

# WHAT WEDDING GUESTS HATE

By Maureen Hart

Your wedding guests will (hopefully) be too tactful to tell you what they do not like about your big day, but here is a list of some of the big offenders they would tell you about, if they could:

**CASH BARS:** Most guests would prefer to settle for wine and beer, or one or two signature drinks, than have to shell out money at a cash bar. Paying for drinks seems tacky, since they are your invited guests. You do not have to have a full bar, but you do have to provide a few choices, like those mentioned above. Non-drinkers can elect to have no bar, since you are not obligated to serve drinks even if other people expect them. In this case, offer sparkling cider or a wonderful punch.



**LONG WAITS:** Don't hand out bubbles, birdseed or sparklers if you plan to stay inside the church for a half hour taking photos. This leaves your guests standing outside in the heat or cold far too long for the eventual joy of tossing balloons or butterflies. One solution: Come outside to be greeted by your guests, then circle back into the church, leaving people free to take off for the reception.

**MORE LONG WAITS:** There is a common practice of allowing several hours between the actual ceremony and the reception while your photographer takes pictures. People from out-of-town especially find this inconvenient, since they have no place to go but their hotel room. Trendy brides are taking more of these photos in advance, even with the bridegroom included, in order to eliminate the long gap. Another plan is to have a pre-reception gala at someone's home or in another place where your guests can gather and have a few hors d'oeuvres or snacks. This does not have to be elaborate or fancy (a veggie platter and cheese tray would be enough)—but it is far better than having your guests seeking ways to kill time in dressy clothes!

**RECEIVING LINES:** No, guests do not object to the receiving line itself, which gives them a chance to congratulate the newlyweds and their parents. But it is awkward to go through a long line of twelve bridesmaids and an equal number of groomsmen you don't even know and find something nice to say about their outfits over and over. Limit the line to the bridal couple and parents. Let your attendants mingle with the other guests (who can then tell them how nice their outfits are!).

**NO SEATING CHART:** Some couples get the bright idea to let guests find their own seats, which can be awkward for people who do not know anybody else. It begins to feel like the school cafeteria pecking order. On top of that, seats get

wasted when six people who know each other take up a table designed for eight. Take the time to work out seating, taking into consideration those who enjoy similar interests and conversation.

**DRUNKEN GUESTS:** Some guests, young and old, treat a wedding reception like a kegger party. After all, the drinks are free, so why not indulge? Unfortunately, their behavior can be offensive to other guests, especially when the father of the bride starts hitting on a bridesmaid, or the best man shares titillating stories about college days (and nights). Try to avoid this scenario by spacing out the food over a period of time and perhaps closing the bar during dinner. Plan on cutting off the bar for a half hour before the end of the reception, and begin serving coffee and espresso. After that, there's not much else you can do but kick up the music another notch.

**HEAD TABLES:** There's nothing wrong with having a head table instead of a sweetheart table for the two of you. But try to be considerate of couples in which one is in the wedding party and the other is not. It can be a boring evening for a spouse or significant other to be seated on the other side of the room, away from the person whose company they most enjoy. One solution is to seat all couples together at tables surrounding yours, which can be the aforementioned sweetheart table, or one filled with both sets of parents, godparents, grandparents, or other significant people in your lives.

**SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES:** Cigar bars are currently popular with trendy couples, but keep in mind that many guests will be irritated by the smoke. Have the cigar bar set up in another room or lounge. The same applies to cigarette smokers, who should be directed out onto a patio or deck.

**CAKE SMASHING:** This time-honored tradition makes some guests laugh and other bristle. There is something counterintuitive about a couple that has just vowed "till death do us part," followed by cake-in-the-face. This spectacle seems tacky.

**CHEESY MUSIC:** Hey, if the Chicken Dance, Hokey Pokey, Macarena, and Electric Slide are your favorite part of any wedding celebration, go with it. But keep in mind that some guests would rather not partake of these hackneyed dances, so limit them, and kick your play list up a notch.



**CHILDREN:** Ah, people love 'em or hate 'em (at weddings) and never the twain shall meet. The final decision should be left to the bridal couple. Finances may enter the picture. Adding a dozen or more little cousins to the guest list, even at reduced prices, may break the budget. If your normal reaction is that a slew of kiddies sliding on the dance floor, or poking their little fingers into your wedding cake, is cute--then children should probably be on your guest list. If those images fill you with horror, plan to make it an adult-only reception. Just

remember to be consistent—the only youngsters should be the flower girl and ring bearer, making no exceptions for your brother's adorable toddler.