

Wedding Venue

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Picking right venue requires an early start

■ County offers diverse locations to celebrate a wedding.

BY STACY HOPE ALLEVINE
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

So, you've chosen who you're going to spend the rest of your life with, but like one song says "you've only just begun." The next major choice, after the bride or groom, is your choice of venue. Most wedding coordinators agree that this is one choice that should be made early.

"The most important thing is to start as early as you can," says Diane George, owner and head coordinator of Covenant Weddings in Clinton. George, a coordinator for the past 20 years, suggests that the first thing a couple should do once they've hired a coordinator is to book their site.

But how exactly does one choose a site? Patti Wilson of Smooth Weddings in Germantown advises couples to take both the ambiance and the look of a site into consideration before settling on a venue.

Newton White Mansion in Mitchellville possesses both of these qualities. Boasting a glass-encased atrium overlooking Enterprise Golf course, the mansion can accommodate both indoor and outdoor weddings. And for those who want to have their proverbial wedding cake outside and eat it too, Newton White Mansion is a great choice.

"It's a win-win situation," George says about the mansion. "In case it rains they have an atrium with floor to ceiling windows that give you the illusion of being outside."

Shelby Tuck-Horton of Exquisite Expressions and Events in Lanham also touts the benefits of the mansion.

"Usually mansions can't fit a large amount of people," Tuck-Horton says. "In Newton White Mansion you can get more than 200 and have the wedding and the reception in one place."

But if you have your heart set on going to the chapel cause you're going to get married, you'll still be able to do it even if you aren't a member of any specific church or denomination. The Memorial Chapel, located on the University of Maryland College Park campus is non-denominational and open to members of the community. This picturesque Chapel accommodates 300 comfortably and contrary to popular myth you don't have to book it four years in advance. Six months to a year will suffice to secure this beautiful site.

Speaking of beautiful sites,

Camelot of Upper Marlboro — once the sanctuary of Evangel Cathedral — has become a popular venue for wedding receptions in Prince George's County.

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bymarriott.com is a sight for your sore wedding planning eyes especially if you're planning to have your wedding and or reception at a hotel. You can plan the ceremony, reception and even book a honeymoon suite through Marriott. The wedding package at the Greenbelt Marriott includes hors d'ouevres, a four-course meal, the wedding cake, a five-hour open bar plus a complimentary sleeping room for the bride and groom. The Inn and Conference Center located in Adelphi is also a Marriott property and is a very elegant venue for either a wedding, reception or both.

With more than 40 years in the business, Martin's Crosswinds in Greenbelt is a trusted and popular venue.

"All the Martin's properties are very beautiful," Wilson says. "They're very well run and they almost have it down to a science."

Karen Baker, an event planner at Crosswinds says what their clients appreciate most is their customer service.

"From the time they sign the contract to the time they leave the brides and grooms say that they were treated very well," Baker says.

A relatively new site is the newly renovated Camelot of Upper Marlboro. As the home of Evangel Cathedral's first sanctuary, the Camelot has since been turned into an event coordinator's heaven. Baker Johnson's daughter has held her wedding reception there. And if you're soon to be wed you won't want miss the Radio One Bridal Show being held there on Sunday.

"It's starting to get popular," says Minister Jacqueline Harther, the senior sales manager at the wedding specialist at the Camelot. Harther advises couples to book a minimum of six months in advance.

But if all these choices are overwhelming, consider taking Wilson's advice.

"Take a break from wedding planning, and focus on dates without discussing the wedding," Wilson says.



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SCHAUN SAYS

Gifts

What do you need for your new home? List those in your registry.

Keep in mind your guests' budgets. Have a wide range of gift items listed, from the affordable to very expensive.

Don't be limited in the number of stores you register at. Some couples register at as many as four or five stores to give their guests plenty of options. Others find everything they need in one or two stores.

Some of the best gifts are the ones the couple did not expect. Allow your guests the freedom to forego the registries if they think they know the perfect gift for you.

Schawn Morgan at Affordable Splendor Wedding & Event Consultants in Glenn Dale can be reached at 301-805-1600 or www.affordsplendor.com.

