



Prenuptial parties: who does what

WEEKS BEFORE the blushing bride enters the church to the swirling strains of "The Wedding March," she and her groom are caught up in another swirl — the rush of prenuptial parties to usher them into the world of wedded bliss.

In short, here come the showers! Bridal showers follow an old custom started by the sympathetic friends of a non-dowered maiden: they "showered" her with enough gifts to set up housekeeping.

Traditionally, showers were for women only and thrown by close friends of the bride rather than family members. (Heaven forbid that the bride's relatives were thought to be begging gifts for the couple.)

However, the traditional all-female bridal shower is increasingly being replaced by the "his and her" version.

Mixed showers are becoming more popular, according to the editors of "Bride's Magazine," "because men are taking a greater interest in the home, and because it's so much fun."

MANNERS MAVEN Letitia Baldridge agrees. Coed bridal showers are cropping up increasingly, she said, as women work outside the home and reserve the weekends for their men.

"Many women don't want to be away from their husbands or male friends," she said, even for a two-hour bridal shower.

Baldridge suggests a maximum of two showers to avoid overloading the bride's schedule. This also avoids overloading the budgets of the bridesmaids, who must show up, gift in hand, at each event.

Showers should be scheduled at least two weeks before the big day, Baldridge said. Beyond that, she said, the sky's the limit.

Nowadays, evening dessert showers or Sunday afternoon picnics around the pool are just as appropriate as long stints on folding chairs in the church basement. But the hands-down favorite of busy brides-to-be and their friends is the weekend brunch.

THE ONLY RULES to remember

are to keep it informal and to keep the gifts appropriate to the guests. Lingerie showers are a definite no-no for mixed company.

Shower themes run the gamut of a new couple's needs.

Kitchen showers are the most popular, especially for young couples starting out with little, because they offer guests a wide variety of gift ideas in several price ranges. But Tupperware, pantry and recipe showers — where guests bring a favorite recipe and a gadget needed to make it — are rapidly taking a back seat to Yuppie fare such as gourmet cooking supplies, barbecue aids and plant and gardening gear.

Coed showers usually feature a variety of joint-use gifts spanning the spectrum from sterling to stereo equipment. And of course, for the baby boomers with a houseful already, there's the "service shower" where the average gift might be a "coupon" for an afternoon of yard work or staining the deck or refinishing Grandma's antique armoire.

THE HOST OR HOSTESS of the shower should make choosing a gift as easy as possible for the guests.

It's very important that a hostess provide her guests with the necessary information about colors, sizes and styles. That way, each gift will fit per-

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Credits

THIS special bridal fashion section appearing today in all 12 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers was coordinated by Marie McGee, special sections editor.

Advertising coordinators were Michele Hegyan and Jan Offenborn. The cover design was done by Glenn Merritt, creative services director.

Questions concerning the special section should be directed to McGee at 591-2300, Ext. 313.

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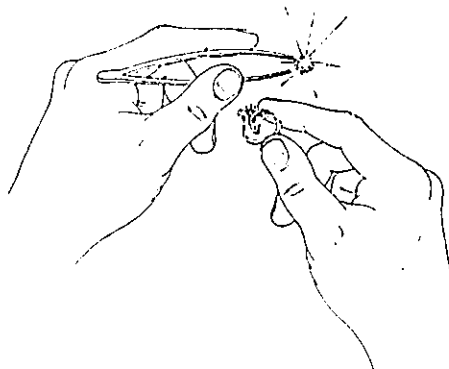
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