



Nouveau *Nuptials*

No longer a modest affair, couples today are taking the plunge in style. What is really new about weddings today is not the price tag but the preoccupation with creating a personalised ceremony.

Beautifully set tables with white floral centrepieces and an intricately decorated wedding cake with marzipan flown in from France are mentally intertwined with crystalline wine glasses that glitter along with silver cutlery and fragile white china. Theme weddings are always interesting, from the invitations and music to the reception setup and favours. Saying "I Do" in a unique, expressive and enduring way is in vogue as stylish young couples spurn the classic and lust the exotic.

Gone are the days of off-the-rack weddings. Wedding planners are turning out to be the perfect one-stop shop for truly unique theme weddings. Hannah Chong, a wedding specialist at Heaven's Gift, says more and more couples are requesting a wedding completely different from everyone else's.

The venue is at the heart of every ceremony, a stately Shangri-La ballroom demonstrates the timeless grandiosity of the occasion, a private beach front in Sentosa could show off the romantic free spirit of the couple, while the lush greenery of Fort Canning conveys the sacredness of the union. Whether planning a wedding with cultural details or an exciting unconventional one, a wedding planner is a great place to go for showstopping ideas.

A SOUTH AFRICAN AFFAIR

A recent concept features luxurious themed affairs from Japanese, Moroccan or Greek for couples who want the tangible passage from the wedding ceremony to their honeymoon destination. Giving guests good experiences often require less money.



HEAVEN'S GIFT

The simplicity of the wedding enhanced the sacredness of this ceremony.



SHANGHAI HOTEL



HEAVEN'S GIFT

So what exactly is a theme wedding, and what does it entail? According to Hannah, it expresses a central theme that carries through at least four of the six basic aspects of a wedding: the stationery, favours, venue, setting, wedding attire and food. "Just having wedding invites that feature elements of the beach does not mean that you have a beach theme wedding," she adds. But how does one go about ensuring that the wedding theme is one that is truly unique to the couple?

At Heaven's Gift, this is done with a personality analysis to uncover tastes, colour preferences and expectations of the couple. Hannah also conducts interviews and explores the possibility of injecting motifs central to a couple's relationship.

Recently, a South African couple requested for a ceremony that emphasised the sanctity of marriage in reaction to the high divorce rate in South Africa. Deciding on something beautiful, spiritual and romantic, a Buddhist monastery was chosen as the venue for the vows to be exchanged.

Without de rigueur glitz and glitter, this intimate ceremony was devoid of signature bridal makeup and hairstyling and a wedding entourage big enough to fill a bus. Instead the bride arrived in a red baju kebaya, the groom in a mandarin

collared shirt, with the ceremony presided over by a minister of justice who was a Buddhist monk.

The simple and uncomplicated ceremony enhanced the beauty and significance of the occasion. By eliminating the usual facets of a full-on wedding, the principle planner, Hannah, was able to focus on the reflective nature of the couple. The wedding ceremony was infused with the most important theme: *the sacredness of marriage.*