional favours (representing health, wealth, happiness, long life, and fertility) although they are rarely used these days. Here are a few alternatives your guests are sure to take home. Lottery tickets, scratch cards, flower bulbs or seeds, personalised pens / golf balls / shot glasses, a CD of the bride and groom's favourite songs (watch out for copyright issues), engraved champagne flutes or pocket angels. For children try teddy bears, activity packs (crayons, paper, puzzles etc to keep them occupied during the speeches), jigsaws, jellybeans or bubbles (good for the photographs). Chocolate nametags or iced cookies are always well received and double as place cards for those on a smaller budget. For the more organised couple, a photograph of the bride and groom with each guest is a great personal memory to share.

Although we'll be having champagne for the toasts, we would like to have something different as a welcome drink for our guests when they arrive. We're getting married in November - do you have any suggestions?

ANNA: Mulled wine all the way, this is always a real crowd pleaser. However if you would like to put a different spin on things

you could try Winter Pimms combined with apple juice and served with cut apple, orange segments and a stick of cinnamon. It can be served cold or warm. If you were looking for something a little less Christmassy and more classic, how about Kir Royale (Prosecco & Crème de Cassis)?

We're getting married in the autumn - 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' - and I'm worried those mists are going to play havoc with my hair on the big day. How will I fight the frizz?

AMELIA: Be sure to use shampoos and conditioners (preferably rinse-out) designed for this problem, like the Série Expert Liss Ultime range, then after you've combed the hair, use an anti-frizz styling product, such as tecni.art Liss Control + (both products by L'Oréal Professionnel.) Lightly squeeze it into your hair but be careful to avoid the scalp so you don't get a greasy look. Scrunch your curls to give some hold and let the hair dry naturally or if have to use a hairdryer, use a diffuser. If your hair is coarse and curly you probably need a strong daily conditioner plus an anti-frizz gel or pomade to control your curl (try tecni.art Play Ball Motion Gelee).

My parents are divorced and I don't know what to do about seating arrangements at the reception. Do you have any advice?

DAWN MARIE: Seating on the top table can cause problems.

Personalised seed packets favour from weddinginateacup.co.uk £1.60 each



Traditionally a straight top table would be (from left to right looking at the table): chief bridesmaid, groom's father, bride's mother, groom, bride, bride's father, groom's mother, best man so your parents would not be next to each other. However, if parents are divorced or have new partners, consider seating them on tables near to the top but with friends or family so they feel comfortable. An alternative top table could include the bride and groom, any brothers and sisters, the best man and partner and the bridesmaids and partners and the table could be round to give a less formal feel.

I have old, new and borrowed sorted. Any suggestions for my 'something blue'?

KERRY: A lot of our designers sew a blue ribbon into the dresses so you already have a little something blue, but if you haven't sorted out your underwear yet then some gorgeous blue lingerie will not only give you 'something blue' but will also be a lovely surprise for your husband on the wedding night. If your dress is sheer and you're worried the colour might show through, go for neutral colours with a hint of blue in detail such as ribbons. Alternatively you could choose blue shoes, or again add a hint of blue in the detail.

I've always liked 50s style and would like my wedding dress to reflect this era. Can you suggest any designers' dresses that might fit the bill?

KERRY: Charlotte Balbier has some wonderfully fun 50s style tea length dresses which would be perfect. Augusta Jones also have more elegant 50s style long dresses which have more of an Audrey Hepburn or Grace Kelly feel to them. You could also complete your look with a birdcage veil from our new accessories collection. You can view it at theweddingdresscompany.co.uk

How long before her wedding would you recommend the bride has her colour/highlights put in?

AMELIA: There are so many ravishing colours but timing is key when it comes to your special day - a week before the date usually lets the colour settle in properly. Equally, the maintenance of coloured hair can cause difficulties, so it's important to follow a strict programme. Conditioner is key. Try a nourishing one from the Kérastase Chroma Riche line. To prolong



Fun bridesmaid jigsaw. Aston's of London £14

your colour and make salon touch-ups less frequent, it's important to invest in a colour-depositing shampoo - L'Oréal Chroma Care is my favourite. The shampoos contain UV filters and moisturising agents, mend split-ends and are packed with pigment enhancers to help counteract fading.

I'm having a winter wedding and am worried I might be cold in my dress. Any suggestions so I don't get goosebumps walking down the aisle?

KERRY: Beautiful lace sleeves or a removable bolero will keep the chill off during the ceremony and will still be comfortable for the reception. And a faux fur or feather wrap will look amazing for outdoor photographs and will keep you cosy and warm. You'd also be surprised how far a touch of nerves and a glass of champagne can keep a bride warm on a chilly day!

My h2b is getting really nervous about his speech. Any tips to help him relax?

ANNA: Rearrange the speeches to before the wedding breakfast, this allows everybody to relax and actually enjoy the meal. Maybe prepare some 'idiot boards' to lighten the mood which will certify a few guaranteed giggles from the guests. To calm their nerves and offer them some Dutch courage you could preorder with the staff to have your h2b, father of the bride and best man's favourite drinks waiting for them on the table.

Do you have any ideas for a hen night that would suit both my girlfriends and my mum?

DAWN MARIE: Pole dancing and drinking competitions don't suit everyone! For a more relaxing event, spa days are always popular with many, including an evening meal and overnight stay. Private wine-tasting parties appeal to all ages and some combine cocktail mixing or chocolate tasting to get people more involved. Or why not try a night in a haunted castle with a ghost tour or perhaps a group dance lesson which the ladies can show off at your evening reception!

We have quite a few children coming to our reception - how will we keep them entertained?

ANNA: Gift bags on the tables with colouring books, bubbles, cameras and sweeties to keep the smile on their faces. There are also child minding companies available that will either sit with the kids during the wedding breakfast or set up a pop up nursery.