

## ALOHA, HAWAII!

Written by Lisa Greer

Sunday, 21 January 2007

Hawaii remains the number one honeymoon destination in the United States, and rightfully so. What could be more romantic than a laid back atmosphere, walks along the beach, the scent of Plumeria flowers, and magnificent sunsets? The hardest decision you'll have to make about this vacation spot is which island to visit.

Price is generally the first factor to consider. Oahu, Kauai, Maui and the Big Island are the most popular, with Lanai and Molokai not quite as developed for tourism. When checking pricing, you'll find the general rule is that the Big Island, and Oahu are the most economical, offering flight and hotel packages starting at just under \$900 apiece for a 5 day stay. Pricing varies with hotel



accommodations and proximity to the beach.

Using a travel agent to book your trip will help alleviate the fear of booking an undesirable place to stay, as they will know what areas are safer and what hotel chains are the most pleasing. The Outrigger Hotels and Resorts offers a nice selection to fit your budget, and you'll also find well known chains such as Sheraton, Hilton, Hyatt and Marriott.

Be sure to check all hotel policies to see if there are any hidden charges above the normal, such as daily parking. Fees for parking a rental car at the hotel can range, on average, from \$8.00 -\$20.00 per day. In those instances, you'll want to check the area to determine if you'll even need a rental car. You may have most activities within walking distance, or easy access to a shuttle, cab or bus service that would be more economical than paying for a rental car and daily parking.

While each destination has its own unique characteristics, you'll likely find the widest variety in the state's capitol, Oahu. It is from this island that you may visit Pearl Harbor and the USS Arizona memorial.

If you have even the slightest interest in history, this memorial is a must do. With Hawaii being 5 hours behind Eastern time zones, the best time to visit is early morning the day after you arrive. Your body will still be on your normal time, and it will feel like you've slept in. Waking up early will be a breeze, so you'll be ahead of the crowd.



Shores of Oahu

Some of the many activities to do in Oahu include parasailing, diving, and surfing, but one of the best deals for your money is Kualoa Ranch, <http://www.kualoa.com/>. Packages range from a \$19.00 tour to all day excursions for \$139.00 (\$79 for children) including a buffet lunch, round trip transportation from your hotel, and your choice of 4 activities. Among the many choices are horseback riding, ATV excursions, kayaking and movie set tours to see filming locations for Jurassic Park, Mighty Joe Young, Pearl Harbor, and You Me and Dupree, as well as the television show Lost.

One thing you won't want to miss while vacationing in Hawaii is a luau. This is a must for experiencing Hawaiian culture. Paradise Cove, <http://www.paradisecovehawaii.com/>, has wide array of afternoon fun and activities leading up to a spectacular dinner and show. Guests are greeted with a Mai Tai and shell lei upon arrival. The fun begins with arts and crafts demonstrations, then Hawaiian

## WEDDINGS: WHAT'S MY ROLE?



Written by Gracie Dane

Wednesday, 17 January 2007

Beautiful, emotional, happy, and can tear apart families for years to come. Unbelievable, huh? It happens. What begins as the planning of a joyous occasion many times ends up in a mere power struggle involving guilt trips and hurt feelings.

A wedding is supposed to be a celebration of two people in love who wish to share their life together, inviting friends and family to celebrate with them in the ceremony joining the couple as husband and wife. Problems begin when friends and family begin contributing their opinions as to what's proper etiquette and what's not, and "If you don't wear that faded blue garter that your grandma wore in her wedding, it'll hurt her feelings. You know she has a bad heart, and the stress could kill her."

Guilt trips escalate to power struggles vying for the position of who's right and who will get their way. I have yet to meet a bride who hasn't been tempted to throw in the towel even a month before the wedding to elope just to get away from it all.

Sometimes it's not the friends and family. Sometimes the root of the problem is a very demanding bride. I personally know of one situation where a son hasn't spoken to his own mother since his wedding day over a year ago because his bride wanted an elaborate rehearsal dinner, which was to include numerous friends and family outside of the wedding party. When the groom's parents told them what was actually in their budget, the bride and her parents planned the affair without the knowledge of her soon to be in-laws, then handed over the bill for them to pay it. The parents paid what they originally said was in their budget and thought that was fair. The bride was not happy about this and tempers flared, escalating to the point of breaking down the relationship.

I have no clue what it is about such an event that brings out the very worst in people, but I have a feeling it begins at the point where those involved start losing sight of the purpose, along with their respective roles. Having said that, let's review.

**Brides:** Remember, this time it IS all about you. Once you understand this, you will be in a better mindset to make the necessary decisions. You will also need to understand that, no matter how hard you try, somebody will inevitably have his or her feelings hurt. Notice I said, "will have his or her feelings hurt" and not "you will hurt someone's feelings". There is a difference. Hurting someone's feelings is a purposeful act on your part. Someone having their feelings hurt generally involves misinterpretation of some unintentional act you did while totally oblivious to the possibility that someone would actually be offended by your act. Once you've accepted the likelihood of hurt feelings occurring, it will not be quite so devastating when it happens, and you will be better prepared to handle it.

**Grooms:** Your primary job is to show up and marry the bride. Your secondary job is to be as supportive as you can be to the bride while she is dealing with hurt feelings and the coordination of family and friends into one big harmonious event. I know this sounds easy, but trust me on this, it is not. Aside from these duties, I encourage you to become involved in the planning. I understand that many times the groom isn't that interested in colors and flowers, but I can assure you that you will want input when it comes time to plan the food to be served. If you aren't involved in the planning at the start, you may very well miss this phase of it.

**Mothers of the Bride:** Remember, it IS all about the bride and groom. To a small extent, it is about you, too, but it's more of a supporting actress role. Notice, I said, "supporting actress" and not "extra" or "side character". You will need to be supportive and understanding during this time, which means not pulling out that old trump card, "We're paying for this, so you need to do it my way." It's the bride and groom's day, and if you've offered to pay for anything or even everything, that should be an unconditional gift and not used for leverage in gaining control of the planning.

**Fathers of the Bride:** Most of you already understand that it IS all about the bride and groom. You are happy about this. Otherwise, you'd be drawn into the planning, too. But, don't misunderstand. You still have a crucial role besides being there to break up arguments and restore peace to the family. Fathers of the bride, you will, of course, need to be there to walk the bride up the aisle and give her away to her groom. Hopefully, you will be happy about doing this.

**Mothers of the Groom:** As etiquette dictates, you are to plan the rehearsal dinner for the bride, groom and wedding party. Aside from this, you will likely be invited to participate in wedding planning, but please understand that this is generally a courtesy extended by the bride. Typically, wedding planning is a special time between the bride and groom and the bride and her mother. If you are invited to participate in the wedding planning, appreciate that for what it is and don't try to take over. You will have enough to do with the planning of the rehearsal dinner.

**Fathers of the Groom:** Fathers of the groom, you play as equally important of a role as the father of the bride. You will need to make sure you are there when the groom starts getting cold feet. You will also need to be responsible for making sure the best man gets there on time, looks presentable and has the rings with him. You will also be an ally of the Father of the bride during chaotic moments of family discord.

**Step-parents:** You play a supporting role in all of this. You will need to be the unbiased shoulder to lean on when the rest of the family is driving the bride, the groom, and each other crazy. And step-mothers, remember that this is a day that most mothers and daughters dream about planning together. Please be supportive and don't feel left out or insulted if your step-daughter doesn't include you in every detail of her wedding. If you have a wonderful relationship with your step-daughter and can interact amicably with her mother, that's great. I'm sure you will be included in the planning. But, if you being in the same room with the mother will cause undue stress on the bride, please step aside and let the mother and daughter have this memorable time together. Your thoughtfulness may not be acknowledged verbally, but I can assure you it will be appreciated.

If you are a stepmother to the groom, and have a good relationship with his birth mother, you may want to offer

assistance in planning the rehearsal dinner, helping with decorations, or some other area. If you do not have a good relationship with the birth mother, look at your possibilities. You could stand on the sidelines and take notes while you watch the madness. You never know, there could be a good book, or screen play in all of this.

**Grandparents:** You have the best role. You can sit back and reminisce about the day you went through all this with your children. The only thing required of you is to show up, be supportive, and take lots of pictures. Isn't that great?

Now that you know what role everyone plays, you are ready to move on to planning stage. For tips and suggestions on this, visit our Features section under Finance for tips on planning a wedding to fit your budget.

[Close Window](#)

## SCRAPBOOKING PROJECTS



Written by Jyll Heiden

Sunday, 04 February 2007

Scrap books or memory books have so much more meaning when you take the time to make them yourself. Whether you have 1 hour or 2, we've listed a couple of project for you to make yourself or with a friend.

### Mini Scrap Book Kits

I was inspired by a friend of mine who created a small binder for each of the friends that went on a mini-holiday together. She went to a great deal of work laying out each page and putting into a binder. The end result was beautiful!

Sometimes, I just don't have the luxury of time to devote to such creativity. Thankfully, I found just the kit in my local craft store that enables me to add just a touch of "me" in making a present for a friend.

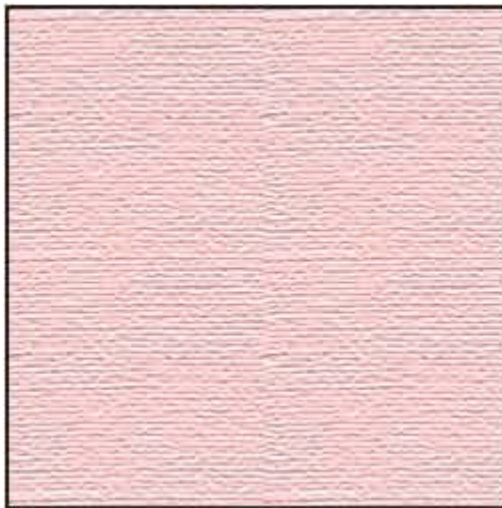
The product is "Simply Fabulous Mini Book It" by [makingmemories](#). It contained a small book, stickers, and other embellishments and it's perfect for 4x6 pictures. In less than an hour, I had used the Mini Book to make a get well/inspirational card for a friend of mine.

### Accordion Album

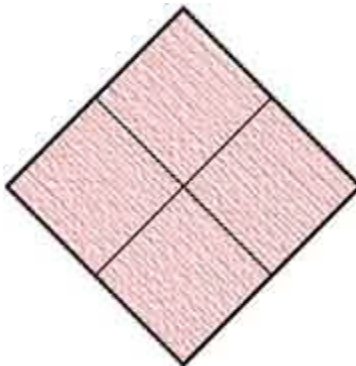
If you happen to find a couple of hours of free time, this project is fun and has a lot of possibilities for your imagination to go wild! You'll need the following:

- 3 sheet of 12x12 cardstock
- 2 sheets of 9x9 patterned paper
- 2 squares of 6.5x6.5 cardboard (notepaper backing works great!)
- 1 yard ribbon
- permanent adhesive/glue
- embellishmnts

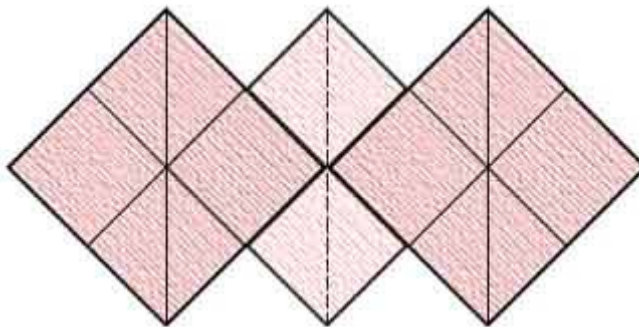
Fold a piece of cardstock in half lengthwise. Open it up and fold it the other way, lengthwise again, so that you have creases going both ways. You are creating smaller squares within the big square.



Turn the piece of cardstock over so that the creased edges are pointing up, forming a "mountain." Fold it in half diagonally, one time, taking one corner up to meet the other corner. (This time, just do one fold.) Repeat for each piece of cardstock.



Once all three pieces are folded, lay them out in front of you so that the first and third form "valleys" while the middle one forms a "mountain." Glue the left piece to the middle piece by completely covering the far right square on the left piece with the far left square of the middle piece. Glue the right piece to the middle piece by completely covering the far left square on the right piece with the far right square of the middle piece.



Using glue, adhere a piece of cardboard to the back of each piece of patterned paper. Fold the edges of the patterned paper around the board like you are wrapping a present. Choose which piece of cardboard will be the back of the album. Glue the ribbon to the center of this board. This will make a tie closure. Glue the cardstock to the back piece cardboard, so that the ribbon is hidden inside. Then glue the top piece on.

Decorate the inside of your album with embellishments, stamps, etc. You can also use embellishments on the outside of your album. Fold it and tie with a pretty bow.

[Close Window](#)

## PICKLES



Written by Kenan Bresnan

Sunday, 28 January 2007

My wife is from the farm, my wife is of the farm, and my wife is farm. It doesn't matter that she left her parents 160 acres of crops and turkeys in 1964 to go to college. Since that time she has been living in metropolitan areas of 30,000 then 60,000 now 400,000. She still hears the call of dirt. This past year she decided that she was going to grow and make all of the pickles that our family would need. She was concerned both that the Great Depression would return and that store bought pickles might contain cancer causing green things that would stunt our children's growth and also cause me to die a horrid pain filled death.

She proceeded to grow the cucumbers, to harvest the cucumbers and then mix the necessary ingredients with them to produce wonderful varieties of gherkins, bread & butter, sweet and various other types of the ever flexible pickle. All of this was done under the guidance of her mother through the good graces of Alexander Graham Bell's invention. One bright fall morning she presented us on the table with seven jars of pickles. She pointed out that this didn't cost us one dime at the local grocery store. She, Mother Earth, had saved us money and at the same time produced a more healthful variety of pickles for the family's consumption. This story could end here except for two small points.

The first point concerned the statement that these God blessed pickles didn't cost us a dime at the local grocery. Technically this was true. Earlier that morning I had gone to the local grocery store for early coffee with the gang. When I was finished with that I cruised the aisles to pick up a few necessary items. I noticed that a jar of pickles cost \$1.24. So according to my wife's figuring our family was ahead by \$1.24 a jar. According to my calculations, she was a bit off. I sat down with a piece of paper and did a bit of figuring on my wife's famous pickle project.

The cost of the seeds was 12 cents. Minimal to say the least. Where this the only cost, I could forget about it. The cost of renting the garden plot was \$15. We do not live on acreage and our dirt wasn't good enough for the farmer's daughter to grow her precious cucumbers in. The cost of roto-tilling the rented garden was \$20.80. Since we are not on the farm and I grew up amid acres of pavement in a fair sized city, we didn't have the basic equipment like a Roto-tiller that is needed to prepare the ground. The cost of the ingredients that go with cucumbers to make pickles was \$6.43. One doesn't grow pickles; one only grows the main ingredient. Other things need to be purchased. These of course come in quantities much bigger than one would need for the wife's miniature pickle project. The cost of the jars and lids was \$9.71. It wouldn't do to put these new born pickles in old coffee cans. They were too big for the old baby food jars that I keep nuts and bolts in down in the basement. The cost of the big pot to boil the jars in was \$10.19. As we never had to boil jars before, we did not have the right sized pot. The cost of the multitude of phone calls to her mother for instructions of what to do next was \$5.32. My wife always remembers her mother doing stuff; she just never remembers quite how she did it. Therefore, the seven jars of pickles that didn't cost us a dime at the local grocery store ran about \$9.30 a jar. If she keeps saving us money like this, we will be in the poor house in a few years. The other day I heard her talking to the neighbor lady about putting up bags of frozen corn to save us more money. That one scares the pants off of me because we will have to start that project by buying a freezer for \$200.

As I said above there were two small points that negate Rita's joy about the homemade pickles. The second point is the most interesting. Neither I, her husband, nor any of her four children, Erin, Mark, Shaela or Connor eat pickles.

[Close Window](#)

## DOLLAR STORE STYLE

Written by Marlene Alexander

Friday, 30 March 2007

[www.dollarstorestyle.com](http://www.dollarstorestyle.com)

### The Scarf As Inspiration

Lets try a little free association using the word "scarf". Pirates, gypsies and magicians spring to mind. Dollar stores, possibly. Using scarves to dress up your home instead of your head, maybe not so much. But, at a buck apiece, these colorful headgear are worth a second look as home decorating accents.



This 41" x 43" scarf makes a nice covering for the dining room table in between family gatherings. We've accented it with candles and books. The candles and matching candle sticks were \$1.00 each. Use hardcover books you have on hand, (preferably in your chosen color scheme), to stagger the height of one candle so that you have a visually appealing scene. We spent six dollars on this table topping.



Here, two scarves make a light and airy change for a winter-weary bedroom window. This window is about 39" wide. (Use three or four scarves for a fuller look.) Curtain rings with clips would be ideal for hanging these curtains but paying up to \$13 dollars for one package of 7 rings (how odd!) rather defeats the purpose of our budget-minded exercise. Instead, we hung our thrifty window dressings on a café rod by pinning medium-sized safety pins through the top of the scarf and doing them up around metal key rings. The key rings came in a package of 8 for a buck. We found these in the craft aisle at Buck or Two and used two packages spaced about 6" apart for our pair of makeshift curtains. If you don't already have a ton of safety pins lying around, dollar stores have them, too. The total cost of our scarf curtains was \$4.00.

[Close Window](#)

## MARCH MADNESS



Written by Lisa Greer

Sunday, 21 January 2007

March Madness will be here before you know it, so if you're planning a Basketball get-together and want something to throw together quickly, check out the treats Sensible Life has for you and your friends to enjoy. These appetizers and treats are tried and true, tasty and easy to make.

### SAUSAGE BALLS

1 lb sausage  
3 c. Bisquick  
1 small jar of Cheez Whiz  
1/2 c. milk

Combine all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Shape into one-inch balls and place on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in preheated oven at 400 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes.

### SAUSAGE-SALSA DIP

1 lb sausage  
1 lb hamburger  
1 small onion  
1 can cream of mushroom soup  
1 can Ro-Tel tomatoes with green chiles  
1 large jar picante sauce  
2 lb Velveeta cheese

Brown sausage, hamburger and finely chopped onion. Drain. Add all other ingredients. Heat and stir well. Transfer to a crock-pot to serve. Makes a full crock pot. Serve with tortilla chips or Doritos.

### EASY SNACK MIX

16 oz jar peanuts  
7 oz can of potato sticks  
6 oz box of nacho cheese Bugles  
10 oz bag Chex snack mix (cheddar)  
1 small bag pretzels  
Parmesan cheese fish crackers (Peppridge Farm)  
1 small box Crispix cereal

Mix all ingredients together in a large container or pot. Makes 2 gallons.

### PRETZEL SALAD

1 c crushed pretzels  
1 stick melted margarine  
1/2 c sugar  
1 c pineapple, drained  
1 pkg cream cheese, softened (8 oz)  
1 container of Cool Whip (8 oz)  
1 c sugar

Combine first 3 ingredients and put in shallow pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 5 minutes. While this cools, combine remaining ingredients and mix well. Add pretzel mix and chill.

### COCKTAIL MEATBALLS

2 lbs ground chuck  
2 eggs  
1/4 c water  
1 c bread crumbs  
1 small onion (chopped fine)

1 & 1/2 tsp salt  
1 tsp pepper

Mix well and roll into meatballs the size of a walnut. Place on baking sheet and back 12-15 minutes at 350 degrees. Drain well

#### SAUCE

1 can jellied cranberry sauce  
2 12 oz bottles chili sauce  
4 tbsp brown sugar  
2 tbsp lemon juice

Mix and heat in crock pot until smooth. Add meatballs

[Close Window](#)

## A NEW START FOR A NEW YEAR



Written by Christy Fowler

Monday, 29 January 2007

With our first issue of 2007, teen writer and poet, Christy Fowler, has another great poem for readers to enjoy and kick off a fresh new year.

You're one year taller

One year older

One year smarter

Your one year closer

For some it's changing everywhere

for some they have not a worry or a care

It means resolutions once again

As we think what we should have changed from way back then

Some of us remember all we lacked

Some of us look for guidance in the Lord

But just remember these few words

Don't Look Back, Look Forward!

by: *Christy Fowler*

[Close Window](#)

## FINANCING A WEDDING



Written by Lisa Greer

Tuesday, 16 January 2007

Planning a wedding even on a budget can be expensive and put a huge dent in your savings account. Whether you're paying, or your parents, it's important to know ways to cut corners in the event another expense escalates. You can then counter that one by cutting corners on another one. Of course, you may want to cut them every place you are able. Whatever the need, Sensible Life has put together some tips and suggestions below to help guide your plans, beginning with clarification on etiquette as related to paying expenses.

### WHO PAYS WHAT?

This will largely depend on the type of wedding and reception the bride is planning as well as the financial resources. Weddings are no longer the simple affair that I remember attending when I was a child. I'm not sure at what point the modest ceremony began to evolve into a lavish social event, but perhaps it was somewhere around the time of Steve Martin's remake of "Father of the Bride". For those of you who haven't seen this movie, his daughter's wedding is quite an elaborate affair, and rightfully so. Both the bride and groom's parents have plenty of money to handle the expense. But, even they have their stressful moments, many of which are solved by the wedding coordinator they hired to plan the wedding and work out the details.

As in the movie, it is tradition that the bride's family pays for the wedding, the reception and accommodations for out-of-town guests, and the groom's family pays for the rehearsal dinner, flowers and the honeymoon. These are the primary expenses that everyone assumes will be handled according to tradition. It is important to remember that, if you break from tradition, those affected by your decision will need to be aware of it long before the wedding day, so there are no surprises.

In today's times, it is not uncommon for the bride and groom to pay for the wedding expenses without the assistance of their parents, but I have found that most parents in this situation will still chip in on at least some costs.

For a more complete guideline of traditional rules regarding who pays what, visit <http://www.southshoreweddings.com/topic/023.htm>

### THE WEDDING

Once you have your budget set, you will need to start with securing a facility for the actual wedding. First, check the price of the church or other facility where you would like to be married as well as the rules pertaining to ceremony times, decorations and clean-up. Some places, including churches, offer packages that include these items.

Those not being married in a church often opt for an outdoor setting, but as you can imagine, whatever picture you have in your mind for this setting may not be how things actually go. In planning an outdoor event, many consider rain, but few consider heat, cold, wind, bugs and unwanted observers. Fall would be the optimal time for an outdoor wedding. Think about it. Depending on where you live, you would be surrounded with beautiful fall colors, and it tends to rain less often in the fall than in the spring. In addition, guests can layer if it is chilly outside. It's much easier to allow for cooler weather than for hot weather, plus there are fewer bugs in the fall.

Another option to consider for the outdoors, if your proximity makes it practical, would be a beach. Keep in mind it would either need to be a private beach, or scheduled early in the morning when there are few people out there. This can be a beautiful setting for a wedding. An acquaintance of mine was married on the beach and the groom descended in a hot air balloon to claim his bride. Awesome. I like things that are different from the norm, but not too different. Elaborate schemes are rarely successful.

Regardless of where you choose, remember that the wedding place is usually one of the most minimal of your expenses.

### THE RECEPTION

This provides more of a challenge than selecting the place for the wedding. Unless you are getting a special wedding/reception package at a hotel, bed and breakfast, or the like, you will need to shop around for a reception facility. Make sure you check rules, clean-up procedures, and any possible added costs so there are no surprises as the big day approaches.

If being married in a church, check there first. Churches generally have facilities for wedding receptions. Again, check the rules. This may not be appropriate for your plans. For example, when planning my daughter's wedding, we discovered that no disc jockey or band would be allowed at our church because no dancing was allowed in the facility.

Also, when checking on reception halls, always evaluate the location in proximity to the church first. In addition to checking the rules, pricing and clean-up, you will want to check space and available seating as well as any packages that include decorations, drinks and the like.

Keep in mind when looking at a facility, even the simplest decorations, as addressed later in the article, can make a bland place look very elegant.

## FOOD, BEVERAGES, AND THE CAKE

These items will be dependent upon whether you have a morning, afternoon or evening wedding, and will also depend upon whether you will serve a meal, or cake and punch only. Please remember to state on your reception invitation "Cake and Punch will be served", so the guests will understand that no meal will be served and can plan accordingly. I believe guests now expect to be served some type of food besides cake at a reception, but this is certainly not a requirement. If you're not sure, you may opt for a morning or afternoon wedding where serving just cake and punch would be readily accepted. Evening weddings would be a bit more difficult to pull this off and still comply with current trend etiquette, but as I stated before, the choice is up to the bride and groom and dependent upon available funds for the celebration. No one should feel obligated to serve a meal, especially if it doesn't fit into the budget.

Having said that, it's obvious that evening weddings tend to be more formal, and thus the largest expense. Depending on your budget, the menu can include anything from Swedish meatballs to prime rib. If you do not have a surplus of funds to allocate toward this reception, I would recommend the elegant, but simple cheese trays, meatballs, quiche tarts, and maybe a little fruit, and the dessert will be the wedding cake. These items can be more economically purchased through the deli and bakery at your local supermarket, and some delis can even do the wedding cake.

The morning or afternoon wedding will be your most economical. For a morning wedding, it would be perfectly acceptable to simply serve cake and. If you want a little more and can afford it, you may want to serve a brunch. Brunch can be something as simple as sausage and egg casserole served with the cake. The casserole can be prepared ahead of time and kept heated. Orange juice or Mimosas would be great beverages to serve with this simple menu, along with regular and decaf coffee. For the afternoon wedding, think about finger sandwiches, chips and dip. Artichoke dip can be a delicious and dramatic addition to your light meal at an afternoon wedding.

Also keep in mind that some things you can buy a little at a time over the course of your planning. If you are planning a year in advance, you can purchase paper goods, and items such as mints that you can preserve in a freezer. You can also start about six months ahead of time purchasing beverages and store them in a cool and dark place.

Finally, the cake -this can be as simple or elegant as you choose to make it. The easiest thing to do would be to call a bakery and order one, but that can also be a little more expensive. A couple of options here would be to have a modest two or three tiered cake done to establish the looks of the wedding cake table, and then have sheet cakes made to serve the majority of the guests. For the most part, bakeries or individuals do the majority of the wedding cakes, but you may also check for a culinary school in your area to see if there is a student talented in this area who would like to make a little extra money on the side. The student may cut you a good deal, and you could end up with an awesome cake. It would be wise, however, to work through the student's instructor to make sure that you are getting someone reliable as well as experienced.

## THE WEDDING DRESS AND ATTENDANT DRESSES

We'll start with the attendant dresses, since these are typically the lesser of the dress expense.

To start your search, you would obviously begin with the bridal shops. This will give you ideas as to styles and colors, but before you jump into a purchase, try looking in more unconventional places like the Internet, the formal wear section of Chadwick's of Boston ([www.chadwicks.com](http://www.chadwicks.com)) or JC Penney ([www.jcpenney.com](http://www.jcpenney.com)). My daughter found her attendant dresses at a bridal shop, then ran across the same dress in Chadwick's of Boston \$50.00 cheaper. Remember one thing, though, if the savings is not enough of a difference to make up for shipping and alterations, it would be more convenient to purchase the one in the bridal store. In our case, it was much cheaper to pay the \$14.00 for shipping for all of the dresses, and they needed no alterations.

The first step, of course, in selecting your attendant dresses is deciding the colors for your wedding. When deciding, keep in mind it is sometimes best to match colors to the skin tone of your attendants, then decide on a color scheme. For example, if you like a light peach color, and your attendants have washed out skin tones, the peach color will have a hideous, overall appearance in the ceremony and will look equally bad in photographs. Also keep in mind that it is not necessary to differentiate the maid-of-honor with a more expensive or different color dress. Everyone already assumes the attendant standing closest to the bride is the maid-of-honor, and if she is to stand out as a little more special, you can do this by making her bouquet larger, or something equally as simple.

The next step in your selection should be to choose the length and style. Whatever your choice, the length and style of the attendants' dresses should consistent with the wedding dress. Most brides select the longer, more formal dresses, but I have seen short dresses beautifully done. If choosing a short dress, color and style become even more important in the decision making process. You will want to make sure the dresses are elegant enough for a special occasion, so it does not look like the wedding party just came from the office.

One more important thing to take into consideration regarding the attendant dresses is whether or not it can be worn anywhere else. I've seen attendant dresses that I wouldn't even want to see hanging in my closet gathering dust. Yes, they are that bad. Don't do this to your attendants. They are participating in this special day on your behalf, and they, too, want to look special in your honor.

Now, for the wedding dress. This should be purchased about six months ahead of time to allow time for ordering and alterations. If you don't have six months to do this, you will need to purchase something already in the store, or have your dress made. Again, check

unconventional places. Many department stores have a small selection of bridal wear and offer alterations as well. Also watch for sales in the bridal shops. They will sometimes have fantastic sales on dresses that are getting ready to go out of style. The good thing for you is that most, if not all, of your guests will not know and probably will not care that the dress is going out of style. As long as it looks beautiful on you, that's all that matters.

When purchasing a bridal gown, white or off-white is usually the first decision a bride makes, but occasionally brides choose black or a color. I would not recommend this, since it would likely shock the guests. You are already the center of attention for that day, so you don't need to do anything extraordinary or different to stand out.

Style is next, and the fit follows, but fit is important only to a certain degree. Just about every wedding dress will need alterations for proper fit. If it needs a nip or a tuck here or there, don't let that be a deciding factor in not purchasing a dress you really want. Consult with the alterations specialist to see if the dress can be fixed to suit your needs, and if not, move on to one that can be.

Fit should definitely be considered before price. This will most likely be the most expensive dress you will ever purchase, and you do not want to be disappointed with an ill-fitting dress that you selected because it was a hundred dollars cheaper than the one that fit really well. Think about it in terms of every decision you make will be memorialized in wedding photographs, so be careful with your choices.

Also keep in mind the look you are going for in relation to the attendant dresses and your wedding decorations. If you have an elaborate, expensive, glittery dress, and everything else about your wedding is simple, the overall look will not mesh. Years ago, I attended the wedding of a co-worker, and she had spent \$6000.00 on her wedding dress. It was probably the most beautiful wedding dress I have ever seen, but didn't really go with the rest of the wedding decor. And, the really sad part about it was the couple only stayed married for six months. I'm sure she wished she had that \$6000.00 back now. She could take a couple of vacations on that.

After fit and price, make sure you walk, sit, bend, dance and jump around in the dress. After all, you will probably be doing all those things at the wedding and the reception, and you will want to be comfortable in your dress. If you are not comfortable in your dress, you will likely be miserable by the time the reception is over.

Last, consider all the trimmings you are purchasing on your dress. Are they worth it? I've seen dresses trimmed completely in lace, or that have intricately cut necklines and straps, and even simple cuts that make the dress look as elegant as if it were trimmed in pearls and sequins. Personally, I would spend less on the dress and more on the hair and make-up. Your face is what everyone will focus on the most, so make sure you look your best.

## ACCESSORIES

### Shoes:

Shoes are the least of your worries. White shoes are more difficult than off-white to find year round, but they can be ordered from numerous sources. We found the widest selection of white shoes on the Internet. Bridal shoes can be pretty expensive, and are not as comfortable as an ordinary shoe, so I have found it best to try looking in unconventional sources for these for comfort's sake alone.

If your wedding dress is long, then a light off-white or very, very light taupe shoe can be used in lieu of white without damaging the effect. With shorter dresses, it's best to match as closely as possible.

With the attendants' shoes, it is not necessary that one attendant's match the other, especially if the dresses are long. In my wedding and my daughter's wedding, we simply required black evening shoes. Since standing for long periods of time during a wedding is an inevitable, we wanted everyone to wear what was comfortable. As long as they all wore the same color, and the shoe was dressy, that is all we asked. Unless you are a shoe fanatic like me, you will not even notice the attendants' shoes are different.

### Veil:

Veils are expensive, but can add as much to a wedding dress as lace and pearls. If you are creative, you can go to a craft store and purchase the items to make your veil, but if you are not the least bit interested in crafts, spend the extra money for the veil. If you purchase a plain one, you can always dress it up later by sewing on a few pearls and sequins. If you do not want to add this expense to your budget, you can use hair ornaments that will have just as dramatic of an effect as a veil.

### Gloves, slippers, jewelry and things:

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.... If you like following tradition, this is the perfect area to comply with that old saying. You will likely only wear these things once – on your wedding day. So, check with friends and relatives to see if you can borrow the slip or gloves they wore at their wedding. Someone may have a wedding handbag you can borrow, or even a veil. Consignment shops and the Internet are also great places to check for these things.

## TUXEDOES

There isn't a lot to say here. Check around for specials. Some rental stores will offer the groom's tux free with the purchase of a

specified number of tuxes. If no one offers a special, certainly feel free to ask. After all, they need to give you an incentive to do business with them. I'm sure they would rather give you a discount than lose your business entirely. If they don't care, you can always move on to another store that actually wants your business and will work with you to get it.

The hardest part of the whole tux selection will be trying to get all of the guys together on the same day. Once you've done that, the major decisions are the color of the shirt and the color and style of the tux. You can also rent shoes and purchase matching socks at these stores. The tux rental will probably be one of the simplest tasks of your wedding plans. There will be one trip for selection and measurements, and one more trip for a final fitting and to pick up the tux. How simple is that? You can get to the store in the morning and be done in time to go to brunch.

## INVITATIONS, FAVORS, STEMWARE, AND SERVING PIECES

### Invitations:

Many people spend a small fortune on invitations alone, and if you think about the big picture, guests may keep them until after the wedding, but they typically end up in the garbage. So, why go to a lot of expense on something that ends up as garbage? Keep it plain, and keep it simple.

To check prices on invitations, begin with your local printer or party supply store. Rental marts also typically have a selection of invitations to order from.

If you plan ahead and have the extra time, check your local office supply store, or on the Internet for wedding invitation kits and do them yourself. Before jumping into doing this, you will need to weigh the time involved, the cost of the kit and the cost of replacing your printer cartridge after printing all these invitations. A good compromise to take into consideration is to have only the invitations printed by a professional, and then you do the reception invitation, R.S.V.P. envelope and directions to the reception.

### Favors:

The tradition of throwing rice on the bride and groom has become almost obsolete, and the tradition of wedding favors has become the norm. These can be anything from chocolate kisses to tiny bottles of bubbles. I have seen many creative ideas for this. My daughter had two favors, a stack of three chocolate mint patties wrapped in colored netting and tied off with silver string for each place setting at the reception, and a matchbook with the name of the newlyweds and the date of the wedding. For my wedding, we simply purchased a few bags of potpourri and netting that matched the wedding colors, cut the netting into small squares, filled them with the potpourri, and tied them off with colored ribbon. I thought this would be something the guest could put in a drawer or closet afterwards, and it seemed to go over really well.

### Stemware and Serving pieces:

If planning to do a toast before cutting the wedding cake, you will want to look into bride and groom stemware. If it is not important to you to have the glasses engraved with your name, you can sometimes find pretty stemware at a discount store, or you may want to check around at a winery, outlet mall, or try e-bay. You may also purchase these at wedding rental facilities and through printers when you order the invitations.

Consider the same sources for the knife and the server for the cake. My daughter used the caterer's serving pieces, and as I recall, I borrowed my knife and server. Unless you would like these for a keepsake, I would recommend doing the same as these small expenses add up quickly.

## UNITY CANDLE AND DECORATIONS

### Unity Candle:

The tradition of the unity candle is a wonderful symbol of the uniting of two families, and really should not be omitted from any ceremony. The unity candles I have priced begin at around \$18.00 for a plain one and can be as much as \$50.00 and even more, especially for the really elaborately decorated ones. The side candles can range from \$6.00 to \$30.00, or more for the pair. You could easily have as much as \$80.00 - 100.00 wrapped up in these candles alone.

Since this is a symbol, and there is no special magic instilled in these candles, you can spend the \$80.00, or you can try a craft store. You can purchase a pillar candle there (or perhaps try a discount store) for around \$3.00 to \$5.00, and the side candles for around \$1.00 apiece. If you can find flat top candles, that would be optimal to minimize the dripping wax. You can dress up the candles by hot gluing on beads and lace, but just make sure you have all flammable items well away from the flame. Even something as simple as gluing a white sequined appliqué, or taking a strand of gold or silver beads and gluing them in a spiral down the candles would be sparkly and elegant - and much less than \$80.00.

### Decorations:

Decorations can be equally as simple. For my wedding, I made white bows with a little greenery and a sprig of gold in the middle to

hang on the end of every other pew. It was simple, but yet had an elegant effect. Then I rented some simple candelabras from a local rental mart, and used some of the church's silk ferns at the altar to add a little color.

For the reception, I purchased a role of colored plastic and covered the tables. Then, I put a brandy snifter in the center with a floating candle in it, and spread tiny, mirrored confetti around it to reflect the light. Again, it was simple, but elegant. My daughter did a similar floating candle in the center, and we made greenery wreaths to go around the bottom of the brass and glass candleholders that were provided by the reception facility. The facility actually ended up buying the greenery wreaths from her after the wedding, so they could rent them out with the candleholders.

## FLOWERS

Remember to keep it simple. A little touch of color here and there adds a lot. As far as the bouquets, I've seen about everything from the bride carrying three large sunflowers to full bouquets of silk roses and ribbons. Whatever your budget, there is something that can be fit into it. Greenery with gold sticks, ribbons and a few flowers can be a good way to have a happy medium here.

## PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER

Let's face it. These items are expensive, but this is not an area where you should cut costs. To help find a more economical photographer, check first for individuals who have a studio in the home. These tend to be the lower priced photographers because their overhead is lower. Wedding photograph packages can run \$600.00 to \$10,000.00 and more. The choice is entirely up to you and your budget.

We had our friend from the video ministry at our church do my daughter's wedding video, and my daughter used the same photographer as my husband and I used for our wedding. He does a beautiful job and is very reasonable on his price. His studio is, of course, in his home.

If photographs simply aren't in your budget, you may want to consider asking around to see if you have an amateur photographer among your friends or family members that could take photos of your wedding and reception. I have seen some of these photographs, and they can be just as good a professional's. Some of these amateurs have all the right equipment to produce various effects, and these photographs can be processed, duplicated and enlarged as you wish.

## EVERYTHING ELSE

Check party stores and rental marts to see what they have available. Many of these places will have photographs of weddings that will give you ideas, and they will typically have all the supplies you need from caketoppers to candelabras and punch fountains.

If you can't find something you are looking for, try searching on the Internet. You will likely find it there.

Brides and Grooms - Good luck in planning your wedding, and I will leave you with one final piece of advice. Spend as much or more on the honeymoon as you do the wedding, because you will definitely need the honeymoon to recuperate and relax with each other.

Parents – if it is in your budget, plan a short get-away after the wedding so you can recuperate as well. Pulling together a wedding is no easy task, and you almost always have these unknown variables that pop up and wreak havoc in the plans at the last minute. If a get-a-way is not in your budget, do try to work in a day of relaxation and a massage afterwards to soothe away stress. You will not regret it.

[Close Window](#)

## COMMITTED BUT FLAWED



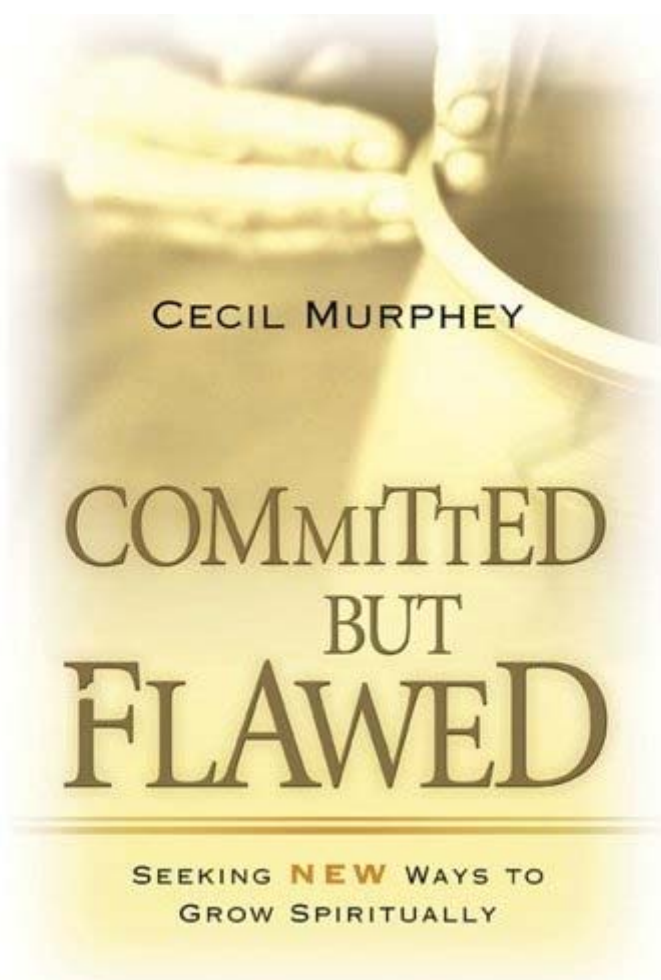
Written by Lisa Greer

Monday, 29 January 2007

From the writer of the best selling book, 90 Minutes In Heaven, comes the book Committed But Flawed. Cecil Murphey brings to readers a unique and fresh perspective on role models for living a Christian life. As a Christian writer, speaker and teacher, this author has many experiences to share, and in this book he delivers a humbled, personal account of his prayer life in his daily walk with Jesus.

Committed But Flawed is a spiritual growth book that you'll want to refer back to time and again to enhance your prayer life and make that divine journey closer to God. We've been told all our Christian lives that we'll never be perfect like Jesus, even though that's what we are to strive for. As a Christian, that can be difficult to grasp. We're flawed, and we will always be flawed, yet our role model is perfect. So how can God possibly love us? How can we ever live up to His expectations? This book will hold a mirror to your thoughts as Murphey focuses on those great icons that were the heroes and heroines of the Bible. Even they had flaws, but were very much loved and favored by God. If you're new Christian, not yet a Christian, or even a seasoned Christian, this book will offer you silent mentors by providing insight into the lives of those who were pleasing in God's sight in spite of their quirks and flaws. With every character, I kept thinking there couldn't possibly be anyone else left for the author to write about that I could identify with. Then, as each chapter revealed another, I found that those individuals had a gift, or an attribute for which I strive in order to be pleasing in His eyes. It's a wonderful read in a length that is just right and will not only hold your attention, but will linger in your thoughts long after you are finished reading.

For more information on Cecil Murphey, or to find out where to purchase more of his works, visit [www.cecilmurphey.com](http://www.cecilmurphey.com).



[Close Window](#)

storytelling, games, and cultural events leading up to the luau buffet and an extravaganza of Polynesian dancing.



There are many events such as this to attend, or you can even opt for the various dinner cruises and simple beach activities, but by all means don't pass up shopping in the marketplace, especially if you enjoy negotiating. Vendors intent on moving their goods for a fair price are willing to make you deals you can't refuse. Shop here for unique treasures and gifts to take back home .

Oahu is a memorable adventure, and one that any traveler should do at least once. For more information on Oahu, and the Hawaiian Islands, visit <http://www.oahu.com/>, and <http://www.hawaii.com/>.

[Close Window](#)