

# Party at the house! When weddings hit home

“Are you sure you want all these people in your house?” I asked the groom’s mom when she offered to host the wedding at her Jackson Hole, Wyoming, home.

My daughter and her son were engaged. Every wedding venue we looked at was booked.

“Oh, they won’t be in the house,” she said. “We’ll keep the wedding outside.”

I’d only just met this woman over Zoom, but already I liked her practical common sense and boundaries. I need more of both.

“What about bathrooms?” I asked the obvious. I did not want to visit an outhouse or the Wyoming woods wearing a gown and high heels.

“Oh, we’ll rent one of those posh, pull-up trailers with flush toilets and sinks,” she said.

Phew! Did I mention practical?

This conversation happened six months ago. Since then and until last weekend, life has been a blender-blur of florists and photographers, dresses and dinnerware, bakers and bands, tents and tuxedos, lists and linens, and lots of check writing to pay for it all.

Apparently, according to event planners (God bless every one), we were not alone.

“I’ve noticed a big uptick in home weddings since COVID, because wedding venues are so hard to find,” said Kimball Stroud, an A-list event planner in Washington, D.C., whose clients have included Elon Musk and Hillary Clinton. “And that’s a good thing.”

A big benefit of having a home wedding is that you can pick your date, she said. “You’re not at the mercy of a venue’s calendar,



AT HOME WITH  
Marni Jameson

which often fills up a year ahead.”

Plus, sharing your home with others makes any occasion more poignant.

“A home is the first choice, by far,” Stroud said. “I tell any couple getting married to ask around to find a family member or friend who has a nice home. If you have the space and grounds, why not?”

Here’s why not: Though more personal, home weddings are not necessarily easier nor less expensive. Traditional venues, like hotels, churches or banquet halls, are turnkey. They have the tables, chairs, linens, tableware, parking, bathroom facilities, and staff.

When you host a home-based wedding, that’s all on you. If the home wedding is also out of state and outdoors, you have even more to keep you awake at night. Let me tell you.

Although rain in Jackson Hole in August is rare, the weekend of the wedding, all the town’s annual rainfall conspired to fall at once. (Insert heavy sobs.) We let go of our dreams for an outdoor wedding under a blue summer sky and a bower of flowers and resigned ourselves to lined-up chairs in the dance tent.

Thirty minutes before the ceremony, however, the skies cleared, and the sun smiled down

on the slushy grass, the processional, the vows, and the cocktail hour on the front lawn.

At dinner time, the guests migrated to the tent around back. Just when all were undercover, the skies dumped down all the rain it had been storing up. Bath-tubs of it.

And there we were, old friends and new acquaintances, all dressed up, magically surrounded by candles, flowers, great food, and grand feelings. Yes, shoes were ruined. Long dresses were muddied. But I wouldn’t have changed one detail.

While hosting a wedding or other special event at a home can be worth the trouble, here’s what to consider:

- Hire an event planner. A good wedding planner not only anticipates what you don’t, but also has a plan for it. They let you focus on enjoying the day, while they tend to the flow and the various vendor headaches.

If you’re planning a wedding from afar, a local planner will have leverage with vendors that you don’t. A florist in Wyoming will care less about pleasing someone from Florida, who will never hire her again, and care more about impressing the wedding planner who is likely to bring her future business.

- Have a rain plan. “You simply must have tenting and be prepared for rain or you cannot have the event,” Stroud said. “Rain could destroy the whole affair.”

While we were reluctantly ready to move the ceremony under a tent, we didn’t have to. But don’t count on Mother Nature to cooperate.

- Think through parking. Few residences can accommodate 50

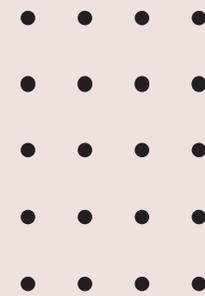
parked cars. Arrange for shuttles or golf carts to transport guests between the residence and a communal parking area or primary hotels nearby. Providing transportation alleviates the parking problem, keeps guests who have been drinking from driving, and lets hosts make sure everyone is off the premises by a set time.

- Give neighbors a heads-up. The groom’s parents told their

neighbors months in advance that they would be hosting a wedding and asked for their understanding and consideration. All were gracious. In return, the hosts promised that the band would stop playing by 10 p.m.

- Rent a loo. “You might be able to host a dinner party for 20 or even 50 in a private home and use the home’s restrooms,”

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