



Your dream day dilemmas – solved by wedding planners  
**Susan Smith and Mark Niemierko** of Smith and Niemierko

# Planning SOS

## What are the most important things to consider when booking a band?

Ask whether they have a demo DVD so you can see them perform, and always check references from previous clients. When hiring through an agency, ensure the agent has relayed your requests for the play list and the first dance and, ideally, speak directly to a member of the band prior to your wedding. It's also important that they dress well – black tie is smart and safe. One of our favourites is uplifting funk band Madison Square. Contact them on 01372 750606 or visit [www.madisonsquare.co.uk](http://www.madisonsquare.co.uk).

## I don't want to go with sugared almonds but I'm stuck for alternative favour ideas. Can you help?

We love gift boxes of macaroons from smart Parisian pastry house Ladurée, which now has a tea room in Harrods. Available in a variety of colours, a box of four macaroons costs £6. A luxurious alternative is a 30ml bottle of perfume from Miller Harris engraved with your names. Not cheap at £85 each but very chic! Log on to the Harrods website at [www.harrods.com](http://www.harrods.com) and contact Miller Harris on 020 7221 1545 ([www.millerharris.com](http://www.millerharris.com)).

## We're planning a small wedding with just 30 close family and friends. How can we create a good atmosphere?

Intimate weddings tend to be some of the most atmospheric we have planned. Guests often feel more involved and you get a chance to chat to everyone. You can also be less traditional – how about a barbecue for an informal way to bring your guests together? Another option is afternoon tea at a lovely estate such as Marble Hill House in Richmond, Surrey, or Hipping Hall in Lancashire, which are both perfect for your number of guests. Before booking anywhere, double check the room capacity – a space that holds around 20 people more than the number of guests you're inviting is perfect. You can find out more about Marble Hill House at [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk), or go online for details about Hipping Hall at [www.hippinghall.com](http://www.hippinghall.com).

## Would it look rude if we spent our first night at a different hotel to our guests?

Not at all. Your guests will respect your decision; it's important you have time alone as newlyweds. Two of our favourite rooms for first nights are the Opus Suite at the Great John Street Hotel in Manchester, with its bathtub for two, and the Terrace Suite at London's Covent Garden Hotel, which has an adorable outside space that's perfect for sharing a romantic breakfast. Check them out at [www.greatjohnstreet.co.uk](http://www.greatjohnstreet.co.uk) and [www.firmdale.com](http://www.firmdale.com) respectively.

## We'd like to do something original for our gift list rather than going to a department store. Any ideas?

Thomas Goode now offers a bespoke service to all its customers. Originally only available to the Royal Family, the world-famous fine china shop in London's Mayfair will commission any design for bespoke pieces and china sets, and as a rough guide you should expect to pay around £45 for a dinner plate. This might seem expensive, but by having one beautiful set designed, your guests can contribute towards a memorable gift you'll always treasure. Call Thomas Goode on 020 7499 2823 or visit [www.thomasgoode.co.uk](http://www.thomasgoode.co.uk).

## We're having a marquee but with all the elements involved, the costs are escalating. Help!

Marquees are an expensive choice as you have to build your venue from scratch. This involves labour, heating, catering space, air-conditioning and sanitary arrangements before you even consider decor. One way to cut costs is to hire one company to do everything from the waste disposal and flooring to lighting and furniture, and then choose an event company who will provide the food and decorate the venue. The fewer suppliers involved, the more you save, and it cuts down on potential mistakes through miscommunication.

Let us help you with your wedding worries! Write to the address on page 23 or email [wedding@ipcmedia.com](mailto:wedding@ipcmedia.com)

