

26 Ways to Personalize Your Wedding

Unique ideas to make your wedding unforgettable

Congratulations on your engagement!

Planning a wedding is a labor of love- so much time and energy goes into it, from deciding on the location and guest list to finding the perfect flowers and invitations.

While those things do set the tone for the wedding, it is the ***special touches*** that get the most attention from your guests and make a difference between them simply enjoying the wedding or remembering it for years to come!

You've probably been to many weddings- what do you remember about each one?

When I think back to weddings I've attended, they were all special because I was invited to witness the union- and I was happy to be there. But it was the small things that I remember most, like the unexpected first dance number that surprised all the guests, or the delicious homemade cookies given out as favors.

So when I got engaged I knew I wanted to have more than the standard cookie-cutter wedding.

I wanted everything about the day to reflect “us” – both as individuals and as a couple. I spent hours looking through websites, magazines and books for inspiration, tracking down those little details to incorporate that would put a unique stamp on our wedding day.

To save you some time, I’ve included some of the best ideas I found for my own wedding as well as ideas I’ve collected in the years of helping couples with their invitations and stationery.

It doesn’t matter if you are planning a wedding for 30 guests or 300, you can incorporate these special touches to express who you are as a couple and your love for each other.

When your guests see the thought and care you’ve put into the details of your wedding, the experience will be unforgettable. They will be so touched and impressed that you’ll hear compliments long after the wedding is over.

And the best part...many of them are easy and inexpensive!

Not all of these ideas will be right for you. But even incorporating one or two will give your guests insight to you as a couple and allow them to fully be a part of your big day.

So here they are...26 Ways to Personalize Your Wedding:

1. **Share your love story.** How did the two of you meet? Do you have any cute or funny stories to share? How and when did you get engaged? (*Yes, you may have announced your engagement but how many people really know the details?*) Telling the story of your relationship is a great way for the guests to emotionally connect with you as a couple. You can incorporate these details into your vows, note them in your ceremony programs or use your wedding website to share these stories with your guests.
2. **Choose a fun song for the introduction music or first dance.** Have you seen those YouTube videos of couples breaking out in unique first dance numbers? (*If not, check them out!*) Even if that is not for you, playing a fun song to introduce you at the reception will set the mood for the evening.
3. **Name your tables.** Instead of traditional numbers, name your tables to coincide with your interests or theme. Movie buffs may want to use favorite movie titles, or do what I did and name each table after a place that is special to your relationship (where you got engaged, your honeymoon location, your college, etc.) If you go this route you may want to have a diagram of the room layout at the entrance table to help your guests find their seat.

4. **Include a song request line on your RSVP cards.** Let guests request their favorite songs ahead of time so you can customize the playlist with your DJ or band- this is a sure way to get people up and moving!

5. **Turn your interests into your wedding theme.** Using a theme can put a unique stamp on your wedding day. Do you have a shared hobby? If you love to travel you could send postcard save-the-dates, name your tables after places you've visited and give travel journals as favors. Your wedding is a celebration of who you are as a couple, so let your interests and personalities show!

6. **Label your wedding dress.** Have your names and wedding date embroidered into the lining of your dress. I chose blue thread and used this as my 'something blue'.

7. **Announce birthdays or anniversaries.** We got married the day after my grandmother's birthday and surprised her by singing to happy birthday at the reception and presenting her with flowers. It was a special moment for her and she got to celebrate with friends and family. You could also announce wedding anniversaries or other milestones. Honoring the big moments in your guest's lives gives them a deeper connection to yours.

8. **Use a unique guestbook.** There are so many options: create a custom photo book using your engagement photos or choose a special coffee table book for the guests to choose a page to sign. Ask guests to write 'wedding wishes' for the two of you and place them in a wish bowl or have your florist create a wish tree arrangement from branches where guests can hang their wishes.
9. **Involve your pets.** You've probably heard of using your dog as ring bearer, but for those who can't (or don't want to) go that route you can still involve your pets. Have them be a part of your engagement photo session or include them along with the family photos on your website or reception slideshow.
10. **Create a custom aisle runner.** Personalize your walk down the aisle with a custom painted runner featuring your names and wedding date. You could also add a special verse or quote.
11. **Have the guests 'bless the rings'.** This works best for weddings with fewer than 100 guests. Put the rings in a pouch and have your officiant announce that you will be passing the rings to the guests and ask each one to silently give well wishes for your marriage. Have your vocalist sing during this time. Assign an usher or friend to oversee the rings and bring them back to the best man before the vows. This is a great way to get the guests involved during the ceremony.

12. **Display photos of your relatives weddings.** Set up a table at the reception and display framed wedding photos of your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings, etc. Include a card with their names and wedding date. Not only does it provide some family history for your guests, but you will have the photos to display in your own home for years to come!
13. **Create a photo slideshow.** At the reception, show pictures of you through the years- it is a nice way to give your guests insight into how you got to where you are today. To make it even more personal, see if you can find a past photo of you with every guest and include it in the display.
14. **Dedicate a song to your parents.** This is a nice way to pay tribute to them on your day. You could also choose to play their wedding songs or surprise them with a thank you message at the reception.
15. **Give guests a meaningful favor.** Whether it is a donation to your favorite charity, a fun item that reflects your personalities or a something delicious to eat, favors are more special when they have meaning to you or your guests. (FYI- If you want to serve your grandmother's traditional cookies but don't have time to bake them yourself, ask your local bakery if they can make them using your recipe. One of my clients did this and they turned out great).

16. **Recreate a detail from your parent's wedding.** I love the idea of creating new traditions, so when I saw a photo of my mother's wedding bouquet and noticed the 'love knots' in the ribbon, I decided to incorporate that detail into my own bouquet- using one knot for each year we had been together.

17. **Give guests an activity.** Create custom coloring pages for the kids or have guests write wishes or predictions (how many kids you'll have, etc.) to put in a time capsule to open on a future anniversary. Photo booths at the reception are also a unique way to get the guests involved and having fun!

18. **Use custom labels.** A small detail that ties everything together- use custom labels with your monogram or names and wedding date for the favors, wine bottles on the tables and guest welcome bags for a coordinated look.

19. **Serve a signature drink.** Do you have a favorite cocktail? Offer it as your signature wedding drink. It can also incorporate your wedding colors or be inspired by your honeymoon location (*sea breeze anyone?*). A bonus is that many times couples can reduce the bar tab by offering only a signature drink along with beer and wine instead of a full bar. Keeping the reception dry? A non-alcoholic drink works just as well!

20. **Write your own vows.** Make the ceremony totally personalized by including meaningful song lyrics, special poems or other words that reflect you as a couple.

21. **Display memorial candles.** Honor those who aren't there to celebrate with you by lighting candles and displaying them at the reception. Note their names and relationship to you on a card next to the candle or honor them in the wedding program.

22. **Serve a groom's cake.** This cake is served in addition to the traditional wedding cake at the reception and incorporates his interests in a fun way (his favorite sports team, hobby, etc). Another option is to use this idea for the rehearsal dinner cake and incorporate a shared hobby or interest.

23. **Hire an artist for the day.** One of my clients hired an artist to paint the reception while it was happening- I thought this was such a unique idea! (A bonus is that now they have custom artwork to hang in their home.) Another option is to hire a caricature artist to draw portraits of the guests during cocktail hour for a fun keepsake.

24. **Repeat a pattern or detail.** For example, if you have a pretty beadwork or lace pattern on your dress, ask your baker to recreate the design on the wedding cake.

25. **Write each other a love letter.** You can do this before the wedding and present them privately on the wedding day, or if you are so inclined, incorporate them into your vows or read them to each other at the reception.

26. **Explain all the special touches.** You've spent time arranging all the details, but some may not be so obvious to your guests (like the beautiful heirloom bracelet from your grandmother you are wearing as your "something borrowed" or that your aunt made the cookie favors from a family recipe). So explain them to your guests in the program or on your wedding website, it will bring even more meaning to the day and honor those who helped with the planning.

Remember, the key to making your wedding unforgettable is choosing things that reflect "you" and express the love you have for each other. No matter what, your guests will be touched that you wanted them to be a part of your wedding day.

I hope that you found some of these ideas useful to make your wedding even more special!

- Brenna Catalano Rhoades

P.S. Have a great idea that you want to share? I'd love to include it on this list. Send me an email at brenna@bcdesignstudio.com