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Outdoor Venues

Summer is a great season for holding your ceremony outdoors.

Not only is the weather great, but there may be fewer restrictions and regulations, since being outdoors has been deemed more safe than being inside during the pandemic.

THE PROS

Summer breezes, lots of greenery, tents and twinkly lights set a fresh and airy mood for the ceremony and the reception. “Tented weddings are the new ballroom,” wedding planner and designer Jove Meyer told *The Knot*. “Couples are leaning into nature and fresh air in ways they did not in the past.”

Entire weekends can be planned outdoors, including welcome ceremonies and receptions, as weddings contract into smaller, safer parties that, with those tinier crowds, can be more luxe and still make the budget. Think s’mores and campfires under the stars instead of star-spangled giant receptions under chandeliers.

Outdoor weddings can also be less formal occasions, including relaxed dress codes that make both guests and the happy couple more comfortable. Today’s ceremonies are heavy on the fun and sentimentality and light on the formality, and every detail should reflect that.

THE CONS

Mother Nature can be a welcome guest at your wedding with a spectacular backdrop or a jewel-toned sunset to end the day. Or she can crash the whole thing with a roaring thunderstorm or excessive heat. All your wedding plans need a back-up, especially those that are outside. The good news is that today’s smaller ceremonies can be a lot more agile and adapt to changing conditions easily.

Your wedding planner can help set up a variety of options for you and your guests. This will help you rest easier as you approach your wedding day, no matter what happens with the weather.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Depending on your venue, you’ll need to consider things like parking, facilities for your guests and plenty of room for staffing.

Wedding planners are pros at figuring out what each venue needs in terms of extras from other vendors.

Just like indoor ceremonies, you’ll also need to consider mask-wearing, social distancing and other precautions.

Even though your outdoors, follow all local restrictions and regulations for gatherings and events to stay safe.



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"The caterer focuses on food and the florist on flowers. The planner is always looking at the big picture and handling all the moving parts. Overall vision, budget, and timeline are pieces of that big picture."



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Reception Menus

Pandemic restrictions have put a damper on both weddings and receptions. There are safety restrictions, and many areas that have limited restaurant and event capacity.

This means that couples can opt to spend more per guest, meaning plated and personalized reception dinners that will delight your guests.

COURSE MEALS

Smaller guests lists mean that you can opt for a more intimate, luxe reception featuring plated, multi-course dinners. Seat your guests in well-spaced pods, where people sit with people they already associate with. Leave plenty of room for both guests and staff to social distance. Encourage sanitiza-

tion and mask-wearing except for when eating and drinking. Consider offering intimate touches like handwritten place cards and personalized notes to make the experience special for those you choose to share in your special moment.

TINY PLATES

If you're not serving a full meal and don't want passed hors d'oeuvres to create a safety risk, opt instead for individualized plates of appetizers on a theme. Think miniature charcuterie boards or small plates featuring four individual finger foods. Have plenty of pick-up points so that guests don't congregate in any one area and can instead grab a plate and move to their table at their convenience.

MINI WEDDING CAKES

Another pinch point at weddings is the line-up after the couple cuts the cake. Instead of serving slices of cake that have to be served, some couples are opting for miniature wedding cakes that are individually plated and either served at the reception or packaged for guests to take home and enjoy later. This doesn't have to just be a cupcake, either. Bakers are turning out tiny, fully decorated layered wedding cakes that perfectly match your theme, palette and budget. Of course, you can always think outside of the box and do another kind of individual sweet treat, such as cookies, brownies or even marshmallow treats.

PREPACKAGED FOODS

Some couples are offer-

ing for boxes of prepackaged foods that come individually wrapped so that people can enjoy them at their own pace and knowing the food is safe to eat.

Bonus: These boxes can easily be shipped to guests attending via online platforms such as Zoom and social media so everyone can share in the fun.





Planning a Zoom Wedding

With the coronavirus pandemic now more than a year old, many cities and states still have restrictions on travel and gatherings.

If you've been holding off on your nuptials waiting on conditions to improve, technology may have an answer for your wedding blues.

HOSTING AN ONLINE WEDDING

That's right, the same technology that brings you working from home can now bring your weddings from home. As a guest, your options are pretty much endless and you can at-

tend from the comfort of your own couch. No flights to book, no babysitters, just joining in the fun. And the happy couple aren't limited by venue restrictions, they can invite as many people as they want, include guests who would prefer not to travel under ordinary circumstances.

You'll need to recruit someone (or even a company; several have sprouted up) to hold the camera, narrate and record the ceremony for posterity. You may also need some decor, depending on the route you want to go, but remember you won't need the whole space. Just a backdrop or two. And don't for-

get the sound. Opt for a microphone or even AirPods to make sure your online guests don't miss a word.

HOSTING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

If Zoom or other such platforms aren't your thing, you can always livestream your ceremony on Facebook Live, YouTube, TikTok or other social streams. These platforms give you an opportunity to interact with guests in real time and may even be easier for some guests to use and understand than Zoom or GoTo Meeting.

Whatever platform you choose, remember to also select a backup (or two or three).

You should also run a test of the ceremony several times, checking things like your hardware and your internet connections. You might want to upgrade your service for a month to make sure you have plenty of bandwidth.

Also check things like lighting, camera angles and audio in a variety of conditions. If you combine your online wedding with other services like ordering outfits, flowers and even cakes and champagne online, you could have a nearly contactless wedding ceremony. Some states even allow for online applications for marriage licenses.



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