



THE WEDDING GUIDE

PLANNING TIPS
that your wedding
suppliers want you
to know

THEIR ADVICE
to help you get
the most from
your big day



I'M NICOLA

As a documentary wedding photographer I get to people watch through my lens on the smiliest day of their life. It really is the BEST JOB EVER!

My style is unobtrusive, relaxed and candid and I prefer to keep my interference in your day to a minimum so your day is about you, not me.

I like to capture your day as it unfolds which means being able to work with whatever conditions are thrown at me.



But...

there are some times where just a little bit of tweaking during the planning stage of a wedding can make a huge difference to the smooth running of your day.

You will only have one Wedding Day. Us wedding suppliers have been to loads. So myself and a few of my favourite suppliers have these little gems to share with you to ensure you get the very best from all of us.



ONE

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LIGHT

IN ITS SIMPLEST FORM, PHOTOGRAPHY IS RECORDING LIGHT. SO WE NEED THERE TO BE ENOUGH OF IT TO ACHIEVE THE IMAGES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL WARM AND SQUIDGY INSIDE.

I know that seems obvious but really think about how many hours of daylight there are at the time of year you want to get married to make sure we can get those lovely daytime portraits that you imagine or the stunning golden hour pictures you've seen on instagram or pinterest.

Summer and early autumn weddings have their own difficulties with later sunsets.

If you want beautiful, golden hour images, then just remember to ensure that you have booked long enough coverage and that your photographer will still be there when the light is at it's best.

If they are off at 8 after your first dance then they won't be there for those pics you've dreamed of. This doesn't have to mean adding hours and expense but may mean just adjusting the photographer's start time.

FEEL CONNECTED TO YOUR VENUE

TWO

CHOOSING YOUR VENUE IS LIKE LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS OF YOUR WEDDING DAY, THE STARTING BLOCK ON WHICH YOU BUILD THE REST OF YOUR VISION.



Leigh Anne is one of the Wedding coordinators at The Bull Hotel in Wrotham who I have worked with for a few years now. Their team is excellent and weddings flow so nicely as a result. Here are her tips on making the right choices.

'When I see couples at the start of their journey they are normally looking at a few different venues and they are working out what is important to them. I think this is a really important process. I can often tell when a couple are going to book because they feel in a way connected to the venue and it shows! I think it is always best to listen to your instinct - always.

Check how much flexibility there is. It's really important to get a feel for how amenable and flexible a venue can be. Nobody wants to feel like their wedding follows a ready-made template. A wedding day is as individual and bespoke as the couple getting married and the venue should be able to reflect this. It's useful to establish how the venue responds to your ideas and requests. Don't be afraid to ask plenty of questions - the responses should give a good insight into how the venue operates.

The cost of a wedding day in the UK hit an all-time high last year so it's really important to understand what you are getting for your money. You shouldn't have to pay an unreasonable package fee for a beautiful day. We also believe that you should be paying for a quality of food and service that is never undermined. Check reviews and see if you can sample the food as well. We want to hear our wedding guests here say that it is the best wedding food they have ever eaten. That is our aim!

Make sure that you have confidence in the coordinator. A coordinator who knows their venue and their clients well, will fill you with the confidence you need to relax and enjoy your wedding on the day. Here we like to offer our couples a service where we keep in touch throughout the planning process and on the day ensure the smooth running of everything that has been imagined. We want our couples to focus only on the elements of the day that are important to them.'



THREE

START BIG, THEN GO SMALL

Make the important elements of your wedding stand out and the rest will follow.

Holly is the face behind Locate to Create, a fabulous prop hire and venue styling company. I love her work and her creativity so I asked her for her thoughts on styling.



'My best bit of advice for brides and grooms deciding how to style their wedding venue is to think about what is going to make the biggest impact. You can end up spending a lot of money on small things that don't actually get noticed on the day. Invest in items that are going to give your wedding the WOW factor.'

Where should you begin wedding planning your wedding props and styling? A top tip of mine is to make sure you think about the elements of a wedding that you have to have (or it is tradition to have) first. Get creative with those elements and go from there. Make the important elements of your wedding stand out and the rest will follow.'



FOUR

THERE JUST AREN'T ENOUGH HOURS IN THE DAY

I know you've heard it a million times.....but.....wedding days really do FLY by. Make sure you allow enough time for everything but most importantly that you have enough time to actually enjoy yourselves and relax with your guests.

Allow enough time to get from wedding to reception venues. Think about the mode of travel you are using to get there. Will the old Rolls Royce, stretch limo or double decker bus be able to negotiate the tiny country lanes to get there or will they have to take a 12 mile detour in order to reach it. Make sure it is factored in to the schedule.

Receiving lines, confetti shots, portraits and group shots can all take a little time to orchestrate so ensure you have allowed enough time for them. I recommend about 5-7 group shots in total. They can actually take up quite some time particularly at larger weddings. My advice is to allow 30 minutes and do them as soon after the ceremony as you can. Guests disappear off to the bar, jackets and ties come off, the ladies may change their shoes, guests take the opportunity to move their car or even have a lie down (yes, these all actually happen!)

My other biggest tip is to nominate a member of the wedding party to help the photographer gather the right guests for the groups. Make them someone who knows all the right faces and give them a copy of the group shot list. This role tends to fall to the Best Man but from experience, they don't always make the best helpers particularly if they are the type to be first in the queue at the bar!



FIVE

PLAY THE GAME



You have gone to the expense of booking lawn games, mini golf, giant jenga or cricket for your guests to have a fun time. But make sure you remember to have a go yourselves and actually play the games. For two simple reasons.

Firstly, you paid for them so make the most of them.

Secondly, and most importantly, they make great wedding pictures and I guarantee that if you have a go, your guests will too.

GO UNPLUGGED?

SIX

This one will really split opinion but that is my reason for including it in here. Having an 'unplugged' wedding has become more fashionable in recent years. I agree with encouraging your guests to be present in your day and not having their heads in their phones. And it can be frustrating when I'm about to take a shot and a guest steps in the way (which happens a lot).

But...many couples don't want to tell their guests they can't have their phones or cameras. In fact, I personally think it can be great to look at your guests' photographs of your wedding. After all, we photographers can't be everywhere all the time.

Just think about your feelings on the topic and recognise if you have a strong opinion either way.

That way you can prepare with a nice sign at your venue or a few lines from the celebrant if want to ask for guests not to take pictures.

If you don't mind, then happy days! You might get great moments like this one.



DON'T PUT CAKEY IN THE CORNER

SEVEN

You don't want it knocked over so you tuck it away. We see it all the time but what a shame not to be able to see your amazing cake in all its glory.

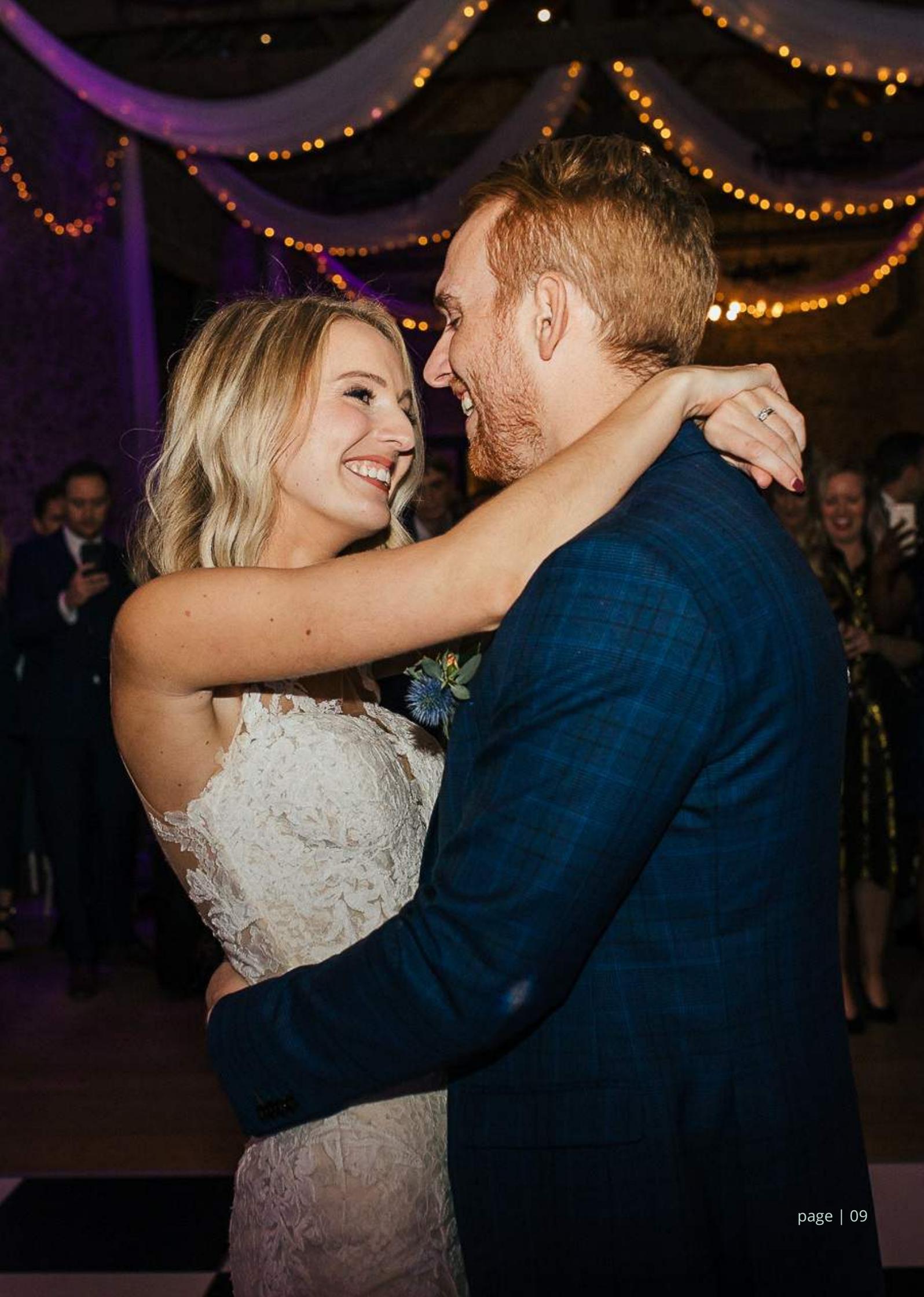
Charlene Russell from Cherry Tree Cakerie is a cake designer and baker from Buckinghamshire, specialising in modern, boho, vintage and whimsical style cakes. We have worked together a few times now and I asked her about this very thing. Here are her thoughts on it for you.



'You will have spent quite a bit of time thinking about your wedding cake and working with your cake designer to create the showstopper of your dreams but all too often, little thought is given to the set up of your cake at the venue.

The cutting of the cake will be one of the most photographed events of the day and I've seen countless images of the cake being sliced with an unattractive fire hydrant or an ugly old radiator on the wall behind it or worse, a fire door - your cake deserves better than that!

Elevating your cake on a simple stand and decorating your cake table will make sure that your cake is a part of the decor and not an afterthought and it doesn't have to be an extra cost. Some simple foliage arranged on the table with some tea lights would look beautiful or if you want to really make it a centre piece then how about a macrame backdrop, balloon installation or flower wall? The options are many, just don't put cakey in the corner!'



EIGHT

MAKE THE SECOND SONG A BANGER



Most photographers stay until the first dance and perhaps the next couple of songs. Make sure that you make the second song an absolute floor filler to get some great dancing action shots.

Phil Harvey is a DJ from 2020 Sounds. I asked for his thoughts on some great tunes for second songs to really fill the floor.

Hold My Hand - Jess Glynne
Shut Up & Dance - Walk The Moon
Marry You - Bruno Mars
I gotta Feeling - Black Eyed Peas
Signed, Sealed Delivered - Stevie Wonder

He also has these tips for you:

'Of all the weddings I have been ask to DJ, never once have I heard a couple say "I can't wait for my first dance, in fact I have been looking forward to it all day".

It's awkward and unnatural to dance in front of your family and closest friends. This is why I always ask if the couple would like their first dance on their own or if they would like me to encourage their guests to join them at a certain part of their song. It makes the couple feel more settled and takes away the stress and pressure.

Most (in fact all) couples ask for their guests to join them. This is a win-win as you get to see the couple's first dance and their guests dance with their loved one. Two great pictures for one great song. For the same reason it's important to follow up the first dance with a good party starter showing all the guests dancing and enjoying themselves.'



So there you go.....

I hope you find those little pearls of wisdom useful in your wedding planning journey. Anything to help you find your way is good, right?

I just want to say ...

THANK YOU

TO THESE AMAZING CONTRIBUTORS



Leigh Anne from The Bull Hotel, Wrotham
www.thebullhotel.com/weddings

Situated in the historic village of Wrotham, near Sevenoaks and Maidstone, this 600-year old coaching inn boasts charm and character. The Bull is a licensed wedding venue and can hold your wedding in The 14th Century Buttery function room for the civil ceremony, wedding breakfast, reception and party.

Holly at Locate to Create
www.locatetocreate.com

Locate to Create is a family run business with a passion for locating unique and quirky items to help create bespoke events and experiences. At Locate to Create we have an eclectic portfolio of items and furniture pieces that will tell a unique and individual story at your event.

Charlene from Cherry Tree Cakerie
www.cherrytreecakerie.co.uk

A wedding cake designer with a penchant for impossibly beautiful, whimsical-style wedding cakes and modern art-inspired designs. Think relaxed and free-flowing bohemian designs embellished with delicate florals and touches of detail and texture to bring your style and personalities to life.

Phil from 20-20 Sounds DJ & Photobooth
www.20-20sounds.com

20-20 Sounds provide a DJ, Photo Booth and Selfie Mirror services that make your event an occasion to remember for both you and your guests



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