

# THE PLANNER

All you need to design the day  
of your dreams

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### RENT CONTROL

The idea of “something borrowed” gets supersized when you start hunting down rental items for your celebration—and these days, chairs are just the beginning. From the unique and quirky to the strictly practical, there are more choices than ever. Turn the page for the lowdown on finding the best loaners.



BRYAN GARDNER, CHAIRS (PARTYRENTALS.COM)

## ALL ABOUT RENTALS

Whether you're seeking forks or fire pits, these tips will help you create a singular look for your ceremony, reception, and after-party.



*A fully outfitted seating area, like the one above, is among the most requested.*

**Assess your needs.** If you're having a wedding at home or in a park or backyard, you may have to bring in everything—from chairs and tables to generators, bathrooms, and tents. Most full-service venues and event spaces, on the other hand, supply all the basics, plus linens and tableware. "That doesn't mean you have to use them, though," says Sarah Westervelt, of New England Country Rentals, in Hanover, Massachusetts. If you want to order those essentials, see if your venue will charge a fee for working with outside goods (some do, some don't), then peruse the wares of local and national businesses, like Classic Party Rentals and Party Rental Ltd. If you see something you love, ask your caterer to rent it—she might get a better deal. As a general guide, you'll spend about 50¢ per plate, \$5 for a standard chiavari chair, and \$10 for a linen tablecloth.

**Think big for basics, small for special effects.** The larger national

operations are best for stocking up on the usual suspects, including tables, chairs, and tents (they generally carry a wide, and deep, selection). Smaller local companies sometimes specialize in single categories, like lighting or antique china, and typically deliver only within their area. The Vintage Type, a rental shop in Minneapolis, for example, has an impressive collection of vintage napkin sets. Just remember: If you can dream it, you can probably rent it—and for a fraction of the cost of buying it. "People are often surprised by the quality and style of what's available," says Megan Proby, owner of 12th Table, an event-design and rental company in Nashville that carries specialty items, such as fur throws and leather-topped coffee tables.

**Spend wisely.** With so much variety, it's easy to get carried away. But put your dollars toward items guests will actually touch, like napkins and glasses, suggests Proby, and scale back on things that blend into the background, such as tablecloths. Keep in mind, less is more: "Beautiful foundation pieces, like sofas, are far more important to the overall aesthetic than a thousand tiny knickknacks," she says.

**Get it in writing.** Sign a contract that clearly spells out the drop-off and pickup times, who is responsible for washing dishes before returning them, and the company's policy on broken or stained goods. "Damage is common. Many a guest has stumbled, merlot first, into the white linen couch," says Proby. "Usually the client pays a replacement fee only if an item can't be repaired." And that's peace of mind when the wine starts flowing.

### HITCH A HIGH-STYLE RIDE

*Limos are sooo last century. For your getaway, have **Opoli** roll up with a luxury BMW, Mercedes, or Tesla town car ([opoli.com](http://opoli.com)). Unlike other car-service apps, it allows you to reserve in advance and name your price, ensuring a smooth trip to happily-ever-after.*

### ELEMENTS OF SURPRISE

*Spruce up your space with a one-of-a-kind loaner.*



#### Unique Markers

Use an unadorned driftwood arbor, or dress one up with flowers for a lush look (\$200, [newenglandcountryrentals.com](http://newenglandcountryrentals.com)).



#### Country Charm

The humble wine barrel is multiuse décor at its best: Place two side by side and top with a wooden plank for a bar, or set out several as drink tables (\$25 each, [yourinvitedpartyrentals.com](http://yourinvitedpartyrentals.com)).



#### Fun Extras

Bring in props for portraits that speak to your personalities—like a pair of classic bikes if you love to cycle ("Karissa" bicycle, \$65, [foundrentals.com](http://foundrentals.com)).



#### Mood Makers

With an outdoor affair, let the good times roll past the last dance by chilling with guests around a fire pit (\$35, [yeahrentals.com](http://yeahrentals.com)).

# ALL ABOUT BACKYARD BASHES

Partying en plein air—and chez vous—comes with its own set of challenges. Bicoastal event designer **Lyndsey Hamilton** shares how to play up your home advantage.

**Set a realistic budget.** “Hosting a wedding at your home, or someone else’s, is intimate and personal, but, contrary to popular belief, it’s unlikely to save you money. That’s because almost everything has to be brought in. Unlike for a venue with an existing infrastructure, you have to think about securing things like refrigeration, a caterer-friendly kitchen, and portable restrooms, all of which carry extra costs.”

**Anticipate rain.** “Unless you’re marrying in a place like Napa Valley, where it only rains about three days a year, reserving a tent is a must. My policy is, if there’s a 30 percent or higher chance of precipitation five days out, we’ll plan on putting it up. Tent-company reps can also help estimate how many people you can comfortably host, and ensure that the tent is placed close enough to power and water sources—a hose doesn’t count! If that’s not possible, you’ll need a generator and portable water.”

**Prepare for sun.** “A tent can also be useful on a bright and hot day to provide air-conditioning and shade. Station waiters inside to welcome

everyone with iced tea and water. In a warm climate, avoid scheduling the event for the hottest part of the day (usually early afternoon). Instead, plan to have your cocktail hour near dusk—guests can mingle while watching the sun go down—and work backward from there.”

**Choose alfresco-friendly food and flowers.** “Consider catering options that can be prepared outdoors, like grilled fish and beef. For flowers, hardier is better. Work with your florist, who can suggest ones that won’t wilt in heat and humidity, such as orchids and potted plants. Have the grass cut short the day before so blades aren’t poking up through the dance floor, and, if guests will be walking on the lawn, put footwear recs on your website.”

**Keep guests comfortable.** “It’s always a nice touch to set out baskets of hand fans, plastic heel covers, and bug spray. For our events, we also usually spray the yard two days before, and surround the tent with citronella candles on the day of.”

**Prioritize parking.** “First, contact city hall about any parking regula-



*Reserve a tent early, advises Hamilton. “In summer, tent companies often sell out—don’t wait until the month before.”*

tions. Then, spend the money to hire valets; they’ll ensure the parking operation runs smoothly. And don’t forget your neighbors: Let them know your plans in advance so nobody has a conniption on your day. If they’re friendly types, have them over for cocktails and ask if they’d be willing to offer use of their driveway or yard. Better yet, invite them to the wedding!”

## Lyndsey Hamilton’s WAYS TO SHINE

Light up your life (and your wedding day) with her favorite fixtures.



**“Tangled” chandelier**, from \$285, schoolhouseelectric.com. “Suspended above the head table, this is an easy way to make it feel a little more special for the bride and groom.”



**Tom Dixon tube light**, \$370, abchome.net. “Dangling lights over the bar lends a nice, ambient glow.”



**“Meredith” brass lantern**, \$23.50, potterybarn.com. “Line a path with these for an elegant way to lead guests to the after-party.”



**Insulator light**, \$250, revolvefurnitureco.com. “Vintage insulators, made into pendants, are chic and simple without being overly industrial.”

# BUILD A BETTER WEDDING WEBSITE

The goal of every good site: Give guests the info they need to prepare for your affair—and drum up excitement in the process.



**Launch It Right.** Start thinking about your site after you've chosen a venue. That way, you'll have some idea of the look you're going for, which can inform the website design. Setting it up on the early side also means you can include the URL on save-the-dates, if sending.

### Get Personal ... to a Point.

Your site will be yet another reflection of you two as a couple, but that doesn't mean posting a dissertation-length bio of yourselves. While it's tempting to gush about your love—getting married, after all, is the sweetest expression of it—showing a little restraint means those details you do highlight will resonate even more.

**Play Up Your Palette.** We've said it before, and we'll say it again: Use the same colors—and fonts for that matter—that will also appear on stationery and signage. As for pho-

tos, what you upload need not be professionally shot, but do choose ones that fit your site's scheme and don't have distracting backgrounds.

**Cover the Basics.** In a perfect world, wedding invitations are kept forever. In reality, most are thrown

away well before the big day rolls around—and that's exactly why it's important to put the who, what, when, and where on your site.

**Add the Details.** There's no need to pad envelopes with superfluous information if you don't have the budget for it. Print your URL on enclosure cards, then guests can go straight to the site for anything relevant: directions to the venue, dress codes for all events, hotel and babysitting info, a curated list of things to do in the area—you get the idea.

**Link to Your Registry.** By now, you know it's bad etiquette to mention your wish list on the invites, which is exactly why you should online. Not only will invitees expect to find it there, but you'll be making their lives easier by supplying links that allow them to click through and shop.

**Let Guests R.S.V.P.** Most sites let loved ones respond to the wedding and all the ancillary events, too. Even better, if you're hosting activities that don't include everyone, you can customize your site so only the chosen can see that info.

## Site Lines

With dozens of website builders to choose from, it can be hard to know where to start. Here, a few of our favorites.

### APPY COUPLE

**Cost:** One-time fee starting at \$35  
**Standout feature:** As its name suggests, this service simultaneously builds an app based off your desktop design, meaning guests can download it to instant-message one another.

### EWEDDING

**Cost:** Free, but a \$7/month upgrade gets you more bells and whistles

**Standout feature:** Ask guests where you should honeymoon, or test them on how well they know you. There are polls and quizzes galore.

### WEDDING JOJO

**Cost:** Free for basic service; \$15/month includes more themes plus a personalized domain name  
**Standout feature:** Some of the most sophisticated and beautiful templates out

there, with what seems like limitless ways to customize each one.

### WEDUARY

**Cost:** Free; more options for a one-time fee of \$20  
**Standout feature:** Integrates your Facebook profile and those of guests, who can then get to know one another before the wedding.