



It was a determination to do something unique that inspired Jenny Wilcox and her husband, Andy, to have their dream wedding by the sea in Devon. 'We'd been to so many weddings that felt samey. We wanted something personal and relaxed, so we invited everyone to go camping (having had a private registry office ceremony the week before) and asked guests to bring something to stick on the beachfront ►

BBQ. The whole thing cost £3,000 and it was very “us”.

The DIY crafting trend has a lot to answer for, too, with Pinterest and Instagram setting the aesthetic of the modern wedding (70 per cent of Pinterest users have wedding boards before they're even engaged). 'I had pine-cone place settings, tree-trunk cake stands, eBay bargain baubles, dried-flower bouquets and mulled-wine mix for my wedding favours,' says stylist Sarah Attrill of her December wedding in 2015. 'I know the effort we went to made it more personal for our guests.'

But while economics and social media have played a part, does this signal a deeper societal shift? 'There's no question that feminism plays a role in women doing things their way,' says Susan Pease Gadoua, therapist and co-author of *The New 'I Do': Reshaping Marriage for Skeptics, Realists and Rebels*. 'Young people are realising that they have more options; I've seen a rise in open marriages and polyamorous relationships, for instance, and the weddings people are having reflect that fluidity. I think the decline in religious constructs have relieved more traditional obligations.'

Women 'owning' their wedding day is something Williams has recognised, too: 'Many don't want their fathers to walk them down the aisle any more, seeing it as old-fashioned and anti-feminist,' she says. 'Couples are walking down together or even alone. And many women are doing speeches, which explains the new websites offering sample speeches for brides. You've also got to consider family

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Rather than sounding the death knell for marriage, these changes actually signal a long-overdue revitalisation of an industry steeped in patriarchal tradition. In times of societal upheaval, our faith in romance is greater than ever and weddings have been pulled firmly into the 21st century. There will be few objections to that.

dynamics – people have larger, more complicated extended families, which does change things.'



THE NEW GUEST-IQUETTE

If tradition is out and the lines are blurred for guests, how on earth does one behave at a modern wedding?

Charlotte O'Shea, author of *Rock My Wedding: Your Day, Your Way* breaks it down

What to wear

With more brides opting for high street and mixing up their bridesmaids' outfit choices (two-piece suit, anyone?), figuring out a modern wedding dress code is a challenge. If in doubt, ask. Or at least casually mention that you're considering wearing a cute navy lace number from Self-Portrait. Ensure your look is individual by adding a statement bag, shoes or accessories. Guests should still avoid anything floor-length and white.

The Insta post

Imagine if the first photograph you saw of your big day was a blurry, unflattering camera-phone snap that popped up on somebody else's Facebook feed. Not cool. Always let the bride and groom post the first picture and take their lead on what is shared. There's a growing trend for couples requesting that their ceremony be 'unplugged'. And even if they don't, most brides would prefer to see your face as they walk down the aisle, not your flamingo-print phone case. In contrast, if they have a wedding hashtag, you'll know about it, so share the love.

The gift list

Most couples will provide guidance on their gift list or an online platform where you can contribute towards their honeymoon. If left to your own devices, then a thoughtful, personalised present or an experience – spa trip, dinner for two, sky dive – is memorable and something that can be looked forward to after the event.

Catching the bouquet

Many brides prefer to keep their bouquets these days, having them preserved forever, donating them to a homeless shelter or leaving them on a loved one's grave. But if it is up for grabs, be aware of the current trend for oversized floral bouquets and the ones made from vintage jewellery – you may need a safety helmet.

The free bar

It's a generous gesture to provide endless free cocktails. So much so that guests have been known to forget where they left their last mojito between questionable dance moves, so they simply order another – read: 'Congratulations on your wedding, here's an extortionate bar bill!' Don't be that person. Remember to also carry cash. Not every couple can afford an open bar or a venue that accepts credit-card payments. ►