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The shower's a coed affair

Couple's needs met with a little prior creativity

WEDDING SHOWERS used to be ladies-only affairs where a bride-to-be received ladies-only gifts like linens and frilly negligees. Today, as more men are involving themselves in wedding preparations, showers should take the interests of both the bride and groom into account.

"Showers that have a particular theme are becoming increasingly popular," says Barbara Tober, editor in chief of Bride's magazine. "They guide guests toward the kinds of gifts a couple will really appreciate and are a lot of fun, too." Tober has some suggestions for the friend or relative who wants to host an unusual shower:

• One idea is to ask guests to bring gifts for only one room in the house, say the kitchen or bathroom. Or plan a shower around the overall decorating tastes of the bride and groom. The invitation could read... "Mark and Sharon are planning a home done in old-fashioned homespun way, so think country for this shower!"

• Showers that keep economy in mind are just as much fun as more lavish ones, and are especially good when the

hostess knows her guests' budgets are tight.

• For a grocery staples shower, guests should bring non-perishable items such as flour, pasta, rice, sugar, canned soups and juices, and also some non-food essentials like detergent and other cleansers. If everyone brings just a few items you can stock a whole pantry for just a few dollars per guest.

• Still another economical way to shower a couple is through a group gift — all guests chip in to buy a single special item. Consulting the wedding gift registry or talking with the bride's mother will usually reveal the gift, whether a food processor, a cocktail table or a television that is affordable when given by a group.

Whatever type of shower you give, Bride's adds these reminders:

• The shower should take place before the wedding, sooner if it's a surprise so it doesn't interfere with the couple's other wedding plans.

• Ask the bride's mother or best friend for help with the guest list. It's always polite to invite the wedding couple's parents to come along, at least for the gift opening and a drink, and members of the bridal party are traditional guests, too.

• The safest way to find out what the couple really wants as gifts is to see what they have registered for. Their wedding gift registry list will probably include plenty of variety. And, especially with a theme shower, the hostess should keep track of what each guest is planning to bring to avoid duplicates.

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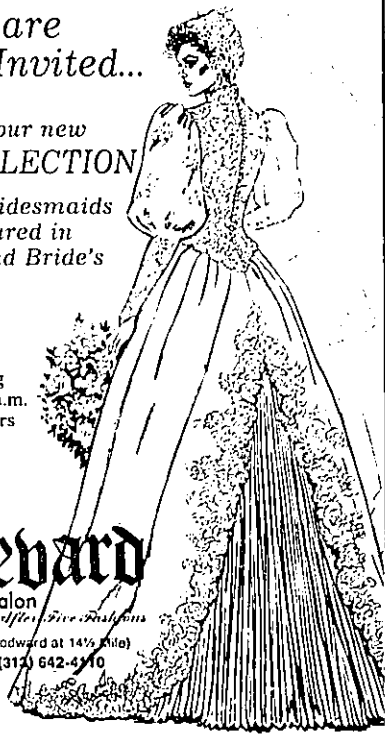
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