

Bridal expos unveil one-stop shopping

BY JANICE TIGAR-KRAMER
Special Writer

Cyd LaChiusa, president of Brides-To-Be Inc., knows better than most business people that necessity is the mother of invention.

In 1976, as she watched her engaged friends search for gowns, florists and caterers, LaChiusa came up with a concept for one-stop wedding shopping — a place for brides-to-be to see all of their wedding must-haves under one roof.

Today, her successful Clinton Township company conducts 25 bridal shows every year. The firm's biggest exposition, at Dearborn's Hyatt Regency in January, drew about 4,000 visitors, including prospective brides and their parents, fiancées and members of the wedding party.

Here's a list of upcoming shows in Observer & Eccentric communities: 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 6, Northfield Hilton, 5500 Crooks, Troy; 6 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 13, Livonia Marriott, 17100 Laurel Park, Livonia; 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 27, Rochester Hills Country Club, at M-59 and Rochester Road, Rochester; and 12:30 p.m. Sunday, March 27, Sheraton Inn, 27000 Sheraton, Novi.

"We can feel the excitement at the bridal shows. It's like opening night at the theater, it's electric," said LaChiusa, 38, who remembers her first show at Zuccaro's Country House in Mount Clemens.

"I had 25 exhibitors who were willing to take a chance on the concept. I was the commentator for the bridal show, my father developed the advertising and Zuccaro's donated the room. Response was wonderful, so I knew I was on to something," she said.

She now has a full-time staff of six and 25 part-time models who work the

shows. Smaller shows include 40-60 exhibitors and three to four bridal salons. Big expos, such as the Hyatt, include more than 200 exhibitors and about 20 salons.

Typically, visitors check in at the door and pick up a vendor directory and a packet of exhibitors' discount coupons. Since the show is mainly for looking, visitors use the directory to check-off the vendors they'll call later for prices, LaChiusa said.

Besides gowns and formalwear, modeled in a runway show, every expo includes representatives from local jewelers, bakeries, limousine services, caterers, florists, invitation engravers, entertainers, travel agencies, restaurants, photographers/videographers and other wedding suppliers.

Brides usually visit booths for about 75 minutes before the fashion show that features gowns from L'Elite Bridal Salon, Southfield; Only You Bridal Salon, Livonia; Pollak's Bridal Salon, West Bloomfield; The Manhattan Collection, Troy; and others. Gowns from Jacobson's, Rochester, will be modeled at the Feb. 27 expo. Men's formalwear is from President's Tuxedo, one of Bride's-to-Be's original exhibitors.

Most brides see at least two shows in the 18 months before the wedding, LaChiusa said.

Because price is important to brides these days, LaChiusa makes sure vendors offer low- to high-end packages. At larger shows, brides see gowns priced as high as \$10,000, to previously worn gowns, sample dresses and canceled special order gowns for about \$100 to \$300. A typical photo package costs \$500 to \$2,000, she said.

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Pizazz of plaid: The classically styled single-breasted tuxedo by Perry Ellis has a satin peak lapel. For fun, it's paired with a bright traditional plaid vest with a shawl collar. At President Tuxedo, Farmington Hills, Troy, Rochester, Southfield, Livonia, Novi and Westland.

Wedding Timetable

You may have chosen a wedding date six weeks or six months from now. Calendar a schedule so your wedding will run smoothly.

"The Woman's Day Book of Weddings" (Bobbs-Merrill) offers a checklist for a six-week, three-month or six-month calendar. Modern Bride magazine offers a wedding checklist when planning six to 12 months ahead.

Here are some of the elements to schedule; if you have less time, adjust your calendar accordingly:

6 months ahead

- ☐ Choose budget.
- ☐ Decide on wedding style.
- ☐ Draw up guest list.
- ☐ Choose attendants.
- ☐ Select locations (ceremony/reception).
- ☐ Arrange with clergy or justice.

4-5 months ahead

- ☐ Have engagement party.
- ☐ Select caterer, photographer, florist and musicians.
- ☐ Plan honeymoon.
- ☐ Visit doctors for physicals and make blood-test appointments.

2-4 months ahead

- ☐ Buy gifts for attendants.
- ☐ Shop for wedding rings.
- ☐ Address wedding invitations.
- ☐ Arrange rehearsal dinner.

4-5 months ahead

- ☐ Have final dress fittings.
- ☐ Plan accommodations for out-of-town guests.
- ☐ Mail invitations.

1-2 weeks ahead

- ☐ Reconfirm all arrangements and reservations.
- ☐ Get marriage license.
- ☐ Send out newspaper announcement.
- ☐ Give bridesmaids' and bachelors' parties.

Express yourself: Italian satin trim, and pearled and sequined lace, accent Joelle Bridal's two-piece gown with a portrait collar, removable wrap skirt and chapel train. The headpiece by TNG Bridal features dangling pearls with floral accents. At L'Elite Bridal Salon, Southfield.



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