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Wedding Whimsy

Small touches bring a touch of humor to an elegant affair

As the saying goes, there wasn't a dry eye in the house at the start of Aaron and Rebecca Samson's wedding ceremony. That is, until everyone started giggling. To add a bit of whimsy to her outdoor wedding at the InterContinental Hotel on Avenue of the Stars in Century City, Rebecca Samson had her three young flower girls wear light yellow tutus and angel wings as they walked down the aisle.

"Aaron and I love to play and to be silly, so we wanted to incorporate that spirit into our wedding," said Rebecca Samson, a Beverly Hills psychotherapist. "It's a big part of who we are as a couple."

Being playful

Adding unique and playful elements to your wedding is a fun way to keep the often etiquette-laden day feeling lighthearted and celebratory, said Chara Nicole Swodeck, a certified wedding consultant and owner of the Open Box Designs event planning company in Claremont.

"Many couples now are choosing to put a little personality and humor into their ceremony and reception because they don't necessarily want the cookie-cutter event or wedding that their parents had once upon a time," Swodeck said. "Being nontraditional has slowly become the new tradition for many."

Subtle ways that couples can show their sense of playfulness and humor include having fun centerpieces, party favors and wedding cake toppers, said Amber Gustafson, wedding coordinator and owner of Amber Events in Los Angeles. Cake toppers of a bride carrying the groom or kissing a crowned green frog, for instance, can add an amusing detail to an elegant cake. (They are available on websites such as WhereBridesGo.com.)

With such details, couples are showing they just want to have fun at their weddings, said Gustafson. "[My clients] don't want to be Barbie Bride and Ken Groom," she said. "Whether that is the groom wearing silly socks or the bride having her dog as the ring bearer, it's about them and nobody else."

With the aim of showing family and friends the lighter side of their personalities, Joe and Monet Romero of Azusa, surprised their guests by wearing hand-painted Converse tennis shoes at their June 13, 2008, wedding. Monet Romero's shoes featured characters from her favorite movie, "Star Wars," while the groom's shoes featured his favorite movie character, Indiana Jones.

"We wanted our family and friends to see our personalities on our wedding day," said Monet Romero. "The shoes were just a cute way for us to have a little fun and for us to be a little different."



A collector of garden gnomes, Tracy Smith aimed to surprise her groom, Ian Christopher Smith, and draw giggles from her guests during their 2008 wedding ceremony when she had a friend place a three-inch-tall gnome on the altar prior to her grand entrance.

Little surprises

"I was standing on the altar waiting for Tracy to make her entrance when I suddenly realized that there was this little gnome standing right in front of me," said Ian Christopher Smith of Long Beach. "We all had a good laugh."

Comically highlighting their passions was the aim of Patti and Dustin Lavallee when the pair got married at the oceanside Verandas event venue in Manhattan Beach in August. Dustin Lavallee, a science and technology teacher, has a passion for soccer, so he asked his groomsmen to wear green soccer socks with their black tuxedos. Green was the accent color of the wedding.

"[Dustin's] a goofy guy at heart, so it was a way of adding a little fun underneath the seriousness of it all," said Patti Lavallee. "If it had been totally up to us, we probably would have gone a little less formal with the whole wedding, but since we've got parents, parents' friends and relatives to impress, then things like the socks ... were subtle ways of making the wedding our own."

Having their nieces

wear tutus and angel wings was just the first bit of whimsy the Samsons incorporated into their wedding. With Gustafson as their wedding planner, the Samsons' 2007 wedding also included such fanciful elements as large white feather centerpieces at their reception and a humorous song-and-dance routine that Rebecca Samson choreographed as a surprise for her husband.

"I wanted to make Aaron feel like a king on the day of our wedding," said the bride. While her 175 guests smiled and laughed, she sang a medley of "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You" by Frankie Valli and "We Are in Love" by Harry Connick Jr. while her bridal party placed a king's crown and red velvet robe on her husband.

Nothing but the best, with a little amusement added in, was the tone that James and Sharon Koh wanted to set at their wedding held at the oceanfront Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel in Dana Point. The bride, an Irvine attorney, wore a Pronovias wedding gown and the couple treated their 160 guests to prime rib and premium Kona Kampachi sushi. But at their reception, the Kohs included a carnival-style photo booth and a hoop-shot basketball arcade game.

"The women loved the free pictures and the guys were lining up by the dozen to get a crack at the high score on the basketball arcade," said James Koh, a news reporter for the CBS affiliate in Bakersfield.

Going overboard

Although their guests will appreciate a couple's efforts to add a bit of laughter to their wedding, a soon-to-be-married duo do need to use some discretion.

1. Joe and Monet Romero wore tennis shoes painted by artist Hairol Mikelly at their wedding. The shoes depicted the couple's favorite movies. Photo by Mora Photography.
2. Rebecca and Aaron Samson added fantasy to their wedding by dressing their flower girls in angel wings. Photo by Alex Morgan of Scott A. Nelson Photography.
3. What could be more lighthearted than feathers? The Samsons thought so and used them to decorate their escort cards. Photo by Alex Morgan of Scott A. Nelson Photography.
4. Patti and Dustin Lavallee highlighted the groom's passion for soccer at their oceanfront wedding by having the groomsmen wear green soccer socks. Photo by Scott A. Nelson Photography.
5. The "Princess Bride Kissing Frog" is a cake topper for a bride who loves fairytales and a groom with a sense of humor. Photo courtesy of WhereBridesGo.com.

Couples should be careful to avoid humor that might be considered crude or tacky, said Gustafson.

Questionable humor might include a cake topper figurine of a groom wearing a ball and chain around his ankle or the groom's best man talking about their wild bachelor party during a toast, Gustafson said.

"There is a slim but very visible line between funny and tacky," Gustafson said.

Adding humor or whimsy to one's wedding only works when it really is part of the personality of both the bride and groom, she said.

"Either you and your fiancé are total hams or you're not," Gustafson said. "You shouldn't be taking improv classes for your wedding day."

— Kim Kabar
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