

something new

Have some fun with decorations at the reception. A Brooklyn couple decorated each table with vases of swimming goldfish. They used bazookalike armaments (from a retailer of party supplies) that shot periodic showers of confetti and red feathers onto the dance floor.

cake dresses.

The '80s bride is a different story. She spends her own money and makes her own decisions. She's educated, knows quality and is willing to pay for it.

"Even though my career keeps me busy, I want a big, beautiful wedding," says Erica Powell of Dayton, Ohio. "There's no way I can find time to arrange everything — not without making myself and everyone else miserable."

Powell is working with a professional wedding planner, an experience she describes as a "tremendous relief."

"Using a wedding consultant or planner does not mean you give up control of your own wedding," says Barbara Tober, editor-in-chief of *Bride's Magazine*. "Rather, you add a very competent organizer to your wedding 'staff' — someone whose time, talent and resources you hire to turn your wedding fantasies into realities."

The final decisions are yours, but these experts serve up advice on everything from color schemes to wedding themes, from fashion to food to floral arrangements.

Among the headaches your consultant can help you with are preparing

guest lists, hiring professionals (such as musicians and photographers), planning pre-wedding parties and making limousine and travel arrangements.

If you prefer, the consultant can handle only one or two details — such as bridesmaids' fittings or flowers — or just offer advice. It's up to you. Remember, though, that using a party planner might actually save you money. They purchase supplies in quantity and often get discounts.

How do you find a wedding consultant? Ask friends and family for referrals. Check at bridal fairs and personal care salons. Hotels and caterers in your area can make recommendations.

Whether you turn the task over to a professional or decide to do it on your own, you and your fiancé should attend the next bridal fair (or bridal bazaar) in your area.

At a bridal fair you'll learn how to plan a perfect wedding and do some comparison shopping. For example, you'll examine the work of several photographers. Most fairs feature more than one merchant in each category so consumers can compare services and prices.

wedding are more likely to attend

teamed up with an anniversary, a birthday party or other family celebration."

In planning a weekend wedding, think up activities you'll enjoy. Weekend fun might include a softball game (bride's team versus groom's team), sailing races, a kite-flying competition, a pool party.

Let others help with the responsibilities. The bride's brother

might organize a Frisbee match, the groom's father could arrange a family breakfast on Saturday.

Pick a home base where everyone can mingle — such as a hotel hospitality suite. Let everyone know what to plan for by enclosing a card with your invitation specifying the host, location and time of each event.

Remember, keep activities simple. You want to be free to enjoy the fun!



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