

# 7 Deadly Sins (OF GETTING HITCHED)

*The various faux pas that can arise while tying the knot now go far beyond forgetting something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue; The South outlines the seven deadly sins of getting hitched, and more importantly, how to avoid them.*

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SEPIELLI OF KIWI FLEUR



MAIN BRIDE, SALLY MARCELLE HAWKINS  
GROOM, LEIGHTON STULTZ  
SECOND BRIDE AND BRIDESMAID, CHANTEL MAXWELL  
SECOND GROOM, COLIN DOUGLAS GRAY  
BRIDESMAID, APRIL MORGAN  
WEDDING GUEST, JOCELYN KRODMAN  
FLOWER GIRL, SKYLER GURLEY  
RING BEARER, DODGE BROOKS  
SECOND RING BEARER, JET SCHROEDER

The good news: You did it. You found the love of your life. After all the bad dates, unreturned phone calls, heartache and just plain loneliness; after all the possible futures spent alone or with the wrong person stretching out toward the broad horizon. After all of it, you fell miraculously, inexplicably, out of your mind in love. You found the one person you want to spend the rest of your life with. You asked, or you answered, but either way the answer was yes, yes, a thousand times yes. You're getting married.

The bad news: Before you can get married, you have to plan a wedding. And whether your wedding style is barefoot on the beach or a white wedding for 300, that four-letter word remains the same: Plan. You just got a new job, and it requires you to take on, simultaneously, the roles of event planner, accountant, etiquette expert, family counselor, travel agent, food critic, tour guide and correspondence secretary. This assignment tends to last somewhere between two days and two years, and the cost? It got more expensive since you started reading this article. And while you're doing all the planning and plotting, you'll also need to hit the gym and lay off the fried foods because this position requires you to be in peak physical condition. Oh, and you're not getting paid.

But don't despair, brides and grooms of Savannah. Forget the standard wedding planning guides. We've put together a low-drama, high-style guide to the wedding of your dreams. We've tracked down the experts and used our highly specialized interrogation tactics until they gave up all their closely guarded secrets. (Actually, we asked them questions, and they were really nice

about it and told us everything we wanted to know).

Just follow our advice, avoid these Seven Deadly Wedding Sins and don't spend even a moment in wedding hell.

☆☆☆☆

## Sin #1:

### PRINCE CHARMING TAILS AND ILL-FITTING VEILS (OR HOW TO LOOK YOUR VERY BEST)

**SIN I:** Remember you and your beloved's first date? How excited you were, but also how nervous? The first trip to the bridal salon can feel equally fraught. Those dresses are so beautiful, but there are so many of them. How do you know what to try on? Strapless or sleeves? Satin or lace?

Heather Burge, owner of **BleuBelle Boutique**, knows exactly how it feels. When she got married in 2005, she realized that Savannah brides needed a beautiful, intimate space to make all their most extravagant wedding dreams come true. That's when **BleuBelle Bridal Salon** was born. Open since September 2006, the third-floor space on Broughton Street is filled with crystal chandeliers, silky French Blue drapes and dozens of the most exquisite wedding dresses available anywhere in the world.

Burge believes that the dress shopping experience begins when a bride makes an appointment, which is recommended but not required. "We custom tailor the appointment for each bride. We want to make it a fun experience," Burge explains.

After sipping champagne and having a look around, a stylish bride who wants to

know what is hot in the world of wedding wear may gravitate toward the Vera Wang gowns, which for fall 2008 include such trends as asymmetrical necklines, rhinestone laurels and full-length ivory gowns with basketball-sized cabbage rose embellishments in colors like deep purple and forest green.

All brides will see the top designers incorporating several trends into their gowns. Some are putting their unique spin on the traditional white or ivory gown by using different colors, including oyster and rose. Wedding gown silhouettes are slim, with more A-line skirts and empire waists. And the colored sash continues to be an option for the bride who wants to make a statement.

But even once you've found a dress you love, how do you know if it's the real thing or just a passing fancy? Burge has three simple questions:

**I. Does it look like you?**

**II. Is it comfortable?**

**III. Do you feel as pretty as you've ever felt before?**

If you can answer yes, yes and yes, then you have found your dress.

The biggest mistake brides make is waiting too long. Wedding gowns are custom made, and may take three to four months to be sewn and shipped; allow an additional two or three months for alterations. Getting married next month? Ask the salon if they sell the sample, the dress hanging in the store. You may even get it at a discount, if you ask.

Above all, Burge says there is a dress for every girl. "Enjoy it. Have fun. Hopefully it's a one-time only deal. Make it memorable," she advises of the shopping experience. And in gown shopping as in love, Burge cautions: "Don't settle."

**On Skyler:** Flower girl dress with orange and pink bow, [\$222], **Jim Hjelm;** **BleuBelle Bridal.** **On Chantel:** Gemstone shoulder silk gown, [\$3,990], **Vera Wang,** white tulle veil, [\$350], **Cheryl King;** **BlueBelle Bridal.** Black and gold corset, [\$139], **Prelude;** **Tres Jolie.** **On Dodge:** Black lapel tux, price upon request, **Ralph Lauren;** **Simons Formal Wear.** **On Jet:** Black lapel boys tux, price upon request, **Ralph Lauren;** **Simons Formal Wear.** **On Wedding Guest:** Vintage pink dress, [\$68], **Vintage BleuBelle,** gold and black strapless gown, [\$492], **Lavender Label Vera Wang,** orange and ivory gown, [\$265], **Vintage BleuBelle,** pink taffeta gown with cap sleeves, [\$465], **Diane Von Furstenburg,** green chiffon gown, [\$438], **Lavender Label Vera Wang;** **BleuBelle Bridal.**



**On Sally:** Blush gown, [\$6,950], **Vera Wang;** BleuBelle Bridal. Blister pearl ring, [\$113], Brazilian gold necklace with onyx, [\$120], both **Zia.** Miniature rose and crystal hair accessories, price upon request, created by Loren Laney. Flowers provided by Kiwi Fleur. **On Vicki Sepielli:** Black two-piece suit with black heels, models own. **On Chantel:** Chiffon halter gown, [\$260], **Alina Valenta;** BleuBelle Bridal. Butterfly hair clip, by Loren Laney, Vixen Salon.

The groom might have a simpler task, but you still want to look the part of the man worthy to be marrying your beautiful bride. **Don McElveen**, co-owner of **John B. Rourke**, has outfitted grooms for their wedding day for more than 30 years. The traditional attire is still a tuxedo, but there are many different variations on that theme, including everything from a classic black tux to white tie and tails.

McElveen does have a couple of cautionary "tails" for the groom hoping to avoid a fashion don't:

**I. Matching the color of your tuxedo vest and tie to the bridesmaids' dresses. (It's not the prom).** If you want a contrast, stick with neutral shades like gray or platinum.

**II. Looking like you crashed your own wedding.** If you are going with a navy jacket and khaki pants, make sure your father and your bride's father know to style accordingly. "No one should be more formal than the groom," McElveen says.

★ **GREEN TIP:** Animal lovers can now wear their heart on their sole. A new line of bridal footwear, Blue Tux, includes several

satin slippers that are 100% vegan. Visit [www.bluetux.com](http://www.bluetux.com)

★★★★★

**SIN II:** Vicki Sepielli, owner of **Kiwi Fleur** on Habersham Street, has been a florist for 35 years. She has designed and arranged flowers for clients that include celebrities,

## Sin #2:

### WILTED ROSES AND SHRINKING VIOLETS (OR PICKING THE BEST BOUQUET FOR YOUR SPECIAL DAY)

society functions and on one memorable occasion in her native New Zealand, for Queen Elizabeth. But the thing she loves most is weddings. "Weddings are my passion," Sepielli explains. "It's something that still makes my toes curl." She did about 85 weddings last year, including up to three in a single weekend.

She does limit the number she can take on because she personally makes each bridal and bridesmaid bouquet that goes out the door. She is also a floral designer who isn't afraid to tell a bride what she thinks when it comes to

colors, flowers and how to put them together. "I'm fairly good with color. I have a reputation for being good at putting colors together," she acknowledges. But she is also quick to point out that she is there to advise. "It's not my wedding. I don't want it to be just my creativity. We create together."

With that many brides asking her to make their floral fantasies come true, Sepielli has a pretty good idea of what is new in floral design for summer and fall. One color trend is citrus shades: Yellows, oranges and lime greens. Another new idea is to use feathers in your centerpieces and displays.

More brides are using some colored flowers in their bouquets, instead of the traditional all-white blooms. "If the bridesmaids' bouquets are hot pink, then the bride's bouquet might be a more subtle pink," Sepielli explains. The hand-tied bouquets are still the most popular, but cascade bouquets are making a comeback, with several brides now opting for this dramatic look. The brides who do go with hand-tied bouquets will often want something personal incorporated into the ribbon tie, including a piece of antique lace, a family member's handkerchief, or a piece of jewelry like pearls or a broach.

Sepielli says there are some floral mistakes



On April: Lavender chiffon gown, [\$290], **Vera Wang**; BleuBelle Bridal. Feathered hair piece, price upon request, created by Loren Laney. Feathers provided by Kiwi Fleur.  
On Sally: Ivory taffeta gown, [\$5,500], **Vera Wang**; BleuBelle Bridal. On Mike Davis: Low Country Event Rentals uniform, Red polka-dot umbrella, [\$50], **Gaucha**.

brides can easily avoid. "She must know the color of the bridesmaid dresses before she comes in for flowers," Sepielli explains. But that doesn't mean that you should go for a monochromatic look. "Certain colors are hard to match. Don't do dark on dark. Pop the color of the flowers with a bright color on a dark fabric, an accent color."

★ **GREEN TIP:** Pick flowers that are in season. Sure, you can have tulips in July if you fly them in, but do you really want carbon emissions to be the one thing from your wedding day that lasts forever?

★★★★★

**SIN III:** Getting married in Savannah means that your options for your wedding include not only hotels and clubhouses, but sweeping vistas, stunning gardens and magnificent oceanfronts. Savannah has an array of outdoor locations, and many couples opt to say "I Do" in the great outdoors, with nothing to separate them from the beauty of nature.

Of course, that means that there's nothing to separate them from the other things that come along with the great outdoors of Savannah, like bugs, tourists and the doomsday

scenario of brides everywhere—rain.

Mike Davis is the general manager of **Low Country Event Rentals**, and he has helped couples with wedding day rentals including tables, chairs, tents and dance floors. He tells couples he works with to keep a few simple

## Sin #3:

### WIND POWER AND APRIL SHOWERS (OR SECURING A FAIL-SAFE LOCATION)

things in mind. "The first thing, is the space big enough for the party you're planning?" Davis asks. Just because it's outside doesn't mean the space use is unlimited. If you have already fallen head over heels for that walled garden, then be sure to plan your guest list accordingly.

Davis says a tent is always a good idea for an outdoor wedding. For one thing, it creates a specific destination for your guests. "A tent says, 'This is where the party is taking place,'" Davis explains. "It's also peace of mind in inclement weather, so that you are covered if a

storm blows in. It's a good insurance policy."

But a wedding tent is far more than a giant umbrella. "It's like moving a ballroom out of a hotel and into the space where you want to have your wedding," Davis says. "It's a really nice showpiece. It's a blank canvas, you can add anything you want: Do lighting, wash out the top, decorate the poles."

Even with the tent in place, there are potential perils to an outdoor wedding. Davis recalls an incident at a wedding reception held on a golf course. "Remind the grounds keeper to cut off the sprinklers," he says bracingly. And while your tent will keep you dry during a gentle summer rain, your wedding day is probably not the best time to test the purported 70 mph wind rating. If you are getting married during hurricane season (June 1 to November 30), you may want to have an actual indoor location as a back-up plan.

Bottom line, says Davis, "If you're a Type A personality, then maybe an outdoor ceremony isn't for you. People are there to have fun. As important as it is to you, no one is going home worrying about it."

★ **GREEN TIP:** If you have your reception in a beautiful outdoor location, remember that



the earth will thank you not to leave your wedding day detritus behind. If you are having a beach wedding, rent ashtrays for the smokers and be sure and provide plenty of trash receptacles. Take a tip from the original girls in green, Girl Scouts. They leave a place cleaner than they found it. The green bride and groom should too.

★★★★★

**SIN IV:** The wedding reception is a chance for the bride and groom to greet their guests and show off that famous Southern Hospitality. And whether you're thinking 'Eat, Drink and Be Merry,' or 'Nibble, Nip and Make Nice,' you want to plan your menu accordingly.

Ashley Field is the Catering Sales Manager for **Savor Savannah Catering by SMG**. She has helped couples plan the perfect event for 50 to 500 guests at venues like the Jepson Center and the Owens-Thomas House. Field says that how

you serve your reception food can be every bit as important as what you serve.

## Sin #4:

**CHEAP WINES AND BUFFET LINES (OR CHOOSING A MENU THAT WON'T TURN THE STOMACH)**

According to Field, the old-school buffet table with the food choices all

in a row, (and the resulting buffet table line) is "kind of out." Instead,

couples are opting for stations: Shrimp and grits stations, ham or roast beef carving stations and mashed potato stations, to name a few. There is also a new twist on the beverage service. In addition to the standard bar, couples may go for a martini bar or a frappuccino bar. Field explains, "It keeps flow moving, it's a lot more fun, people aren't confined to their seats." Think of it as the food court of wedding receptions.

Another trend is to serve snack-sized portions of the couple's favorite comfort foods. These "mini" versions of burgers, hot dogs or macaroni and cheese in parmesan cups are usually served at the end of the reception as the partygoers start to get the munchies.

Whatever you choose, don't fall into the trap of forgetting to eat at your own wedding. You painstakingly chose that truffle risotto; don't just gaze longingly at it as you thank your Aunt Edna for making the trip to Savannah. If you really are too busy greeting your guests to sit down and enjoy your dinner, Field suggests you ask your caterer to wrap up dinner for two and send it along to your hotel.

Whether you go for a seven-course dinner or appetizers and punch, the dessert of choice for most couples is still the wedding cake. **Minette Rushing's Custom Cakes** is like fantasyland for the bride who has visions of sugar-spun roses dancing in her head. Rushing has been making cakes in Savannah for more than ten years. "It started as a hobby, grew into a business, then a retail space," Rushing says, indicating the interior of the bakery on Hodgson Memorial Drive. Rushing says that the brides who come to her are looking for something different than the standard wedding cake. "We try to make something unique for each bride," she explains. The "hot cakes" for 2008 will be cakes with clean lines, square cakes and cakes frosted in pale tones accented with splashes of vibrant color.

There are as many options for the actual pastry as there are for the decorations. Chocolate cake is now a popular choice, as are fillings such as mouse, pastry cream or fruit curd. Also, more brides are choosing fondant frosting, which gives cakes a sleek, polished look.



Not so hot? According to Rushing, the oh-so-cute cupcake trend is on the wane, as are the dizzily-pitched "whimsical" cakes and sugar-spun decorative monograms (*so* 2006).

★ **GREEN TIP:** Try and find a caterer who is committed to buying local produce and seafood. The food choices will be fresher, and you will reduce the fuel needed to bring the food to your table. Also, talk to your caterer about ways to freeze or donate anything that isn't eaten. After all, leftovers are the original recyclables.

★★★★★

**SIN V:** Subdued or raucous, elegant or electric, your wedding day is a celebration. Your music sets the tone for everything from the walk down the aisle to the last dance of the evening. If your wedding is a movie starring you and the love of your life, then your wedding day music is your soundtrack.

Gregory Cross of Crosstown DJ thinks that music selection is one of the most important decisions a bride and groom will make.

"People don't remember anything but the music," Cross says.

"If they had a good time dancing and had fun, that's what they will remember." And music isn't just the dance party. Many couples

## Sin #5:

**ELECTRIC SLIDE AND LOSS OF PRIDE  
(OR ENSURING YOUR GUESTS ARE ON  
THEIR FEET, NOT IN THEIR SEAT)**

are now picking songs to play throughout the reception to mark special moments. One trend Cross has seen is couples choosing individual theme songs to be played as members of the bridal party or sets of parents are introduced at the reception.

The Sapphire Bullets of Pure Love is a 13-piece R&B band from Thunderbolt. Phillip McDonald, the band's bass player and musical director, has played at his share of weddings. "We do a lot of standards; we can do two hours of that. We can make recommendations, help read the crowd. We play until someone tells us to stop. If the dance floor's full we'll keep playing."

For the reception, the debate of band versus DJ is truly one for the ages. How do you know if you want a stage full of live jams or the versatility of a one-man jukebox?

McDonald has some straightforward advice: "Spend as much money as you can on entertainment."

Lead singer Tim Love agrees. "That's what turns it into a party."

Cross says that a DJ is better able to concentrate on making sure that everything that needs to happen, happens. He puts it this way: "A DJ is more personalized,

## Top 5:

### WORST WEDDING SONGS

*As selected by the Sapphire Bullets of Pure Love*

- I. "This Masquerade" by George Benson, Leon Russell
- II. "White Wedding" by Billy Idol
- III. "Rehab" by Amy Winehouse
- IV. "Me and Mrs. Jones" by Billy Paul
- V. Anything by Michael Jackson



they don't have to worry about their instruments or the next song."

He also points out that with a DJ, "you have the original artist, not someone trying to sound like Mick Jagger."

One thing they all agree on, whether you go live or pre-recorded. "Never use a friend—always hire a professional," says McDonald. After all, your cousin may have a ton of music on his computer, but do you really want to cut your cake to the 22-minute version of Stairway to Heaven?

★ **GREEN TIP:** Many couples want to share their favorite wedding day songs with their guests. But instead of burning 200 CDs (and running up that electric bill) post your music to your wedding website.

★★★★★

**SIN VI:** Julie Musselman is the President and CEO of **Hostess City Celebrations**. She has been in the event planning business for fourteen years, and has helped more than 120 couples navigate their way down the aisle.

Musselman says that a wedding planner can be a good choice for couples who find themselves with limited time or experience: "People who are planning a large event and want to invest in the success of that event; people whose personal commitments limit their time; people

who may not live in the same city as their family; or people who are going through a lot of life transitions as they are getting married."

She says that

Savannah continues to be a popular destination for weddings. "It's the ideal in

## *Sin #6:* WEDDING CRASHERS AND OTHER DISASTERS (OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LEAVE IT TO THE EXPERTS)

Southern charm and hospitality," she explains. And even for couples who call Savannah home, the trend in weddings is to create a unique event built around the individuality and personality of the couple. "You see a blending of traditions, regions, countries, faiths," Musselman points out. Some of the ways in which brides and grooms put their personal stamp on their event is with personalized table names at the reception, homemade or local items in the gift bags for out of town guests, or planned activities for the morning of the wedding like walking tours or mini-wedding golf tournaments.

Musselman does advise engaged couples to avoid a few all-too-common mistakes. "You need to know the budget from the beginning, then decide what's most important," she says. "You wouldn't take off from here to Birmingham without a road map." She suggests sitting down with both sets of parents and getting everyone's expectations and financial picture from the start. And she urges brides to include their future in-laws in the planning. "It can go a long way in building relationships. It really isn't all about the bride."

Her no-nonsense, tough love advice to brides having nightmares of wedding day disasters?

"Go back to the checklist—don't revisit decisions you've already made. If you picked purple, then it's purple...Delegate tasks to the people who love you—they're not giving away awards for Super Bride..."

Try your best to enjoy your engagement. You'll never be engaged again, and it's exciting."

And above all, she cautions, remember that your guests love and support you. "They're coming for you, not the centerpieces."

★ **GREEN TIP:** Marry for love, stay married for the earth. Studies show that



**On Sally:** Ivory empire waist gown, [\$2,800], **Vera Wang**; BleuBelle Bridal. Blister pearl ring, [\$113], **Zia**. Miniature rose and crystal hair accessories, price upon request, created by Loren Laney. Flowers provided Kiwi Fleur. **On Leighton:** Black lapel tux, price upon request, Ralph Lauren; John B. Rourke. Pink and black satin scarf, [\$5], **Jo-ann Fabrics and Crafts**. **On Cara Sandt:** Carriage Tours of Savannah uniform. **On Chantel:** Ivory and charcoal chiffon gown, [\$5,590], **Vera Wang**, BleuBelle Bridal. Ivory netting veil with butterfly pins, by Loren Laney. **On Colin:** Barrington tux, price upon request, **Simons Formal Wear**.

married households consume far less energy per person than single ones.

★★★★★

**SIN VII:** When you are planning your wedding day, you might overlook the teeny tiny detail of actually getting to your ceremony and reception sites. Sure, you could drive yourself, but do you really want to be circling the squares in your wedding gown, eyes peeled for a ten-hour meter?

A better option is to hire transportation to drive you to the ceremony and reception. **Geoff Albert** is the owner of **Classic Tours**, a service that specializes in chauffeur-driven classic cars of the "Big Fin" era. These pristine Cadillac convertibles are often hired for the entire wedding day, to take the bride and her father to the church and then drive the happy couple to the reception and afterwards to their hotel.

If you are looking for an entrance worthy of a princess bride, consider the classic Savannah mode of transport: The horse drawn carriage. **Cara Sandt**, owner of **Carriage Tours of Savannah**, says they offer two different choices

for couples on their wedding day. The vis a vis (in French, "face to face") is a white carriage that seats up to four. "We can pick up the bride, her father and a couple of attendants and deliver them to the site of the ceremony," Sandt explains. The carriage can then serve as a

## Sin #7:

### PARKING METERS AND FOUR-WHEELERS (OR LESSONS ON PULLING UP TO THE ALTAR IN STYLE)

"getaway" for the bride and groom after the ceremony.

"They could also make use of the Cinderella carriage," Sandt adds. True to its name, this delicate, white wrought-iron coach would put a fairy godmother out of business. "There's a driver and a footman who rides on the back; it's for a much more formal wedding, for people who really want to make a statement."

Your white wedding wheels come with the

requisite white horse and a driver in formal attire.

Sandt does remind couples to avoid a common mistake, "not having an alternate plan in case of bad weather. If there's a thunderstorm you don't want to be sitting on a carriage."

★ **GREEN TIP:** If you have a large number of guests, consider hiring group transportation to take them to and from the ceremony and reception site. It's fuel efficient, plus that way you don't have to worry that any of your out of town guests will get lost and end up driving into the marsh (which is bad for the guest and the marsh).

*And they lived happily ever after...*