



STARRY NIGHT
— BARN & STUDIOS —

The Amazing, Exciting, Fun Often-Nerve-Wracking-But-Shouldn't-Be, Journey of Planning Your WEDDING GUIDE

You or your partner might be one of the few (let's face it, more than a few,) who have dreamt about their wedding for years and you may have a strategic plan ready to unfold with ease and little second-guessing. But if not, take the time before you launch into planning to have conversations about what kind of wedding you both envision: how big, where, themed?, and what is truly important to you both in a public celebration of your lives together. It's also important to consider family and friends and think about who you really want to be there and what considerations there are to get them there.

With the dazzling excitement of engagement perhaps still new and fresh, take some time to soak-in the love and happiness that your marriage represents and savor what is and what is to come.

FORMAL *Planning Time*

when you're ready to move into official planning, the list of questions below can help get you started in thinking through the big and not-so-big considerations, both of which can hold equal importance.

1. Budget



Set a budget of what you can and want to spend. This can be tricky right out of the gate since you don't really know what a lot of things cost until you start investigating. Doing your best to keep within a set budget can help reduce stress and anxiety – the last things you want to increase when planning your wedding.



2. Season & date

Do you have a set date in mind or are you flexible? What family and friends' considerations are at play in settling on a date? Does your wedding location and venue have seasonal and date limitations? Do you have specific vendors that are non-negotiables for you? Maybe a photographer that you've been set on or a caterer that you need to nail down right away once a date is decided or perhaps their availability impacts the dates you have to choose from.



3. Celebrate

What kind of wedding do you want? Formal or more casual? Do you want an indoor or outdoor ceremony and reception? A combination of the two?



4. Head Count

What is your anticipated guest count? This will impact the types and numbers of facilities that can accommodate your guest count.



5. Venue

Do you have a specific type of venue in mind? A barn like we have here at Starry Night, an indoor facility like an old theater, a public beach, a French manor or an outdoor garden theme at a winery?



6. Planning

Will you be doing the planning yourselves, perhaps with help from relatives or friends (be careful) or are you hiring a full or partial wedding planner? If you're doing the latter, the above questions should be covered with your event planner too. If you need suggestions for TC/Leelanau area wedding planners, ask us!



7. Wedding Party

Will you have a wedding party or is that not part of your vision? If a wedding party is in the mix, what will their role be?



8. Wedding Fun

What do you envision for the flow of your day? Are there any pieces of your wedding that will take center stage (besides you and your partner?) Will you have a favorite band, dancing as a main event or an elaborate dinner ceremony? Do you want lawn games or music by the fire? Do you want a polo match or a family versus family tug-o-war?



9. Guest Accommodations

If you have out-of-town guests coming, what lodging options are available and what transportation needs to be provided, if any?

NEXT STEPS

With answers to some of your questions, you can now confidently move into making it happen. Making decisions on some of the big questions will help guide next steps.

1. Decide on your location and facility and book your date. This allows lot of next steps to fall into place and you're also ready, if you want, to send out "Hold the Date" cards to anticipated guests. Hold-the-date notices are extremely helpful and lead to getting more RSVP's and giving attendees early notice to find lodging, if needed, etc.

Once your facility is secured, know what the facility provides for your event and what you need to provide. Does the facility provide bathrooms, tables and chairs or staff to work your event? Do you need to use preferred or onsite caterers or wines? If you're at a resort, do you need to book a minimum number of rooms?

It's also good to plan for a rehearsal dinner at this time, if that's on your wedding agenda.

2. If there are providers – caterers, photographer, a DJ, floral designers, etc., that are must-haves, get those contracts negotiated, signed, and set to lock-in your date. If you are more flexible and just have criteria that you want good food and a good photographer and you're having your wedding in an area that does a lot of events (like TC and Leelanau) then the pressure can ease up a bit since there are so many quality providers. However, waiting until a month or two before your event is NOT a good idea as vendors do book-up quickly. Bigger vendors will have more capacity to take on multiple events. If you're going with smaller and local, get in quickly!

Vendors and Providers to consider in your planning and budgeting:

- Photography / Videography
- Floral Design
- Music
- Catering
- Cake / Dessert
- Shuttles
- Wedding Officiate
- Linens and Decor

Hit the Pause Button and do a budget check: Where are you on budget and what's left? Prioritize what's a must going forward if budget is tight then determine where you can compromise, do things yourself, etc. before you get into Number 3.

Keep in mind handy cost-cutting tips like using an event rental service for lighting and décor rather than buying things that you'll likely never use again. You can do fabulous things with ball jars, candles, lights, flowers and ribbon (not necessarily in that order!) that won't break the bank and provides the right amount of sweet vib→rance to your entrance or tables. So many possibilities. Pinterest is dangerous but offers so much inspiration

3. The fun stuff! Décor and ambiance. Do you want round or long tables or a combination? Simple white linens with simple, elegant centerpieces and table settings or a more elaborate color scheme with tall garden vases and a canopy of drapery and lights? Do you want any media or visuals as part of your décor? Place-cards, namecards, dessert table design and flowers?

4. Logistics. Is your ceremony onsite or offsite of the reception venue? How are you and your fiancé getting to and from if offsite? Your guests? Is parking limited and do you need/want shuttles? Does your venue offer attendants and assistance with parking or helping with guests with limited mobility? Who is doing the ceremony set-up and break down, reception set-up and break down? Garbage and recycling? Does your caterer handle that? The venue? Do you need an insurance rider or additional licensing for alcohol?

5. Back-up Plan. Do you need a back-up plan for any inclement weather?

6. and Final Step Double-check all your contracts and vendors for the correct time and date and the services to be provided. Make sure any communications are made between the venue and vendors, detailing the use of space and the amenities provided.

This, of course is likely not the last step; it always feels like there is more to do. It's most important throughout the planning process to stay grounded and enjoy the journey and surround yourself with support and positive energy. Your wedding is ultimately about celebrating joy, love and commitment. If you keep that love and joy at the center of your planning endeavors, you and your guests will experience and share in that love and joy no matter what décor or food choices were made along the way.