

# Spend where it counts

Cakes, cocktails, centerpieces and champagne toasts. All the details can really break your wedding budget. But you can trim the costs and still have a lovely ceremony and reception. It's simple. Ditch the details that don't matter, and spend where it counts. We asked wedding planners and brides for their best tips for cutting back. We promise, no one will notice. By Maryann Hammers

**DITCH THIS** Save the Dates

**DO THIS** Save on printing, paper and postage, says San Francisco-area wedding planner Maxine Andrews. Instead, "set up a Facebook page; send an email blast (try the free service MailChimp.com); or use evite.com."

**DITCH THIS** Fancy Tiered Cake

**DO THIS** Consider a cupcake tower, cookie trays or dessert bar. Really want the cake? Maggie Reyes, owner of ModernMarried.com, saved hundreds of dollars by buying hers at the supermarket.

**DITCH THIS** Champagne Toasts and a Full Bar

**DO THIS** "Skip Champagne and let people toast with whatever drink they have," says Jennifer Wheaton, catering manager at Boston's Westin Copley Place Hotel. (If you really, really want Champagne, tell servers to pour just a half-glass.) Instead of a full bar, recent bride Leah Ekmark Williams opted for beer and wine, plus one signature cocktail. "Our cherry limeade vodka was a big hit," she says.

**DITCH THIS** Designer Gown

**DO THIS** Buy off the rack. "At Ann Taylor Loft, H & M and even Forever 21, you can find fabulous gowns and dresses in the 'after five' departments," says Joyce Scardina Becker, who plans weddings throughout California. Also check out consignment shops, sample sales and vintage stores. Los Angeles wedding planner Wayne Gurnick recommends Rent the Runway to "rent" a designer dress.

**DITCH THIS** Centerpieces

**DO THIS** "I used my bridesmaids' bouquets as centerpieces, and my toss bouquet served as the arrangement adorning my cake table," says Ekmark Williams. More tips: Flowers go farther when augmented with leaves, pebbles, seashells, ribbons, floating candles, feathers or moss. "Place centerpieces on a mirror, along with crystals and tealights for more dazzle," says Teri Gault, author of Shop Smart, Save More.



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