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Planning an at home wedding does not come without challenges. For starters, the planning process is more involved because you're starting from scratch; which means you'll spend lots of time coordinating wedding details.

## *Weddings at HOME*

*How to CREATE a Beautiful and Personal Event in YOUR OWN HOME*

IT'S THE PLACE YOU LOVE AND IT MAKES YOU FEEL comfortable in a way no other space can. Your home has special meaning to you, and that's what makes it such a great place to tie the knot.

TEXT BY *Kristen Castillo* | PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Hinzphoto.com*



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#### AT HOME APPEAL

"I love home weddings," says Kim McDowell of *The Event Essentials*. "It's personal, great, it's yours. It's an emotional experience—an emotional attachment."

You may find an at home wedding very appealing because it's so personal and one-of-a-kind.

"At home weddings are romantic and

With an at HOME wedding, you don't have to WORRY about competing with any other EVENT. Your wedding is center stage and you call the shots.

charming," says *Event Planner Chandra Keel*. "Whether it's the home where the bride grew up or where the couple will start their lives together, it's a sentimentally personal space that evokes warmth and intimacy."

With an at home wedding, you don't have to worry about competing with any other event. Your wedding is center stage and you call the shots.

"At home weddings are not only sentimental, but can be logistically friendly when it comes to such things as choosing any wedding date the couple wants without worrying about their space being 'booked,' avoiding decor or photography restrictions, and potentially eliminating large food and beverage minimums found at most venues and resorts," says *Amina Michele of Some Like It Classic Wedding & Event Design*.



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At home weddings also provide you with convenience and familiarity, since you already know and love the property.

### ANOTHER BONUS?

"The property, no matter where you pick, is always about personality. It's about seeing personal style at home," says McDowell. "You can do whatever you want."

### GETTING STARTED

Planning an at home wedding can be a scary idea. There's so much involved and it's not an easy task since most likely you have never planned such a large event before.

One of the biggest considerations involves balancing your guest list with your home size.

"I think a home wedding is best suited to a small event with 50 or fewer guests,"

A HOME  
wedding is best  
suited to a  
SMALL EVENT  
with 50 or  
fewer guests.

says Rosemary Worrell of *Bella Vita Weddings and Events*.

With an at home wedding, you need to think about how you can accommodate all your guests comfortably—from ceremony seating to the cocktail hour to dinner and dancing.

"You can have a black tie event at your home," says Amy Mancuso of *Amy Mancuso Distinctive Weddings*, who advises clients to consider what they want

as well as the wedding funds they have available. "Be realistic on what space you have available and what your budget is."

When budgeting for an at home wedding, be sure to factor in necessities that are typically included at traditional wedding venues.

"There is so much more to consider because you have to bring everything in—glassware, chairs, linens, bartender, music and decorations," says Mancuso.

Still, an at home wedding has lots of design potential, from lighting to color scheme. The freedom of controlling your venue is a huge advantage for brides and grooms.

"You can do whatever, whenever you want it," says Mancuso.

#### GETTING HELP

With such a long to-do list for an at home wedding, you'll need the help of a profes-



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sional wedding coordinator who can help guide your decisions, keep you on budget and allow you to enjoy the planning process with as little stress as possible.

"It's going to be easier and less stressful if you have the help," says Worrell. "Everything is easier with a little help."

Mancuso agrees, "having a consultant at a home wedding can be very valuable because there are so many details," she says. "We have vast knowledge of what you need."

For example, you may need to rent a tent, set up the ceremony site and coordinate guests' seating. These are just some of the logistics to figure out when planning your big day. Wouldn't it be nice to have help from someone who knows what needs to be done and has a plan to do it?

"A wedding coordinator can advise on such things as parking, permitting, additional lighting, generators, bathrooms, and even help cut costs on rental items so the couple stays on track with their budget," explains Michele. "Along the way, a coordinator will also help the couple with the design of the wedding, so it will contribute to the overall aesthetic and comfort of the home. For example, the coordinator may help plant flowers in flower pots to match the couple's wedding colors."

Coordinators arrive at the home days before the event to make sure things go as planned. They know you can't overlook any detail and they make sure vendor set-up and breakdown are on course.

"A wedding coordinator can foresee these issues and prepare for them so there are no surprises in the planning process, or worse, the day of the wedding," explains Keel.

#### COST CONSIDERATIONS

Home weddings are a growing trend

these days, especially for couples trying to save a few dollars. "It's becoming more popular with the economy; people are trying to do it themselves," McDowell says.

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dollars.

You might think planning an at home wedding is budget friendly, but that's not always the case, especially since you often need to pay for every element from décor to food to permits.

You may save in certain areas such as room rentals and venue liability insurance. But you'll often pay in other areas such as setup and delivery fees; paying for carpet cleaning and tile cleaning and hiring wait staff to work your event.

Remember, the basics like tables, chairs, lighting and heaters (which are usually included at many venues) are all considered extras for weddings at home.

Consultants often have professional discounts and deals they can pass along to the client. The deal isn't always a monetary discount, but sometimes extras are thrown into a package, such as additional centerpieces or chairs.

"More times than not, we can negotiate a better deal," says Mancuso, who notes that every wedding is unique and thus so are the price points.

Deal or no deal, you don't necessarily have to give up on a wedding at home

just because of your budget. "A couple may not have to spend a large portion of their budget on decor or floral, because the home of their wedding already exudes their wedding vision with trees, plants or even garden furniture," says Michele. "And although there may be unforeseen expenses such as additional tables or kitchen setup for the caterer, or a 'plan B' rain tent, a couple can't put a price on the meaningful memories they created in the comfort of 'home' on their wedding day."

#### POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

Planning an at home wedding does not come without challenges. For starters, the planning process is more involved because you're starting from scratch; which means you'll spend lots of time coordinating wedding details.

There's so much to consider, explains Worrell, who says couples need to think about "everything from are you going to rent port-a-potties or will the caterer use your kitchen?"

She continues, "Do you really have the space? What about parking? Do you have a place for the caterer? How quickly do you turn around the space from ceremony to reception?"

Aside from these practical concerns, you'll need to be creative about everything from menu plans to décor.

"Planning an at home wedding is a logistical challenge, and isn't for everyone. Nearly everything needs to be rented so that the home can be transformed into a space that provides the accommodations we would expect from a ceremony and/or reception site," says Keel. "It's an involved process, but the pay-off can be worth it. An at home wedding adds a warm, personal touch to the couple's special day—a unique touch that is special to that couple only

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and cannot be replicated when renting a location."

Not every home is right for an at home wedding. Some homes are too small, so you can consider renting a private residence which gives privacy and exclusivity in an intimate setting.

If you do want to get hitched at home, work with a coordinator to help make sure the residence is really ready for a large party.

"If you want it at your house, we'll do a site visit," says Maneuso "We'll walk the property and talk about the vision."

Whether you get hitched at your childhood home, the backyard of the home of you and your groom, or another private residence, maximize the possibilities of your special venue. Embrace the privacy, the control over details and décor, and most of all savor all the moments of your big day. ♦

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