



# Matrimony Revisited

...It's not your mother's wedding

By Leslie Wu

When even besieged royals Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles are taking the plunge for the second time, it's clear that the last bastions surrounding former taboos on remarriage are finally crumbling. Buoyed by career aspirations and the increasing options to have children at later ages, many couples are finding that love comes not once but twice in a lifetime.

More confident in themselves and in their choices, mature brides are tailoring weddings to suit their own desires and purposes, rather than succumbing to the pressures of a cookie-cutter wedding fantasy. New options and choices in the wedding industry, as well as cultural and sociological changes in our society, ensure that the independent bride can get what she wants, when she wants it. Trailblazing their own paths in the world of flowers, bridal wear and other wedding accoutrements, second-time brides are personalizing their special day in ways that previous generations would envy.

When it comes to second weddings, the myth that the entire celebration must be more subdued has been dispelled. "It certainly holds the same sort of magic and is as important as the first time – or even more so," says Mississauga-based wedding planner Joy Moyles. Her business, Encore Events, was originally founded to cater to what Moyles terms "repeat performers" – couples who are celebrating remarriage.

Laura Paladino has also noticed a trend towards customers who are primarily over 30 years old. More than 40 percent of clients at Oakville-based Laura Paladino Invitations are couples who are getting remarried.

With added life experiences and broader relationship views, couples remarrying have a more mature and educated outlook. They tend to

an older couple may have been considering the prospect of marriage for some time, which may aid in their decision-making process, according to Lynn Harlow of Burlington-based dress boutique Promises and Lace.

Armed with experience and knowledge, repeat brides will have a well-defined game plan as to their vision of the day. "These brides tend to be less involved in the planning process," notes Moyles. "They usually have very high expectations, yet the majority of them have their expectations all set, and they're not as influenced by images of media."

"They're not going after what Martha Stewart wants or what media throws at them. They have their own idea of what a wedding entails," agrees Viehl.

With second-time couples, the entire planning process also tends to be shorter, depending on how long the couple has been together. "Second-timers make decisions quicker than first, since they've determined what they want already," says Moyles. "There's a whole pre-planning process that doesn't happen with first-timers."

For many of these couples, price is no object. Since many older or remarrying couples tend to be more affluent than a first-time couple with a strict budget, cost is secondary to getting what they want, according to Paladino. "They tend to go for something really nice, that's more of a reflection of themselves."

"Their price point is certainly higher. They're willing to spend a bit more and they're in a position that they can afford to spend more as mature people doing well in the workforce," says Harlow.

Although the couple's discretionary income may be higher, couples still exercise caution when it comes to wedding expenses. "The weddings tend to be much higher-end. Repeat performers don't want anything middle-of-the-road," Moyles declares. "They're much more rational about the process, however, and will sit down together and determine a budget."

### It's My Party

For the savvy bride, it's truly a buyer's market when it comes to wedding options. Never before has the independent bride been offered such selection in flowers, bridal wear and other wedding accoutrements.

Although every bride approaches her wedding day in a different way, the personal preferences of repeat brides are often determined by their previ-

ous experiences. "How their first wedding went plays a large part of how they want to have these weddings," says Reverend Gill. The weddings are either small, intimate affairs with less than 10 guests and no photographer or flowers, or sleek in the opposite direction with enormous and lavish extravaganzas.

### Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

Reverend Jim Gill at Oakville's Walton United Memorial Church has married couples for more than 20 years. He explains that second-time couples want to formally acknowledge what already exists, and tend to adhere less to convention. "I hear many stories about brides who felt that their first wedding was a party for their family and parents' friends."

These brides are making the wedding industry dance to their tune, rather than being lured into visions of white crinoline and sky-high confectionery. They also know their own desires, and depend only on themselves and their partner for their choices.

"Younger brides may come in four or five times with their family and bridesmaids and will be much more particular about details," states Lisa Drumonde from Mississauga-based The Rose Place. "By comparison, older brides come in by themselves, and know what they want. They don't want to see a bunch of samples. They always pay for their own weddings, and it's definitely their call."



"There's only one way to have a happy marriage and as soon as I learn what it is I'll get married again." – Clint Eastwood

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Page 23: For second marriages, price tends to take a backseat to individual wishes. Invitations are still based on the classics, and while remaining personal, rings are incorporating designs such as those made by fingerprints.

Mature brides often use practicality as a guide to select flowers that photograph well.

Details such as place cards and cakes tend to be more sophisticated and streamlined.

"Sometimes this authority can be due to the experience people have gained through their job. I find that more mature people tend to make decisions a lot faster because their career is further along, and they're used to considering options quickly," says Paladino. "They know more about themselves and can identify with a particular invitation."

"Remarrying couples don't change their mind a lot," notes Carly Viehl, a floral designer at Toronto's Bloom the Flower Company. "There's no need to hold their hand like a first time bride." This decisiveness may stem from the fact that

ois experiences. "How their first wedding went plays a large part of how they want to have these weddings," says Reverend Gill. The weddings are either small, intimate affairs with less than 10 guests and no photographer or flowers, or sleek in the opposite direction with enormous and lavish extravaganzas.

Ironically, some weddings blossom to larger sizes more reminiscent of a first-time wedding, due to the fact the couple is older. If couples are more established in their careers, the likelihood of wanting a huge event to impress their business associates, is bigger. "It's all about the 'wow' factor, and adding drama through height in centerpieces or arrangements," explains Viehl. Large candelabras, or vases shaped like giant martini glasses that stand two feet high are visually striking options to stop guests in their tracks. Forget tulle and backdrops, says Moyles, who has overseen the decoration of many intimate second-time wedding celebrations. Repeat performers prefer custom limos, chair covers, organza overlays, and expensive centerpieces.

When it comes to bridal wear, the idea of the restrained or subdued second bridal gown is out. Second-time brides are just as likely to gravitate towards trendy strapless gowns, and accentuate their look with interesting neckpieces, such as a choker in Austrian crystal, with touches of pearl and sparkle, plus matching crystal, dropped earrings, explains Harlow. "Nine out of 10 times, they're not going for white, but will wear it if it suits them."

Some second-time brides, especially those going to a destination wedding, want lighter fabrics, such as silk and chiffon. They will favour a playful look, even adding toe rings for a bit of sparkle through their sandals, according to Harlow.

Cakes are another area where anything goes, according to Debbie Olson at Simply Chocolate in Oakville. "They tend towards classic elegance, since they can afford to have their wedding in a venue that warrants that kind of cake." Options abound, from petit fours and cupcakes to elaborate truffle trees decorated with flowers coordinating to the wedding colours. Second-time couples usually eschew white for more sophisticated shades such as ivory with gold and silver accents, or paler hues. In addition, expensive gum-paste flowers rather than fresh flowers might be used to cover the cake in order to ensure every piece is edible. "It's less important for the cake to be white than for the cake to be delicious," Olson advises.

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When selecting their flowers, many brides stay away from the traditional white wedding choices, and unlike younger brides, their first thought isn't necessarily roses, according to Drumonde. They're much more practical and looking for something that will photograph well, approaching their flower selection with that in mind. Often more expensive flowers, such as hydrangeas and orchids in vibrant hues, will find favour with discriminating brides. Lilies are also an elegant option, prized for their fragrance.

Viehl sees sleek and modern looks, clean lines and an architectural look, with plenty of squares and rectangular shapes in vases. There's less of the romantic, lush, rounded lines, minimal use of greens and more use of flowers that have a clean stem like calla lilies or gerberas. "Bold and beautiful colours are very favourable, as older brides tend to go crazy with colours such as oranges and pinks," says Viehl.

Centrepieces are opportunities for riotous colours while brides will stay with more restrained colours for themselves, such as bouquets ranging from pale chartreuse to deep hunter green with semi-precious gems and rhinestones. Simpler arrangements in a series of vases rather than a large, lush centrepiece are popular.

In terms of invitations, modern interpretations of classics, using cream or silver colours as a base and adding flourishes such as pockets or varied shapes, are favoured. As the bride and groom are typically the hosts, it will be their names on the invitation, rather than their parents. A further reflection of the added sense of identity of the couple is the use of first names or monograms on the invitations instead of full names, as many brides are choosing to keep their own names.

"What immediately comes to mind with the second-time bride is that they're much more sophisticated, and looking for a more streamlined, less elaborate version of what someone in their early 20s would want," says Paladino. Second-time brides will choose something with texture and character, such as linen, shimmer or subtle patterns with scalloped or classic monograms. "They want something elegant that's not too loud."

For favours, remarrying couples tend to choose high-end items that can be consumed immediately, such as personalized truffles. "They've already »

## Ten ways to enjoy a successful remarriage

- Don't give in to antiquated beliefs and traditions. It's your day – do it your way.
- Personalize your vows to express your individual feelings and thoughts.
- Include the children in your ceremony and celebration.
- Have your ceremony at your celebration venue with family and friends.
- Wear what looks and makes you feel good.
- White is alright.
- Focus on your needs and desires, not the expectations of others.
- Don't let your past control your present choices. Repeat a beautiful experience.
- Ensure that everything is mutually talked through and agreed upon.
- Express your love for each other often and never stop dating each other.
- Ask for help if needed.

Courtesy of wedding planner Joy Moyles, Encore Wedding Design.

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» given, keepsakes or mementos at their first wedding to remind friends of the vows they made," explains Olson.

The most important memento of the wedding day – the wedding ring – tends to be intensely personal for second marriages. Along with the exchange of rings between the bride and groom, the pair will often give rings to their children in order to symbolize the union of families. Some couples will even go the extra step to incorporate parts of themselves into their wedding...literally. Today, couples are joining not just hands, but also thumbs, says Thomas Keogh of Toronto's McK Design. Using computer-aided design, couples can incorporate their fingerprints and that of their children in platinum, yellow or white gold and silver to create an individual pattern in the surface of the rings.

### Family Ties

Apart from lavish accessories and luxe but restrained decor, by far the most prevalent trend with second weddings is the involvement of their children as part of the ceremony. Whether they sign as witnesses, stand up for their parents as best man or maid of honour, or give the happy couple away, children play an integral role in the day's proceedings. "The key is successful integration of the families and inclusion of the children, whether they're 10 or 30," says Reverend Gill.

Moyles is also a big believer in incorporating children into the marriage. "If you've both been married before and both have children, there's no such thing as just two people in that marriage – harmony keeps that marriage grounded." Many brides appreciate the acceptance of their children for this new life chapter.

"Marriage is the highest state of friendship," British novelist Samuel Richardson once wrote. "If happy, it lessens our cares by dividing them, at the same time that it doubles our pleasures by mutual participation." Ultimately, the priorities for a second wedding are exactly the same as the first: to join two people who love each other, despite any minor issues or inconveniences that may occur. After all, sometimes even prince charmings have to deal with disapproving in-laws and last-minute venue changes. The crucial aspect of a remarriage, according to Harlow, is enjoying the uniqueness and magic of the moment. "I tell all my repeat brides that although they may have gotten married before, they've never been married to this man before... so it's going to be special and right." ❧

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