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IT'S A PROCESS; HAVE FUN WITH IT!

Photography by Amber J Deery



It has been so exciting to work on this month's Bridal issue. I feel like it has been forever since weddings were at the desired attendance and without being dictated by COVID. I know that COVID is still wreaking havoc on weddings, events and everything else, but it doesn't seem to be at the forefront of everything, nor every conversation.

Nothing is perfect. The last few years have been far from perfect. No matter how hard we strive for it, it can always be better, more complete, more something. This obviously goes for weddings and marriages. However, sometimes we get caught in wanting everything to seem perfect or wonderful to the outside world, maybe even for ourselves.

Guess what? Nothing is perfect. I have learned to be okay with that. I used to not be, but I guess I finally realized that it's exhausting trying to be or trying to make something be that is far from perfect. I think that there is beauty in knowing that things won't always be easy or the best; it's what keeps us all learning about ourselves and others.

Our wedding wasn't flawless, but it was the imperfections and mishaps that made it just that, our wedding. Same with our marriage; it is our story, and no two marriages are the same. I wish I could go back in time and tell myself to not stress out trying to make everything perfect. I would have probably enjoyed our wedding a little more, even though it was so much fun!

If you are planning your wedding, planning a daughter's wedding, or helping with a wedding, enjoy the process. Kansas City has so many venues, stylists, photographers, gown boutiques and everything in between to help make the days before, during and after the big day amazing.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER J DEERY

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The business opened in 2009, and Melita Holmes purchased the boutique a year and a half ago. "We are small, and our space is very warm and inviting."

For this reason, Fit Form Pilates can be more flexible and provide personal care. Instructors focus on whole body strength and wellness for a community of women who want to feel strong, look good, have fun and encourage each other along the way. This makes it easy to stay consistent and see results.

As an added benefit, Adi Shamir offers Fit Food Feel Good in the boutique. As an integrative nutrition health coach, she shares her knowledge of how food can have a positive impact on your health, well-being and immune system.



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"We are offering some new classes this month, and can't wait to meet you, get to know you and be a part of your health and fitness journey," Melita smiled. "You already matter to us!" ♦

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HONORING YOUR BODY: INTRO TO INTUITIVE EATING

BY LISA BUTLER

Courtney was feeling helpless. A 15-year span of stopping and starting trendy diets had taken a toll on her body and her mind. She felt like she was sitting in the front seat of a weight loss roller coaster and there was no exit from the ride.

The rest of her life felt fairly in place, though. She was healthy, exercised regularly, and her family and career seemed to be on a particular high, but so was her weight. The extra pounds she lost from her last diet were back, plus a few more. Drained from the highs and lows of dieting, she was ready to give up until she saw something on her news feed about intuitive eating.

WHAT IS INTUITIVE EATING?

Intuitive eating, sometimes called mindful eating, is a pretty simple idea. By making “peace” with food, a person doesn’t restrict or ban certain foods from their diet, but instead listens to their body and eats when it feels right. Instead of looking at food as “good” or “bad,” a person eats based on hunger, their thought process and the way they feel at the moment in time.

But hold on to your doughnut holes; intuitive eating doesn’t mean eating whatever or whenever we want. It means using our body’s natural ability to tell us when we’re hungry and when we’re not. Mindful eating is a simple tool to help us gain control over our eating habits by becoming more aware of our overall eating experience, hunger, satiety,



triggers, senses and appreciation for the food we eat.

BENEFITS

Mindful or intuitive eating isn’t about weight loss. Eating with intuition or mindfulness may address problematic eating behaviors such as binge and emotional eating, while aiding as a response to external cues. Studies show mindful eating can have a positive effect on emotional eaters. By looking at food as one tool of many to cope with emotions, we can develop our overall emotional wellness.

THE 5-S PLAN

Stress surrounding food can often become overpowering for some, so we may find ourselves choosing unhealthy foods to cope, eating very fast or eating things that just aren’t satisfying for us. Learning to appreciate the food in front of you may not be easy, but a simple strategy like the 5-S plan from the experts at

the American Council on Exercise can be helpful.

Sit: Always sit down when you eat. The act of sitting generally makes you eat at a slower pace compared to eating while standing. Be sure to not have the television on in front of you, because that is an automatic distraction. Consider your environment and where and how

you are consuming food.

Smile and say thanks: Who doesn't feel good after they smile? By being appreciative of the food in front of you, you can approach the meal with a sense of gratitude, knowing that not everyone has easy access to the same types of food.

See: Take a moment to look at the food. Take in the colors and textures of each ingredient in the meal before you.

Smell: Can you notice different aromas and seasoning nuances to the meal in front of you?

Savor: Since it takes at least 20 minutes for the brain to realize you're full, the act of eating slowly can leave you feeling less rushed and more satisfied. One tip is to try focusing on chewing slowly and savoring each bite. Challenge yourself by chewing each bite at least 20 seconds. After you swallow what is currently on your fork or spoon, then you can take another bite of your food.

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Intuitive eating is not one size fits all and it may not be for everyone. The goal of eating this way is to honor what our body needs, not restricting the foods we choose. The idea of intuitive eating is focused on improving health and feelings toward food. While some may lose weight as they are able to get a handle on unhealthy food behaviors, others may not, especially if they have been restricting themselves from food in the past.

It's a good idea to talk with your doctor before starting intuitive eating. Certain medical conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes may require lessening the intake of certain foods to manage these conditions. It might also be a good idea to make an appointment with a registered dietitian or a nutritionist to discuss any obstacles and come up with a meal plan that works for you.

If your mind and body are dizzy from the diet roller coaster or your current way of eating is making you feel nauseous about your choices, then consider getting off the diet ride and changing the way you look at food. Try intuitive eating; make peace with that pizza, your body and mind. ♦

SOURCES: acefitness.org, health.clevelandclinic.org and webmd.com.



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DATING IN THE GOLDEN YEARS

BY ANN E. BUTENAS

If you think you're too old to find love in the afternoon of life, think again. This is one of the best times to find your perfect match. Why? For starters, you probably have more time on your hands; you know what you want in life; and you have given yourself the complete freedom to just be yourself, no judgement allowed.



Besides, no matter one's age, love and companionship are definitely integral aspects of a happy life. You may be widowed and ready for a new partner, or you may be out of a marriage for a while. Whatever the reason, love does not discriminate. Forget about your age! Love doesn't check your ID. But before you head down the path to finding new love, there are a few things to consider.

Be specific about what you desire in a partner. You have a wealth of experiences, mistakes and lessons that should have taught you

well by now, and from those you can determine exactly what you want in a relationship. Find someone who shares the same interests or retirement goals; that is key to compatibility. Also, exercise patience. Finding true love is typically easier said than done. Don't feel as if you have to rush into anything and don't feel as if the first person you meet is the one with whom you should partner. Be willing to date for a while so you can find the right person for you.

What about the kids? If you have children, it might be a good idea

to let them know you are dating. Hopefully, they will be supportive of this decision. Also, make sure they understand you are not trying to replace the other parent. Who knows, they may even be able to give you advice on what to do and what not to do.

Even though you are ready to get out there and mingle, do you even know where to begin? That can be a challenge. Consult your circle of friends and don't hesitate to reconnect with someone from years ago. You just never know what might transpire. Online dating services are another option. While some folks may harbor a bit of hesitation in that regard, many older adults use online dating as a great way to connect with the perfect match. When you construct your online dating profile with specific information about yourself in terms of interests, hobbies, philosophies, values and goals, the website will select potential matches based on those criteria.

Senior centers are another avenue for finding connections. These centers frequently host events throughout the year for a variety of holidays and activities, and the pool of single seniors at these events makes for an easy way to meet new people.

If your passport is your favorite book and you love to explore the world, consider joining a senior travel group. This is a terrific opportunity to meet like-minded people and get to know someone while enjoying a relaxing vacation.

Now that you have a bit more time on your hands, you might consider engaging in some volunteer work, especially if your perfect match must be someone who is kind, compassionate and empathetic. With the common denominator of shared interests, the compatibility factor increases.

But now we have to introduce a delicate subject: physical intimacy in a relationship at this stage in life. The chances for pregnancy no longer exist and you may feel a sense of heightened freedom to enjoy a physical relationship. However, proceed with caution. Dating at this stage in life does involve opportunities for unsafe sex and sexually transmitted diseases.

It has been reported that more than half of men and 40 percent of women in the older adult population are sexually active. In conjunction with that, the rate of STDs is rapidly increasing. This is when there might be a role reversal; the children of these seniors might want to initiate a "safe sex" discussion with the parent if the parent intends to become sexually active. Just because one is older and wiser doesn't make that person less susceptible to communicable disease. In fact, as one grows older, the immune system weakens, putting the individual at greater risk for infection. Throw in heart disease, liver damage or diabetes, among other aging-related health issues, and these can complicate matters.

Seniors must have the same access to education about STDs as do their younger counterparts, including information on what the short- and long-term effects are and how transmission can be prevented. Physicians should address the STD issue by asking questions of sexual activity in their patients; seniors should be aware Medicare provides free STD screenings with low-cost treatment options if the results come back positive. If all else fails, the availability of free condoms at senior centers might be an answer! ♦

SOURCES: *seniorhomes.com and psychologytoday.com.*

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Be Confident WITH BEAUTIFUL HAIR

BY JULES MOORE

Q How often should I wash my hair?

A Upon consultation and review of scalp and hair condition, we always ask our guests how often they are shampooing. Every guest leads a different lifestyle, but for the most part we recommend a minimum of twice a week for most clients. On your shampoo days we encourage two shampoos. The first is to remove dirt, oils and product build-up while the second is for the deep cleansing to allow your recommended shampoo to work its magic. It is important to make sure you are getting your scalp clean by using your fingertips or a shampoo brush for a healthier scalp. Follow with the recommended conditioner to mid-length and ends first, then brush through with a wet brush or wide-tooth comb for even distribution. To keep your hair fresh in between, we suggest dry shampoo for your roots while replenishing your ends with an oil, dry conditioner or balm prescribed by your stylist. This will allow your style to stay full and healthy looking. It's essential to replenish mid-length and ends because, like your skin, hair loses moisture throughout the day and evening. We recommend oil such as Surface Bassu oil morning and evening as part of your routine.

Q How often should I get a haircut?

A Depending on your style, every six to eight weeks is most popular for all hair types. Hair grows at different rates for individuals depending on age, lifestyle, health and other factors. Our guests with hair above shoulders and shorter are encouraged to reschedule every three to four weeks to maintain style. If your hair falls below the shoulders to mid length, that is the popular six to eight weeks. Hair that is longer than mid back with proper care can maintain ten to twelve weeks. For our guests who want to grow their hair longer, it is still recommended to maintain trims to dust off the ends to keep the hair fresh of dry, split ends. You may think that not cutting your hair will allow it to grow longer. The fact is, between the elements, hot tools or improper care, your hair will grow unevenly or become depleted and split ends will thin out your hair, making it shorter. This will cause you to need more than a trim. So, maintain your locks on a regular basis so every day is a good hair day. ♦



Jules Moore, owner and stylist of Jules & Zoia Statement Style Salon, knows that the profession of a stylist can be very intimate. While getting up close and personal on a physical level, the stylists at Jules & Zoia make every client comfortable enough to share insecurities and work to help minimize their worries. Collectively as a team, we strive to bring out your best self. It is our goal to help you feel welcomed and loved so we can best help you feel confidently beautiful.

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**BY CINDY MCDERMOTT | PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER J DEERY
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY JENNIFER CONROY OF HELLO LOVELY
SHOT ON LOCATION AT LENEXA PUBLIC MARKET**

Kate Smith has a half million reasons to love her work. The Lenexa, Kansas, wife and mother runs Kate Smith Soirée and helps brides achieve the wedding dessert of their dreams with French macarons, many times in place of the usual wedding cake. She estimates that each week her team produces about 2,000 of the delicate shells filled with cream and, since she started her business in 2018, they have made 500,000 macarons.

Kate Smith Soirée is found in the Lenexa Public Market and shares space with her Butterfield restaurant. She describes her labor of love as a luxe boutique bakery being shaped by a local small business offering a product that is a bit more elevated, high-end dessert. She creates mountains of various flavors of macarons for consumption, but she concentrates on helping brides and grooms set new standards for oohs and aahs through the art of building with macarons.

“No one in Kansas City was doing what I’m now doing. I noticed that everyone in the wedding industry was doing the same tiered, buttercream or fondant cakes. It was the same thing over and over again, and not everyone likes cake. I’m not a huge cake person and at my own wedding I had a cake and I didn’t even eat it. But I did bake 500 macarons for the wedding and they disappeared before the dinner even started,” Kate remarked. “When I




came here there was no alternative; it was either cake or cupcakes. But I thought, why aren’t you doing more elevated, high-end stuff, and that’s where the macaron came to me. You can make it look like a cake with a tower that has a big and grand feel to it but it’s not a cake.”

ROOTED IN THE FOOD WORLD

Kate began her love of the food industry by working side by side as a youngster with her parents in their restaurant. The Oklahoma native decided on a degree in hotel and restaurant administration and achieved that goal by graduating from Oklahoma State University in 2017. To complete her food and

beverage internship, she worked in China and studied culinary arts and pastry in Florence, Italy, where she developed her passion for the French macaron.

The French macaron is defined by two rounded disks created



“Stay true to yourself. It’s easy to follow what everyone else is doing. But there’s a sense of pride in going against that grain and paving a new way or starting a new trend. The world would be incredibly boring if people didn’t step outside of the norm and try something new.”

from a batter of egg whites, sugar and almond milk, held together with a delightfully creamy filling such as ganache, buttercream or jam. The love of these macarons goes back centuries. When Catherine de Medici married into the French royal family in 1533, she brought her Italian chef and her love of Italian macarons. From these roots, chefs in France added their own techniques and the French macaron was born. An extreme faux pas in the bakery world would be committed by confusing the macaron with the like-sounding macaroon, which is a coconut cookie.

FUN FLAVORS, BIGGER AND BETTER

Her mantra is “dare to be bold” and the creations from Kate and her staff are simply amazing. The journey began in December 2018 hosting pop-up carts and selling thousands of macarons. Her first storefront came in June 2019, and the rest is macaron history. Kate Smith Soirée has enjoyed leading couples through an adventure in alternative wedding desserts, stepping outside traditional wedding cakes. With her incredibly talented team, she employs the macaron to construct wedding desserts that are unbelievable and memorable.

“That’s our brand, specializing in alternative wedding desserts and stepping outside the norm of the traditional wedding cake. But we do understand the tradition of having a wedding cake so we offer smaller cakes or a cake on top of a macaron tower. This is what made us famous in Kansas City, the macaron tower with a small six-inch cake on top so the wedding couple can cut into it and serve to each other,” she stated. “Every couple I have met has a unique vision of their wedding. They have unique personalities and want to showcase that through their dessert

display. Sometimes they want an array of different desserts and colors, and a wedding cake is usually three tiers with white buttercream. But our macaron towers can be whatever color you want or have a gradient effect. It’s fun to see the couple’s creative process from start to finish. They give me their color palette and tell me about themselves, and we create something that reflects



each unique couple. I love getting to do that.”

Kate reports that each year the bakery serves 120 couples and, unfortunately, they do have to turn away some customers. But a newly opened location in Overland Park, Kansas, should give Kate Smith Soirée the ability to serve more wedding day guests.

The bakery boasts 70 core flavors but that can be expanded to 120 by delicately altering the components. The deliciousness of the macaron derives its pleasurable palate from the concoction of various flavors for the filling, sandwiched between shells customized to match in color. Think key lime, red wine chocolate, chocolate vanilla swirl, puppy chow, sour blue razz and so many more mind-dizzying choices. While Kate is proud of these impressive offerings of high-quality French macarons, her confectionary is no small cookie. The bakery features a rotating selection of sweets, confections and custom celebration cakes using seasonal ingredients.

MEASURING UP FOR THE MASSES

Macarons are notoriously hard to make even for professional chefs. Producing a successful macaron can drive the baker “macaroni.” But Kate loves to share her macaron abilities with others and hosts classes at her Lenexa Public Market space.

“We don’t keep our recipe a secret. I teach classes at the bakery with the actual recipe and anyone can make them, even seven-year-olds. But it can be trial and error,” she remarked. “You can do pretty much everything right, but if your oven is not exact or the temperature is not correct or the environment of your kitchen isn’t right, then it can be difficult. They are finicky little things. But we’ve nailed down the environment and the oven, and in my class, they always come out perfect.” Kate reminds potential macaron architects to precisely weigh their ingredients, with no volume measuring for macarons. Weighing is the absolute key to your success because the ingredients must be exact. An oven, electric whisk and piping bag are key components, and Kate notes that round-circle templates can be printed from the internet to ensure consistency of size for the shells.

LOCAL. HANDCRAFTED. INDULGENT.

At Kate Smith Soirée, the confections are handcrafted using delicate classic techniques. Kate notes that it’s not always the fastest or easiest method, but it’s the best way to ensure attention to detail and create mouth-watering treats.

“Everything we make is in small batches, in Lenexa and soon Overland Park, in-house and with our own two hands. We try to source local ingredients to highlight in our products such as honey from local farmers made especially for us. We use local coffee from All the Love Roasting by Martin City Brewing and tea from Savoy Tea Company. We try to highlight local because we’re a small local business and we wholesale our products to other small businesses. We love to create that relationship in support of each other,” she commented. “We are in the business to make people’s day. Our concept is that people should allow themselves the pleasures of a sweet treat. You don’t have to have a reason. We are in the celebration industry. Anyone can walk in and purchase a sweet treat.”

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Kate started out of her kitchen but has built a successful business,



employing many others, at several locations. Kate shares that determination to never let go of her dream or never let the cookie crumble has guided her throughout this career. “Sometimes people don’t want to make room for you and you have to make room for yourself. I never wanted to give up my dream because someone wouldn’t give me the time of day. I had to create a space for myself and my team. We wanted an inclusive and inviting space to be creative and do what we had a passion for,” Kate advised. “If someone says no to you, don’t use that as a reason to give up.”

Kate added that networking was another component of her success. “Create that space, network and meet people because it takes a village to create and bring it to life,” she noted. “I can’t stress how important it is to create connections and network. I started my business out of my home but every single connection and networking event that I went to opened a door and made a new contact, which opened a new door for me. They became my colleagues. I would much rather work in an environment that’s collaboration over competition.”

At Kate Smith Soirée, the team focuses on making unique wedding desserts and building upon their extensive skillsets to showcase the perfectly curated dessert display. After pleasing hundreds of couples with incredibly impressive sweets, Kate relishes the time she spends with them to create a masterpiece that brings to the forefront the uniqueness of each person. Her passion is found not only in her works of delectable artwork but also in her ability to live her dream.

“Stay true to yourself. It’s easy to follow what everyone else is doing. But there’s a sense of pride in going against that grain and paving a new way or starting a new trend. The world would be incredibly boring if people didn’t step outside of the norm and try something new,” she noted. “Also, the key to success is to surround yourself with the people you aspire to be. Every chance you get, put yourself in a room with those people because you can only become what you want when you surround yourself with those people. Put yourself in that environment and you’ll get there.” ♦

DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER

BY LINDA PRICE

Are diamonds forever? Probably. Diamonds are the hardest natural substance on Earth and melt at temperatures of 5500° Celsius. No acid can destroy them and they can be cut only by other diamonds. Given the odds, diamonds will be around forever.



Until the 15th century, kings were the sole owners of diamonds. The power wielded by royals led others to curry favor in the form of beautiful and rare diamonds. The collections of many royal families or state jewel collections contain stones that are incomparable. Even so, many collectors around the world have beautiful diamonds in breathtaking collections.

FAMOUS DIAMONDS

The Cullinan Diamond was an astounding 3,160 carats when it was first mined. It is the largest diamond ever discovered and was cut into the Star of Africa, an amazing 530.20 carats set in the British Royal Scepter, and the Lesser Star of Africa, an equally amazing 317.40 carats set in the Imperial State Crown of Great Britain.

The Golden Jubilee Diamond is the world's largest faceted diamond. It is cut in a fire cushion shape and weighs 545.67 carats. The diamond is yellowish brown and currently part of the crown jewels collection in the

Royal Thai Palace.

The Incomparable Diamond is golden and weighs 407.48 carats. In November 2002, the diamond was put up for auction on eBay for a reserve of 15 million pounds by an unknown owner. It did not sell.

The Oppenheimer Diamond is a yellow diamond weighing 253.7 carats uncut. It was donated to the Smithsonian Institution in 1964 by Harry Winston.

The Spirit of de Grisono diamond is one of only three sizeable black diamonds in the world, weighing 312.24 carats. Its original weight was

587 carats; it is set in a white gold mounting with 702 smaller diamonds and is reported to have been privately sold.

The Lesotho Diamond is the 15th largest rough diamond ever discovered. In its uncut state, it weighs 603 carats and is rated a D.

THE FOUR CS

Diamonds are graded by several gemological institutes including

the Gemological Institute of America, or GIA, the American Gem Society Laboratories and the European Gemological Laboratories.

The GIA was founded in 1931 by Robert M. Shipley of Wichita, Kansas. In the '40s and '50s, the GIA created a scale to grade diamonds that has since become accepted worldwide. The GIA's diamond grading certificates evaluate diamonds for quality, not value. A specific diamond's report includes scientific information on the Four Cs of quality—color, clarity, carat weight and cut—and includes proportion, finish and any known treatments. The price of a diamond does not depend on any one element, but rather it is a combination of all the Four Cs.

COLOR

Color can be the hardest to determine because of the wide range of colors on the market. Fancy diamonds may be pink, yellow, blue, brown, red and many other colors. The color scale runs from Z for obvious yellow to Grades D-E-F for a colorless type. Stones graded D-E-F are usually more expensive because of their rarity. Stones graded G-H-I-J are nearly colorless and may still be relatively expensive.

Fancy diamonds are graded on two scales, basic hue and intensity. If two stones have the same hue, clarity, shape and size, the more intensely-hued stone will be more expensive.

Some diamonds are treated by irradiation to change the basic hue to another color. They are a pleasant change from the pure, natural colorless stone and are much less expensive. However, they should never be considered an investment.

CLARITY

Impurities or natural flaws in diamonds are called inclusions. These are caused by carbon deposits or small feather cracks created when the diamonds was formed. Using a 10X magnification, diamonds are graded from FL, flawless, to I1-I3, imperfect, based on the size, number, nature and position of the inclusions. The fewer inclusions found in a diamond the more expensive the stone will be. Flawless or Internally Flawless diamonds are very rare and expensive.

CARAT WEIGHT

The carat weight of a gemstone is simply its weight. One carat is 200 milligrams or 0.2 grams. Thus, a diamond weighing 1.25 carats weighs 250 milligrams. In general, the price of a two-carat diamond will always be worth more than two one-carat diamonds, all other elements being the same.

CUT

The cut of a diamond is the most important factor in determining the brilliance and beauty of a diamond. Many different cuts are used on diamonds, but the standard round is probably the most popular and the one that commands the best price, all other factors being equal. Other popular shapes are the oval, pear, heart, marquis, emerald and princess. These cuts are called fancy cuts.

Whether you're selecting a diamond for love, remembrance or investment, you can be assured that whatever your pleasure, diamonds are forever! ♦

SOURCES: abazias.com, allcountries.org, diamondsafe.com, myjewelry-source.com, royal.gov.uk.

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LOCAL SEASONS CATERING & EVENTS

Unique, Personal Attention to Your Event

BY SHERYL HAMMONTREE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER DEERY

LOCALLY
SOURCED,
SEASONALLY
PREPARED



There is little doubt that finding “the dress” and selecting the perfect attire for your wedding party are where the fun of planning a wedding begins. Whether you’re wearing something passed down through generations or stepping outside the lines with a less traditional choice, either way, you are expressing your personality, history and the passion that brought both of you to your wedding day.

When you need a break from wedding fashion, take a minute and consider how personal and expressive you can be when selecting what you serve your guests! Let the food share insight into your life together. Food can tell a story of your family’s heritage and traditions, places you have been or even adventures you hope to take together.

Beyond the main course and dessert, imagine how cocktail hour hors d’oeuvres or a late-night station can be great ways to showcase your personal tastes and experiences.

Of course, there are trends in fashion, but think about the trends you’ve noticed in food and beverages.

CHARCUTERIE BOARDS ARE EVERYWHERE!

They are a great statement piece and provide a perfect way for guests to interact and engage with each other. Plus, they offer a little bite of something for every palate.



*Photo by
Jeff Schotland of
Scotland Photography*

THOUGHTFUL FARE

There is definitely a trend toward more clean eating and a farm-to-table approach as well as an awareness of dietary limitations such as gluten free and vegan. For many guests, it’s a wonderful surprise to find “something they can eat” when attending an event. Thoughtful goes beyond thinking of others; thoughtful also means that there is thought and intention behind what is being served. Imagine

the fun in serving a themed, crafted cocktail!

DISCOVERY AND ADVENTURE

Behold the trend of mixing things up and introducing guests to something they may be tasting for first time. A mushroom they’ve never heard of, unexpected spice blends, artisanal grains and heirloom ingredients allow guests to truly discover something new in each bite.

And now, may we introduce you to Kansas City’s own Local Seasons Catering & Events!

The experts at Local Seasons Catering & Events specialize in creating unique, personal culinary experiences. Hollie Norton and Tarah Miller look forward to hearing your story, your vision and all ideas surrounding your celebration. They will work with founder Chef Sean Kirby and the team to design a menu that reflects both of you and works with your venue (not all kitchens are created equal), presents



“The talent in the room. Everyone truly brings a different style and approach to the table, which allows us to constantly learn from each other, stay creative and imaginative, all while providing flexibility to our clients.”

beautifully and works well for the group being served. That’s right, a customized menu!

Perhaps one of you is Cajun and the other Italian. Local Seasons Catering & Events will create a fusion of flavor that will impress and warm the hearts of your families and guests. Customized means you will not be handed a list of meal, snack and drink options to choose from; your menu will be uniquely your menu.

Just as their name suggests, Local Seasons Catering & Events focuses on local sources such as Crum’s Heirlooms in Bonner Springs for the highest-quality produce, stone ground grits, smoked chilies and the corn for their house-made hominy. Fresh tastes better, and if it’s local, it’s fresh!

Chef Sean takes it to the next level by continually changing



menus to align with the seasons. Seasonally prepared dishes allow continual inspiration; Chef Sean works with what nature has to offer while always providing guests with the freshest ingredients. Tomatoes just aren’t quite the same in January and it’s hard to beat the sweet juice of a fresh peach in the late summer! Local and seasonal are not limitations; they are a guarantee of freshness and, of course, unmatched quality and flavor.

The best part of my job is not only meeting fascinating, gifted Kansas Citians such as Sean, Hollie, Brandon Winn, Andy Sloan and Riley Bock, but I also get to taste their genius! So, without further delay, let’s start with the tender, fall-apart roasted Cornish hen served with a spicy tomato cream sauce, asparagus and an unforgettable side of Minnesota wild rice. Chef Sean shared the

story of his finding this specific rice while fly fishing in Northern Minnesota. Of course, he could choose to source his wild rice from a list of quality vendors, but that specific rice would not have been harvested from the clear clean lakes of Northern Minnesota, by hand, in a canoe, then toasted and painstakingly separated and prepared for someone to enjoy. This rice was like nothing I've ever tasted; it's nutty, hearty, warm and quite memorable. This level of intention and attention goes into every recipe.

Next, I enjoyed roasted rack of lamb, served with purple sweet potatoes, baby carrots, sugar snap pea puree, a blueberry gastrique and last but certainly not least, the preserved chanterelle mushrooms were packed with an impressive amount of flavor. What a delicious morsel and gorgeous presentation (those purple sweet potatoes!) for a fall wedding.

Discovery and adventure were on the menu when I had cobia for the first time. Described as a meaty fish, similar to mahi-mahi; it's naturally mild with a buttery taste that's unlike any other fish. The cobia was seared to perfection and served atop sautéed Swiss chard with roasted tomatoes, chive oil and sweet corn cream sauce. This may have been my favorite.

The next plate was just lovely! Perfectly seared yellow fin tuna topped with bright and beautiful tangerine sections, thinly sliced jalapeno and Persian cucumber, cilantro, enoki mushrooms with a drizzle of Thai chili caramel. Again, it was a lovely presentation, full of flavor, crisp and light, perfect for a summer event!

The subsequent offering was not your typical surf and turf! Poached lobster tail with beef tenderloin served with a side of haricot verts with a saffron reduction and carrot puree.

Local Seasons doesn't advertise, unless you consider the events they cater an advertisement. Their business continues to grow from referrals and glowing reviews from those who attended an event catered by Local Seasons, which was voted Best in Weddings by The Knot for the last five years.

I asked Chef Sean, what, outside of the loyal following and referrals, he believes has been the most important ingredient in his recipe for success. Without hesitation he replied, "The talent in the room. Everyone truly brings a different style and approach to the table, which allows us to constantly learn from each



other, stay creative and imaginative, all while providing flexibility to our clients."

By the way, we're talking about weddings in this issue but don't think for a second that Local Seasons wouldn't cook up something spectacular for whatever you're wanting to celebrate, even if it's a special dinner in your home for a handful of guests or just you and someone special. ♦

To talk with Local Seasons Catering & Events, call 816-607-4150 or visit localseasonscatering.com.



Art director, illustrator and entrepreneur Sheryl Hammtree is happiest when creating. As a freelancer, she creates visual styling and targeted messaging to strategically solve challenges for clients. As the owner of Thoughtful Threads, she creates expressive apparel to empower people and build a community of kindness. Sheryl heads outside to find energy, inspiration and calm; whether in the garden or on a trail, her soul is fed by creating memories with her husband, Joel, family and friends.

SLOW COOKER WHITE BEAN AND SAUSAGE SOUP

RECIPE & PHOTOS BY LAUREN LANE | LAUREN-LANE.COM



INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
 14 oz. precooked sausages, such as andouille, sliced
 2 15-oz. cans cannellini white beans
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1/2 onion, finely chopped
 1 sprig of fresh rosemary chopped or 1/2 teaspoon dried
 2 bay leaves
 Kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper
 4 cups chicken stock, preferably homemade
 1 teaspoon Better Than Bouillon if not using homemade stock
 4 ounces spinach or baby kale chopped into smaller pieces if desired
 1 Parmesan rind (optional)
 Freshly grated Parmesan for serving

DIRECTIONS

Optional: Heat oil in a skillet. Add sausage and cook until golden on both sides, 4 to 5 minutes. Add to slow cooker. The browning adds more flavor. Add white beans, garlic, onion, rosemary, bay leaves and parmesan rind. Season with salt and pepper. Add chicken stock and stir to combine. Cook on low for 6 to 7 hours or high for 3 to 4 hours. Stir in spinach or kale and cook until wilted. Remove bay leaf and rind. Taste and add salt if needed. Top with freshly grated Parmesan before serving. ♦

TIPS

1: Cook on stove top if desired. Follow directions and simmer for 15 minutes.

2: Add a teaspoon of Better Than Bouillon if not using homemade stock.

3: Use less sausage, 6 ounces, and add 3 chopped carrots and 2 celery stalks if desired.



After 25 years in creative design and management with Hallmark Cards, Lauren Lane quit to pursue her lifelong passion for food and entertaining. Lauren has reinvented herself at 50 and now pursues her dream of teaching others how to cook easily and entertain effortlessly. Follow her on Instagram, Facebook and her blog so you don't miss any of her recipes and cooking tips and tricks.

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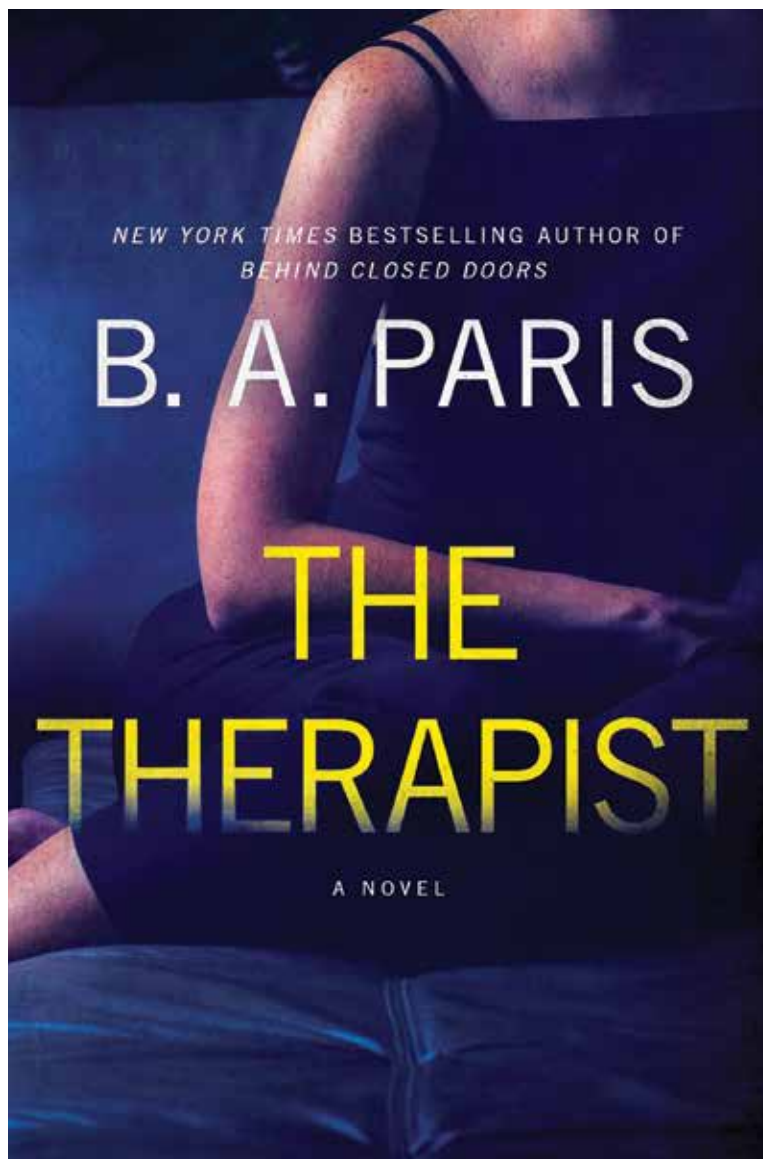
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THE GUEST LIST

BY B.A. PARIS

BY GAIL SILVERSTEIN

British novelist B.A. Paris delivers yet another whodunnit that will keep the reader guessing right until the very last chapter. Her latest page-turner, The Therapist, unfolds with deep insight into the characters and some flashbacks. Told in first person by protagonist Alice Dawson, the novel gives us an inside look at how mundane, everyday life can entangle people and become real scary real fast.



Alice and her partner, Leo Curtis, are 30-somethings who meet when he accidentally crashes into her car. After becoming involved in a long-distance dating situation, the pair decide to take their relationship to the next level by moving in together to a spacious renovated house in an exclusive

being located in a gated community.

Quickly, the story develops with neighbors Tamsin, Eve, Will, Connor, Maria, Tim, Lorna and Edward when Alice throws a last-min-

area of London. Though it's everything the happy couple dreamed of, they are plagued by feelings of being watched in their new home, despite its

ute housewarming party. Paris' character analysis is in depth, and these neighbors feel like they could very well be our own neighbors. On the day of the drinks party, a stranger drops by; how he is admitted and who he really is remains a mystery for a bit. Mistaking him for Maria's husband, Tim, Alice shows him the house complete with renovations. The trouble is, none of her neighbors witness this stranger's arrival or departure and finally, Lorna admits to accidentally letting him into the close-knit community. Fear and suspense brew below the surface of the story until the reader learns about Nina Maxwell. A caring therapist, Nina was the beautiful neighbor who was brutally murdered. Nina's husband, Oliver, was accused of her death and he committed suicide.

Alice's entire world is turned upside down as she discovers that Nina was killed in the very house she and Leo just moved into! Her own sister, who perished mysteriously with their parents in a car accident, was also named Nina, so when Alice hears about the former neighbor Nina's death, she becomes obsessed with the case. Enter private detective Thomas Grainger, hired to research Oliver's innocence. He confesses to being the mysterious Tim from the house party, and soon Alice begins to trust him even as her mistrust of Leo increases.

Convinced that Leo must not have known about the house's bloodstained past, she is shaken to her core to discover that Leo not only knew but jumped on the chance to buy it! Ben Forbes, the real estate agent who sold Leo the house, is caught in the middle when he reveals the truth to Alice. She realizes that the neighbors must think of her as insensitive and money-oriented. Devastated, Alice can no

longer sleep in the house. Through realistic prose, the reader glimpses much of Alice's feelings, thoughts and fears. As an author, Paris is the master of human emotions and her main character is one the reader cannot help but feel empathetic toward.

"I can't believe it. I can't believe that Leo went ahead and bought the house despite knowing about the murder, it seems too incredible. How could he be all right with it? ...What makes it worse is that he lied to Ben about having told me." As Alice continues the narrative, love, friendship and deception come together in this story of ordinary people—neighbors, friends, and lovers—who keep secrets from each other. Everyone conspires to not mention Nina's horrible death to Alice, and the lies just compound from that point onward.

Alice decides not to be truthful about the detective, Thomas, instead telling everyone that it was a nosy reporter who prompted her meddling into the mysterious murder. Alice's despair and mistrust complicate her relationship with Leo. She, too, holds her own secrets from him, and the great reveal will make you wonder what else the two lovebirds are lying about! In between the numbered chapters are a few flashbacks titled Past and written from the point of view of the therapist, but just which therapist is it? Nina Maxwell, the murder victim or her unknown therapist that she consulted at the time of her murder? It's the novelist's nod to the book title's clever ambiguity.

With believable dialogue, the characters are relatable. A few plot twists and eerie pasts keep the audience guessing. No one is above suspicion; all have their own agendas, and many are not who they appear to be. B. A. Paris is known for her suspense stories, and the ending will leave you astounded. ♦



Grande Coffee with Light Rain

BY KEN WILSON

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CHOOSING TO BE A GREEN BRIDE

BY CATIE WATSON

*Eco-friendly weddings are continuing to gain in popularity, with good reason. According to Kate Harrison's *The Green Bride Guide*, the average American wedding produces 400 to 600 pounds of garbage and more than 60 tons of CO₂ emissions.*

Planning an eco-friendly wedding is a beautiful way for a couple to show their love while fighting the problem of wedding waste. An added bonus is that many eco-friendly wedding ideas are budget friendly and more creative than traditional choices. Here's an overview of some eco-friendly wedding trends.

RUSTIC WEDDINGS: BACK TO NATURE

Choosing the rustic theme for a wedding provides many opportunities to incorporate eco-friendly products and practices. Popular rustic venues include barns, farms, orchards or any natural setting. Rustic decorations that are trending for eco-friendly receptions include lanterns, Mason jars and burlap table runners, with casual bunches of wildflowers and swags of greenery replacing formal floral arrangements. Using chalkboard surfaces to display information, such as seating arrangements and menus, is a popular rustic touch that reduces paper waste.



Rustic trends for eco-friendly bride and bridesmaid dresses include styles that are less structured and more romantic in natural organic fabrics such as cotton, silk and linen. Many brides are choosing bouquets created from loosely gathered seasonal foliage and blooms for their rustic-themed weddings instead of traditional formal arrangements.

VINTAGE WEDDINGS: REPURPOSE AND RE-USE

If you've always dreamed of a glamorous wedding, you may not gravitate toward the rustic theme. As an alternative, many brides are using a vintage theme to create a glamorous or romantic mood for their wedding while supporting the eco-friendly

goals of recycling, repurposing and reusing. Vintage elements that are trending for wedding events include antique furniture pieces, vintage crystal and china and vintage lighting such as candlesticks and chandeliers.

A vintage gown that fits your style can be tailored to fit and altered for a more contemporary look. Besides being eco-friendly, a vintage dress that was originally worn by the bride's mother or grandmother adds sentimental value to the occasion. If nothing but a new wedding dress will do, look for a designer who is committed to using sustainable, organic fabrics.

ECO-FRIENDLY WEDDING RINGS

Now that mining for diamonds and gold has been tied to human rights violations and destruction of the environment, choosing a wedding ring has become an ethical decision. A vintage ring or a ring made from recycled gold is an eco-friendly alternative, since it saves the energy that would have gone into the creation of a new ring. Lab-grown gems are another alternative, and today's reputable jewelers are very conscious of the sourcing of diamonds, avoiding the blood-diamond trade.

KEEPING IT LOCAL

The concept of local can be incorporated into any wedding theme. Keeping it local means cutting down on the amount of transportation required for all aspects of a wedding, from guests to flowers and food. Less transportation means lower CO2 emissions.

Many brides are opting for out-of-the-box wedding destinations that are close to home, such as public gardens, museums and historic homes. Also expect to see more all-in-one events that minimize guest transportation by combining wedding and reception. The farm-to-table food movement provides another way for couples to minimize the transportation impact of their wedding. Caterers who specialize in serving organic foods and wines that are produced locally are becoming more popular for wedding receptions. When it comes to food service, the eco-friendly choice is a plated meal, since it generates less waste and fewer dirty dishes than a buffet.

Flowers and plants that are grown locally are a much better choice for the environment compared to out-of-season or exotic flowers that must be shipped in from remote locations. Many brides are using succulents, ferns and blooming branches either in place of flowers or in combination with local blossoms. Encouraging guests to take home centerpieces and floral arrangements after the reception is becoming a popular practice, as well as donating flowers to a local church or senior center.

You can also go local when it comes to wedding favors. Instead of giving guests a trinket that was probably made overseas, eco-friendly gifts such as food and small potted plants are trending. Sending guests home with sweets from your favorite bakery or your grandma, items made by local artists or craftspeople, or handcrafted seed packets are other unique options for favors.

MIX IT UP

With so many ways to plan an eco-friendly wedding, there's no reason to think that you have to sacrifice style, tradition or the wedding of your dreams in order to help the environment. Whether you incorporate one or two eco-friendly ideas or base every decision on how it affects Mother Nature, you will be making the planet a better place. ♦

SOURCES: *brides.com, greenweddingprofessionals.com and theknot.com.*



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FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR NEWLYWEDS

BY MEG DIETER

One of the most important planning elements goes beyond budgeting for the big day: financial planning as newlyweds.

Money might not be the preferred topic of conversation as you and your fiancé cook dinner or walk through the park, but it's truly the foundation for building the life you wish to live. Have a proper, thorough discussion on spending habits; does your partner live paycheck to paycheck or save every penny? What are their thoughts on large purchases? If you disagree or find differences, don't panic. Acknowledge and communicate separate habits as you work through this financial checklist.

ID BASICS

If you're changing your name, contact the Social Security Administration to download the application for a name change and instructions. You'll need to provide identification and proof of marriage; if you don't visit a local office in person, original documents can be provided by mail and will be returned to you. Having the correct name on documents discussed here is crucial.

Next, update your driver's license, employer records and voter



registration records. Don't forget bank and credit card accounts, too.

CRUNCHING NET NUMBERS

You've sacrificed a femininely decorated (mostly pink) apartment and he's learned to love your rom-com binge sessions; now it's time to unify yet again, on the fiscal front. Calculate your net worth as a couple to recognize where you stand monetarily. Gather a list of combined assets, debts, credit card statements and personal credit reports. Analyze these together and keep this report in mind as you brainstorm your financial goals.

NEW TO-DOS

Post-nuptials, your focus is probably enjoying your Hawaiian honeymoon. Nevertheless, there are a few significant steps to take immediately after you've exchanged vows.

First, update your beneficiaries on investment accounts, 401(k) plans, savings accounts, retirement accounts and insurance policies. Second, give your spouse power of attorney and designate them as

a health care proxy. This provides you with peace of mind, knowing your partner can make important legal decisions regarding your health and finances in the event that you become ill or disabled. Consult with an attorney to update or write your will. These to-do list items will ensure that your assets are inherited by your spouse and your wishes are adhered to properly when you pass away.

INSPECT INSURANCE

In addition to reviewing personal accounts, take a look at your various insurance policies. Ensure that there are no lapses in coverage or duplicate coverage. If you don't have life insurance, now, the start of your new family, is the time to contemplate buying some.

Consider the type you might need, whether it's to support your family, cover education or replace income. Combining households usually means obtaining a single renter's or homeowner's insurance policy. Review health insurance policies to decide if it makes more sense to keep both plans or add your spouse as a dependent to one policy, depending on employer restrictions.

GOAL-SETTING SESSION

Setting financial goals is essential to starting your marriage off on the right foot. You've probably already discussed individual debt, retirement plans and maybe even when you'd like to start your family; now's the time to list your combined goals and plans of action.

Are you dreaming of renovating an old Victorian home or traveling the world together in retirement? Maybe you'd just like to pay off your student loans within the next five years. Whatever your goals are, it's important to physically jot them down as well as a feasible time frame. Review every few months to ensure that you're staying on track.

BASIC BUDGETING

As you send out the last of your thank-you notes and swoon over the wedding photos, make "create a spending plan" one of your final newlywed action items. Transitioning from being the sole supervisor of your expenses to combining and balancing accounts can be trying. Creating a budget will allow you and your spouse to have spending control without nitpicking each transaction.

Calculate your combined income and all the monthly purchases you generally make. Subtract your monthly purchases and bills. If you have money left over, discuss where this money will go, whether it's into savings, a treat for yourself, a rainy-day fund or debt repayment. Agree to review your budget regularly and keep up with your financial goals. The reason behind creating a budget is to guarantee that you're on the same page when it comes to making joint decisions; communicate any disagreements or unexpected expenses.

Studies show that money problems are a leading cause for divorce. You can prevent this by coming together and discussing your spending habits, budgets and savings plans before tying the knot. As the saying goes, "what's yours is mine, and what's mine is yours." Approach financial discussions openly and as a team. Start strong, affirm spending and savings habits together, then check in frequently to keep your finances on track. ♦

SOURCES: davisandcompanycpa.com, forbes.com, k-state.edu and thebalance.com.



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Kathleen and Nick Kolarik

WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

Kathleen (Sullivan) Kolarik, 29, was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. She attended Bishop Miege High School and Rockhurst University, where she graduated with a bachelor of science in nursing; she recently completed a master's in nursing education from the University of Central Missouri. She works at the University of Kansas Health System as a nurse and teaches at the University of Kansas School of Nursing.

Nick Kolarik, 30, was born and raised in Overland Park, Kansas. He also attended Bishop Miege High School, then entered Indiana State University, where he played baseball and completed a bachelor of science in information technology. Nick is employed at the University of Kansas Health System as a cybersecurity engineer. He and



- May 29, 2022 -

PHOTOGRAPHY

Joe and a Camera

GROOMSMEN SUITS/TUXES

The Black Tux

BRIDAL GOWN

True Society and BHLDN

HAIR STYLING

Maddie Brooks, Soffia Via

BRIDESMAIDS' GOWNS

Show Me Your MuMu

MAKEUP

Hillary Rehms, MakeupHill

GROOMS SUIT/TUXEDO

The Black Tux

VIDEOGRAPHY

Cody Hunt Films



Anna Baier and Marie Healy. Bridesmaids were Tessie Johnson, Annie Cribbin, Libby Kieffer, Samantha Adams, Sara Jones, Anna Henry and Christina Pratt. Best man was Monatana Astorga; groomsmen were Anthony Yates, Joe Yates, Sam Kolarik, Andrew Molina, Mickie Huynh, Ross Johnson and Steven Wirtz.



“We got married in the same church where my parents married 38 years ago and my grandparents more than 50 years ago,” Kathleen shares. “I had a nursing gala at Drexel Hall when I was in college, and I fell in love with the venue.”

Kathleen and Nick honeymooned in Salinas, California, where they stayed in a vineyard house in the beautiful pastures of heaven. ♦

Kathleen live in Mission, Kansas.

Kathleen and Nick met in high school and their relationship flourished. New Year’s Day, one day before Kathleen’s birthday, the two were walking around their neighborhood after a snowstorm and Nick got down on one knee in the middle of the street to propose.

The blissful couple tied the knot May 29, 2022, at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church followed by a reception at Drexel Hall. Maid of honor was Molly Sullivan, sister of the bride; matrons of honor were her sisters



FLORIST
Clara’s Flowers

DJ
DJ Connection

CATERER
Grand Street Cafe

CAKE
Sarah Pryor

WEDDING VENUE
St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

RECEPTION VENUE
Drexel Hall

WEDDING COORDINATORS
Molly Sullivan and Lisa Jones

Remi and Adam Peterson

- October 8, 2022 -



WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

Remi (Burns) Peterson, 24, graduated from Emporia State University in 2021 with a bachelors in business administration. After working for her family's pharmacy business as merchandising director, she is now the assistant administrator and a lead teacher for a new day care center in their hometown.

Adam Peterson, 29, graduated from Anderson County High School and went to work helping his father run their family farm just outside of Greeley, Kansas. He's also a partner with his father-in-law in a small cattle and longhorn operation. He and Remi live

in Garnett, Kansas, with their dogs Roxie, Trigger, Gunner and Colt, and enjoy spending time outdoors, hunting and fishing.

Remi and Adam met through a mutual friend, Garrett Scott, seven years ago. Garrett also had the honor of serving as best man.

"Adam proposed while we were on a trip to Colorado with our friends and family," Remi recalls. "It was one of the last days we were there when he got down on one knee and totally took me by surprise! Having my family with me when he proposed made it even more special."

The blissful couple tied the knot October 8, 2022, on Remi's



family property under the same arbor under which her older sister was married. Maid of honor was Cambree Burns; bridesmaids were Chelsii Fountain, Chelsea Doherty, Olivia Burns, Cheyenne Eddings, Mackenzie Lutz and Kinlee Jones. Garrett Scott served as best man; groomsmen were Austin Alcorn, Dakota Ferguson, Dakota Welsh, Michael Mader and Sam Pitts. Quinnlyn Doherty and Madison Hofmann served as flower girls, and ring bearers were Roman Fountain and Chase Hofmann.

“We got married on my family’s farm, ROCCEM Ranch,” Remi says of their wedding day. “The sprawling 300 acres of timber and pasture provided the perfect backdrop for our special day. We said our vows outside under an arbor built by my brother-in-law for their wedding nine years before. As a close friend serenaded our family and friends on acoustic guitar, our happy hour got the evening started and included a two-horse trailer that same friend helped us transform into a bar trailer to serve drinks from. Having signature drinks

named after each our dogs and served in souvenir cups personalized with their pictures, happy hour turned out to be everything we wanted it to be! Surrounded by 350 friends and family that evening, we shared great food, priceless moments together and danced the night away until our fireworks filled exit as husband and wife.”

Remi and Adam will take their honeymoon at a later time. As farmers, the couple worked around harvest for their wedding, and they will enjoy their special trip at just the right time for them. ♦



PHOTOGRAPHY

Nicole Renee Photography

CEREMONY GOWN

True Society by Belle Vogue Bridal

RECEPTION GOWN

Emily Hart Bridal

BRIDESMAIDS' GOWNS

David's Bridal

GROOM'S AND GROOMSMEN SUITS

Garnett Flowers and Gifts

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Wild Rose Planning & Events

HAIR STYLING & MAKEUP

Wild Cactus Hair Co.

VIDEOGRAPHY

Hum the Harmony

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Kimberly Raines and Daylight Flora

DJ

CG DJ Services

CATERER

Bull Creek BBQ and Burg & Barrel Food Trucks

CAKE

Rhonda Klein

JEWELER

Shane Co.

Sidney + Sam Nigro

- August 12, 2022 -

WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER



Sidney and Sam Nigro, who attended different high schools, met on a blind double date, when friends of both brought them along for a gathering in 2014. It was a simple meeting in a high school parking lot that turned into forever.

Sidney (Sibenaller) Nigro, 25, graduated from the University of Kansas and works as a regional safety manager at MHC Kenworth. A lover of sports, Sidney plans to see a football game at every NFL stadium and baseball game at every MLB park in her lifetime. To relax, she enjoys playing with the couple's black lab, Chief, of course, a sports reference.

Sam Nigro, 26, a lifelong Kansas City resident, graduated from the University of Kansas and now sells health insurance at Broker Source. Sam enjoys travel and adventure, experiencing the best of every culture; he hopes to visit every continent in his life. At home, he likes to explore the city through food.

Sidney and Sam were just 16 when they started dating, and they had a standing Sunday date for church, brunch at Harvey's and a visit to the City Market. As adults, they were living downtown, and Sam asked Sidney to reminisce with brunch at



Harvey's. "I thought nothing of it," Sidney smiles. "But July 31, 2021, was the date that topped the rest. His plan perfectly captured almost a decade of history, starting the beginning of a new life together at the same spot where our story began."

The blissful couple tied the knot August 12, 2022. Sidney's maid of honor was Bailey Sibenaller; bridesmaids were Erin Schaper, Grace Curl, Maura Kessler, Morgan Steffes and Haley Hamke. Sam's best man was Tyler Soetaert; groomsmen were Josh Krestine, Austin Bernard, Tanner Kimball, Andrew Bellerive and Cameron St. Clair. Serving as ushers were Duncan Strang, Cole Mitchelson and Brad Ferrel. Torre Prendergast, Lilly Connealy and Charlotte Connealy were flower girls; ring bearers were Tommy Prendergast, Christian Kelly and Cy Kelly.

The ceremony at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church was unique, as the priest who officiated the wedding is a friend of the Nigro family who baptized Sam and officiated two of Sam's siblings' weddings. Upon arrival at the reception at Hotel Kansas City, guests received a hand-curated welcome basket that contained local spirits, beer, coffee, barbecue sauce, and a personalized note describing how each product connected to Kansas City and to the couple.

"Our reception in the modern Starlight Ballroom with some of the best views of the city was the perfect juxtaposition of modern and traditional," Sidney describes. "To showcase the venue, we selected a black and white color palette to complement the hotel's classic feel. The venue was filled with lush white florals, roses

and baby's breath, and guests enjoyed dinner, dancing, and cocktails under candlelight." A unique touch at the reception was the Weddings Through the Years table with photographs of family weddings on both sides beginning in the early 1900s. It commemorated the history of love that made it possible for Sidney and Sam to meet!

Sidney and Sam spent a week unwinding in paradise at the Zoetry Agua Punta Cana, in the Dominican Republic, where Sam surprised Sidney with a private helicopter trip to Santo Domingo. ♦



PHOTOGRAPHY
Sara Reed Studios

BRIDAL GOWN
Bridal Extraordinaire

BRIDESMAIDS' GOWNS
Show Me Your Mumu

GROOMS SUIT/TUXEDO
Bridal Extraordinaire

GROOMSMEN SUITS/TUXES
Bridal Extraordinaire

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Posh KC Blow Dry Bar

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Miles Makeup

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Kat Barlow Films

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CATERER
Hotel Kansas City

CAKE
McLain's Bakery

RECEPTION VENUE
Hotel Kansas City

WEDDING VENUE
Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic
Church

WEDDING COORDINATOR
Lauren Lindmark



JUST SAYIN'

BY Q104 PERSONALITY JENNY MATTHEWS
PHOTO BY LAUREN FRISCH PUSATERI

I've often joked about how my husband was "caller nine" and that's how we met. And the truth is, we did meet through the radio. But it didn't happen exactly like that!

I was living in West Palm Beach, Florida, happily single after removing myself from a toxic years-long relationship. I was working as part of a morning show team on a country radio station. I had my own little apartment. I had friends. I was definitely not looking for love. The single life felt nice.

I checked my email after the show one morning. Now, this was long before the days of social media. Email was it. So, I opened a new message and all it said was "single or attached?" I have no idea why, but I typed back immediately, "very single." To this day, I don't know why. I had no idea who the email was from. He emailed back and sent a photo

of himself. Told me to take a look and let him know if I was interested.

He. Was. Gorgeous. I called my mom and sister right away and shared my news. I sent the photo to them. We were all in agreement that he was either a) a psycho stalker killer; b) had no legs (as he was sitting at a table in the picture); or c) it wasn't really him. Again, for reasons unknown, I wrote back, and we decided to meet for a date a few days later.

I had heard of love at first sight. I'm not sure I believed such a thing was possible. But I felt it. I knew this was the man I would spend the rest of my life with. I knew it so much that I wrote it in a letter that I kept

hidden for years to come. I gave it to him on our wedding day.

Here we are 20 years later, and I love him more and more every single day. People ask what's the secret to our relationship. All I can say is this. He's my very best friend. We have so much trust and mutual respect. We don't hold each other back from living out our dreams. We encourage each other. We are a team when it comes to parenting. We're in this together and we're committed to our marriage.

Don't settle. I almost did. You deserve to feel truly loved and cared for. It's worth the wait. ♦

Jenny Matthews co-hosts *The Morning Drive* with Mike Kellar + Jenny Matthews on Q104 New Hit Country, weekday mornings from 6 - 10am. Connect at www.jennymatthewsonair.com and check out *The Morning After* with Mike Kellar + Jenny Matthews podcast!

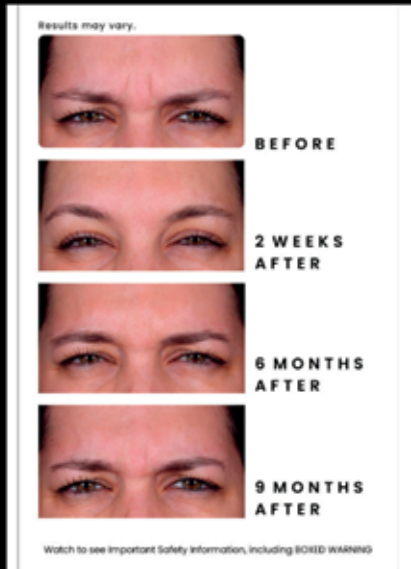
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FEB. 19

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OVERLAND PARK CONVENTION CENTER

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**CAPRICORN**

(DEC. 22-JAN. 19)

Valentine's Day is the day when most turn their hearts toward love, but you may find yourself focusing that love energy on yourself. There is nothing wrong with this, so put aside all feelings of guilt.

**TAURUS**

(APR. 20-MAY 20)

This will be a significant month for you, but the universe is going to have to teach you a lesson about stubbornness unless you can learn to rein it in. Lucky breaks are going to manifest in odds-defying numbers, allowing you to deal with some issues you've been having in the area of debt. The key to making the most of this is being ready and willing to let go of those things that no longer serve you.

**VIRGO**

(AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)

February is a time for coming together, and your sign typifies this in February. Allow yourself to become very adaptable; avoid judgmental thinking toward others, and literally you can write your own ticket. Small details may bog you down this month, so resolve yourself to being a "big picture" thinker for the duration.

**AQUARIUS**

(JAN. 20-FEB. 18)

Taking things easy is good advice this month. Most attempts to start anything new are likely to blow up in your face. Relax, take things as they come, be willing and flexible to try new things, and challenge previously held ideas about the world around you.

**GEMINI**

(MAY 21-JUN. 20)

With ruling planets positioning themselves above your horizon, this means that it is full steam ahead for you in all areas. Even the retrogrades won't be problematic for you. The tendency is going to be to overdo it, as your energy levels will be very high. Make sure that after the 20th you allow yourself some down time.

**LIBRA**

(SEPT. 23-OCT. 22)

It would serve you well to remember that inner harmony can give rise to outer harmony where that special someone and family are concerned. Most of the ruling planets are in auspicious positions to give you the needed energetic push that you've been looking for to complete tasks and projects. You may very well receive a special surprise from someone close.

STAR JOURNEYS

BY MELODY BUSSEY

February brings renewal and feelings of the heart and home. For most signs, this will manifest not only as tender feelings for those they love, but for themselves as well. Taking a moment to acknowledge yourself makes you more available emotionally for those you love. Loving someone often means loving yourself, too. This is a time when the ruling planets are moving forward, bringing you along for the ride.

**PISCES**

(FEB. 19-MAR. 20)

That feeling of loving and being loved will be strong. Single Pisces stand a chance of meeting "the one" this month, while those who are in relationships will see them grow and deepen. You will also become more social, making it enjoyable to meet people. While the retrograde that happened in December might have left you feeling impatient regarding a new situation, project or idea, it will be in February that you will receive good news about it.

**CANCER**

(JUN. 21-JUL. 23)

Long-term changes to your financial horizon will happen this month. These changes are going to have far-reaching consequences for the better. A change in jobs, careers or occupations is likely and your social calendar will be full.

**SCORPIO**

(OCT. 23-NOV. 21)

Jupiter is moving into your "house o' love" on the 15th, meaning that things are going to sizzle for you in time for Valentine's Day. Make sure that prior to the day you lay a good foundation for making that happen, leaving nothing to chance. You love to take risks, so why not take a chance on love this month?

**ARIES**

(MAR. 21-APR. 19)

You may find yourself at a crossroads this month as your short-term projects have been completed, leading to a "now what?" moment. You are going to be dynamic in dealing with people, so take advantage of it and try your hand at something new.

**LEO**

(JUL. 24-AUG. 22)

This is a time of transition for you, and you are going to feel the strain of it. Remember that you are never given more than you can handle. Make sure to be kind to yourself and rest if you need to. Exercise your good humor to make it through this period.

**SAGITTARIUS**

(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

This is the month to let your softer, caring side shine. Set aside the stubborn streak, the need to have things your way all of the time. If you can do this, your Valentine's Day will be spectacular. On the career front it is best to just let things coast.



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