

Creative gifts for attendants

Local shops offer plenty of ideas for the perfect present

BY ANN FARRIS
SPECIAL WRITER

Looking for something that's a little out of the ordinary to give to your wedding attendants? You're not alone. More and more, brides- and grooms-to-be are breaking with tradition and bestowing gifts of real substance, or at least real creativity, on the friends and family members with whom they've chosen to share their most sacred day.

When searching for the right gifts, the place to start is with yourself: what would you truly appreciate getting? What kinds of things would you treasure?

What kinds of things would you actually be able to use? Does it have to be formal? Can't it be fun? Browsing areas revealed some interesting ideas.

ANTHROPOLOGIE, BIRMINGHAM

Whimsical is the word that comes to mind when wandering through this store, filled with an eclectic, exotic mix of furnishings, clothing, jewelry and accessories. Influences include: Indian, Victorian, Mediterranean, Japanese and French. Picture frames, jewelry boxes and photo albums in silk and velvet with delicate hand beading, priced from \$20 - \$48. Fragrant, deeply-hued candles ranging in size from votives to three-wick pillars, \$8 - \$38. Fragrances: gardenia, pear, pomegranate, cucumber, mar azul. Ornate India-inspired mirrored candle trays, \$20. Bracelets of glass seed beads, Indian seed beads and Swarovski crystals. A set of ten comes packed with a semi-precious stone bearing the emotion that it represents. Pink = Love, violet = Wisdom, etc. \$138.

PRESENCE II, BIRMINGHAM
Owner Leslie Ann Pilling specializes in custom jewelry design with a classic, artsy feel. She'll design handmade jewelry and accessories for the entire bridal party. Also available: fine jewelry designs from 450 artisans from around the world. Styles range from Renaissance to contemporary. Decorative arts and antiques gallery. Small watch glass and silver perfume bottles, made in England. \$38 - \$45. Tussy Mussy - cobalt glass and silver plate hand-held flower arrangement holder, made in England. \$100. Sterling silver drop earrings w/semiprecious stones - \$48.

BANANA REPUBLIC, BIRMINGHAM
Banana Republic has its own line of bath and fragrance accessories. One that's particularly nice is Peony, a pink-hued, delicate scent packaged in clean and classic bottles. Place in a large hand woven basket stuffed with white organdy. Bath crystals, foaming bath, gel candles, votives and soap. \$6 - \$25.

POTTERY BARN, TROY
For a fresh take on a classic gift for men, Pottery Barn offers a stainless steel retro flask. It's proportioned tall and narrow, just \$12. Bronze or stainless large letter book ends - O and X for hug and kiss - \$59. Collage frames that hold 4, 9 or 16 4" x 6" photos and hang on the wall suspended from an iron easel. Dark honey or walnut finishes. Fill with photos from pre-wedding celebrations or, if your attendant(s) is a childhood friend, use reprints of old photos of the two of you.

COLORADO PEN COMPANY, TROY
Traditional gifts with a contemporary

twist. Kenneth Cole leather cell phone cases, small fits StarTAC, large fits Nokia. \$25. Stainless steel Swiss Army pocket watch. Comes with 10" stainless chain and leather strap. Doubles as a desk clock. \$150. Colibri risk watches that clip onto belts, golf bags or just about anything else. Choose the compass, sport (with rubber bezel) or golf watch (with removable marker). \$40 - \$50. Glass paperweights with pen and ink drawings of your alma mater. \$35.

H2O PLUS, TROY
Soothing, therapeutic, water-based natural minerals and marine-derived botanicals are the main ingredients in H2O's complete line of skin care products for men and women. Their Spa line is perfect for harried brides, grooms and wedding attendants-to-be. The Stress Relief Kit comes in a metal tin with Mini Ice Shampoo and Conditioner, Muscle Soak, Massage Oil, Aromaplus Stress Relief Formula temple rub, Aromatherapy Room Spray, Aromatherapy candle and a wooden massager. \$35. The Sole Survivor personal pedicure set includes: Revitalizing Mint Foot Soak, Pumice Foot Scrub, Smoothing Mint Foot Rub and a nail brush. \$30. Sea Salt Skin Smoother. \$22.50.

NORDSTROM, TROY
"Personal Touch" is a no-fee service available to all Nordstrom customers. It's particularly helpful to busy brides and grooms looking for gift ideas, wedding tuxedos and wardrobe suggestions. "Our goal is to make the Nordstrom shopping experience easy and relaxing for our customers," says Gwen Hubbard, Personal Touch Manager. "We sit down with a customer and discuss their individual needs. In the case of a bride or groom, we'll create a personal profile and walk them around the store to pre-select gifts they'd like to receive. Or, if it's gifts for wedding attendants they're looking for, we have lots of wonderful suggestions. Then, when they're ready to make a purchase, they can either come in or simply call. We'll gift wrap and ship the items they've requested. It's completely complimentary; why not let someone else do the work for you?" Personal Touch is available on a walk-in basis but appointments are suggested. Monday - Saturday 10 am - 6 pm, Sunday 12 noon - 6 pm.

HUDSON'S, TROY
Hudson's Estee Lauder Spa is the perfect place for the entire wedding party

Please see GIFTS, 13



Elegance to go: This picnic backpack, complete with service tray for four, removable bottle holders and storage containers, makes a fine gift for attendants. \$69.95. Available at Harrison Luggage, Berkley.

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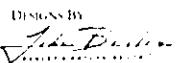
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