

## The Shopping Spree of Your Dreams!

By Maureen Hart

Who wouldn't like to go on the shopping spree of their dreams?

By getting engaged and setting a date, couples have the go-ahead to walk into a department or specialty store and pick out any items they want as a gift.

One of the most exciting aspects of planning a wedding is the opportunity to put together a bridal registry. And there are no real rules. Some couples even register for their honeymoons, hoping Grandma, Aunt Bessie, and their friends and co-workers will help offset the cost of a jaunt to Fiji or South Africa.

Ultimately, both common sense --and a sense of fun--should be part of this exciting venture.

In the old days, most brides-to-be and prospective grooms lived at home and their registries included the basics out of necessity. Those lists included toasters, coffeemakers, dish towels, and measuring spoons.

Today's couples often include those items as well, but because they are either living together, have their own apartments, or have lived in college housing, they sometimes have the basics, and their hearts' desires lean more to a quesadilla maker or a panini press. Many young couples prefer trendy martini and margarita glasses over fine crystal stemware.



All of this is to say that there is a wide range of registry ideas out there, and most couples will find themselves combining the old and the new, the mundane and the fun, the practical and the splurge, when they finally print out their lists.

Where to start? Most couples look to the kitchen when they begin registering for gifts, then branch out to the dining accoutrements. A close second is the bedroom, followed by the bathroom.

For the kitchen, consider starting with a good set of cookware. There are dozens of sets out there—All-Clad, Wearever, T-Fal, Cuisinart, and more. Examine the handles—are they sturdy and heat-resistant or do you also need to register for a good set of pot holders right off the bat? Decide on the material—stainless steel, aluminum, enamel, even glass. Serious cooks prefer to choose their pan according to its use, instead of picking out a matched set. Do you need special cookware such as a roasting pan, large stock pot, pasta pot, wok, omelet pan, asparagus pot, lasagna pan, or chicken fryer? Are you a baker? Then you will need cookie sheets, cake pans, pie plates, and muffin tins, not to mention a rolling pin, cooling racks, and mixing bowls.

After the food is cooked, most brides want to serve it on a special set of dishes. Your lifestyle will determine if you want a set of fine china along with dishes for everyday. Your choices are vast—from earthenware for daily use, to such elegant names as Lenox, Noritake, Royal Albert, and many more for company meals. Brides looking for something edgier can find fine china by such contemporary designers as Vera Wang.

To actually eat off of these plates, you need flatware, and again, this can be everyday stainless, or fancier silver plate or sterling. Some everyday patterns are lovely enough to be used all the time, nor is there any rule against using your good silver for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Glassware offers the same wide range of options—from simple Libbey barware and beverage glasses to exquisite Waterford or Baccarat patterns. A water pitcher is a nice addition as well. If you imbibe, pick out a martini shaker or a wine rack. If you plan to entertain, look for a chip-and-dip bowl, serving pieces, and baskets.

Once you have your cooking and serving ware chosen, it's time to look at small appliances such as the aforementioned toaster and coffeemaker. Today's brides may also select grills, electric griddles and fry pans, beverage coolers, food processors, juicers, and much more. You may think you do not need the venerable Kitchen Aid mixer, but trust me, someday you will. A few years from now, when you have donated your bread maker and electric fondue set to the church bazaar, you will still be using that sturdy mixer. I feel the same way about a microwave, a blender, and a food processor. What I don't think you'll need very much, at least not enough to justify the cupboard space, is a chocolate fountain or an ice crusher (if you choose the right blender, it will do the same job for you, and it will serve as a smoothie maker, as well).

Before you leave the kitchen department, remember that you will need a spice rack, and some kitchen towels and dishcloths, a utensil set with at least a ladle, spatula, large spoon, slotted spoon, and fork. You must also include steak and carving knives, preferably in a set. Cheaper is never better in knives, so look carefully at the handles and blades.



For your kitchen or dining table, consider a tablecloth, napkins, placemats, and maybe even a nice centerpiece. I am also a fan of napkin rings for dinner parties, but that may be too old-fashioned for some of today's young marrieds. Chances are, whether you register or not, you will receive candlesticks, but you may want to preempt that decision and choose a set that are to your own taste and not that of Aunt Ida. Select from silver, brass, crystal, ceramic, and wooden sets to enhance your table décor.

Everybody loves new bed linens, and here is your chance to go for the top

of the line. Pick out your spread or comforter first, and take it from there. And splurge (on somebody else's dime) for a really high thread count. Make sure you register for bedsheets, pillowcases and shams, and maybe some throw pillows that match. You might want an extra blanket for very cold nights.

For the bathroom, look for the fluffiest, softest towels you can find, in a color you love, and register for several sets, or for ones that complement one another. Remember to choose bath and hand towels, and washcloths. Pick out a shower curtain if needed, and then look to the fun little items for your bathroom vanity—a cup, toothbrush holder, soap dish, towel holder, etc. Add a wastebasket and tissue cover.

Now that the kitchen, dining, bed and bathrooms are in good shape, think about other things that would accent your home. You might find a painting or photograph you like for the living room, a lamp or vase, a mirror or decorative object. Maybe you need something practical such as a vacuum cleaner or clothes hamper.

You can be imaginative in your choices, and you can register at a kitchen supply store, an art gallery, a garden shop, or a hardware store, depending on your needs and interests.

I said there are no rules for putting together a bridal registry, but then again, every bride and groom should try to vary their choices to suit every budget. For every crystal goblet on your list, try to offset with a smaller item, such as a jelly roll pan or a picture frame. And remember, nobody is obligated to follow your gift registry. (That's how you end up with all the white elephant items for your first yard sale.) Regardless, be certain to be prompt in writing gracious thank you notes to everybody, whether you like the gift or not.

### **Things I Love And Can't Live Without:**

- Food processor (it chops, slices, shreds)
- Cutco knives (expensive, but worth it)
- French White Corning Ware casserole dishes
- Serving trays
- Glass water pitcher
- Marble rolling pin and pastry board
- Cooking tongs
- Graduated set of ceramic mixing bowls
- Cutting boards
- Salt and pepper mills
- Steamer pot (for fresh vegetables)
- Hand mixer
- Cookie sheets (used for much more than cookies)
- A large chicken fryer



- Blender (crushes ice, makes smoothies and pina coladas!)
- Pasta pot (how else to boil fettuccine?)
- Toaster oven
- Microwave oven

### **Things I Don't Need**

#### **But I Love:**

- Fine china, crystal and silver (but they look fabulous)
- Silver serving pieces (even though I have to polish them)
- Teapots and cups (lots of them)
- Napkin rings
- Salt cellars
- Liqueur glasses
- Champagne flutes

### **Things I Don't**

#### **Think You Need:**

- Quesadilla maker (too specialized)
- Smoothie maker (blender does the same job)
- Sandwich grill (use a fry pan for grilled cheese)
- Pots that are too heavy to lift once you put food in them
- Cast-iron pans (Grandma swore by them, but they rust easily)
- Satin sheets (face it, they are chilly)
- Melamine dishes (they just don't last)
- Ice cream dishes (take up too much room in cupboard—use a cereal bowl)

### **POPULAR PATTERNS:**

•CRYSTAL: Waterford's Lismore is the most popular fine crystal pattern of the moment for traditionalists. Brides looking for a more contemporary look may opt for Lismore Nouveau instead. Mikasa offers many choices, including Arctic Lights and Flame D'

Amore.

•CHINA: Lenox is used in the White House and is one of the finest American makers of china. Durable patterns include the simple Eternal, with a gold rim, or Solitaire, the same pattern with a platinum edging. Both can be combined with contrasting patterns for an interesting table, and Eternal serving pieces will be useful if you someday opt for the popular Holiday pattern for Christmas. Less formal dishes include Portmeirion Botanic Roses, with a springy floral design, or on of the many Pfalzgraff patterns.

•FLATWARE: Reed & Barton's 18<sup>th</sup> Century is a simple style in sterling that goes with most china patterns. It's counterpart in stainless is called 1800.

Waterford's Powerscourt stainless pattern is perfect for a couple looking for a

silver and gold design to complement their dishes. Sleek modern designs include Chime by Vera Wang or Torun by Dansk.