

WATCH OUT FOR THE BUDGET KILLERS!

By Maureen Hart

I'm sure that, as a parent, you have calculated the cost of the wedding, and gone over the budget time and again.

What I found was that the "little" things killed the budget. Sure, everybody worries about the cost per plate of dinner, and how much that jazzy band will run. You have specified contracts with the florist and the baker and the formalwear store.

But, it's the smaller items that throw the budget off, and it will be much easier on your nerves, and your pocketbook, if you try to itemize everything ahead of time.

ITS NOT JUST THE GOWN!

Attire-wise, the bride's gown is the big ticket item, but keep in mind all the rest—her veil can easily run into the hundreds of dollars, although you can find perfectly lovely ones for much less than that. You don't have to spend hundreds on a headpiece either—a plain comb, a bunch of flowers, an inexpensive tiara will look just fine. Remember, too, that she will need a bra that is a perfect fit, and a crinoline if her skirt is full, as well as shoes, jewelry, and maybe even gloves.

GIFTS, GIFTS, GIFTS!

We did gift bags for out-of-town guests at the last minute, and by the time we filled them up, we'd spent another \$300.

I never gave much thought to gifts for the bridesmaids, but we ended up with gorgeous drop earrings (\$40 at a discount) as well as evening bags at \$34 each. Both were a good buy, and added immensely to the look of the wedding, but it was an expense I didn't really consider.

COSTLY FLOWERS

Flowers cost much more than you expect. Centerpieces can run from about \$50 up to \$250 (or even more). Think of inexpensive alternatives—floating candles, votives, more inexpensive blooms such as gerbera daisies or alstromeria. While you know the bridal bouquet will set you back at least \$100 (probably much more), and the bridesmaids will be in line with that price—you will be shocked at how much corsages and boutonnieres can add up (you'll be asking yourself whether you really need to get them for the readers and the drivers and all the other people who take part in the big day).

TAKE THE CAKE!

If your reception package includes a cake, take it. Unless having an elaborate or special cake is on your list of Very-Important-Things, it doesn't make sense to spend hundreds of dollars more on something you are already paying for in the catering bill.

Remember that except for the moment when the bride and groom cut the confection, it does not play that large a role. Or, have a smaller fancy cake and have the kitchen cut up a sheet cake to actually serve to guests.

BUSES, LUNCHES, AND MORE...

When my daughter chose to have her wedding in the Poconos, I did not include buses in my initial budget. But, as time went by, I began to worry that elderly relatives would not want to drive that far, especially on the return trip at night, and that younger guests might imbibe a bit too much and have to navigate dark, windy and unfamiliar roads on the way home. Two buses were added to the budget.

I planned on the per person cost for the reception, and on the beautician services for the girls, but it cost me over \$150 to have lunches served to the attendants while they were having their hair done.

Favors. Place cards, Matchbooks. Rose petals. Unity candle (some actually run \$100). Satin baskets for the flower girl (\$40 each). A pillow for the ringbearer (another \$40). Frames for table numbers. Monogrammed cocktail napkins and finger towels. Programs for the ceremony. The list goes on and on and on. Try to figure ahead for all of the little items, so that you are not in sticker shock when the big day finally arrives!

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