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So much goes into planning a wedding. Finding the perfect dress, the venue, a photographer, flowers; the list goes on and on. It can be exciting and stressful at the same time. Everything that goes into preparing for the big day, and trying to make it perfect, is worth it when it all comes together. Then there's the reality. It doesn't always go exactly as planned. Maybe it rains; that's good luck, right? A bridesmaid gets sick or a bump all of a sudden appears on your face out of nowhere. Truth is, things always happen that are out of our control. It is the imperfections that keep us on our toes and in tune with reality.

It is easy to get wrapped up in trying to make your wedding day perfect, as you should since it's one of the biggest days of your life. Don't forget to enjoy the day and soak up each and every moment. Know that if everything was just perfect, it would be too easy and then you would have less to laugh about later.

I think the same goes with marriage. We put so much pressure on ourselves, from the day we get married, to stay in the "honeymoon" stage. We try to have the perfect marriage, or what we and our peers believe to be perfect. I know I did. It was a hard reality

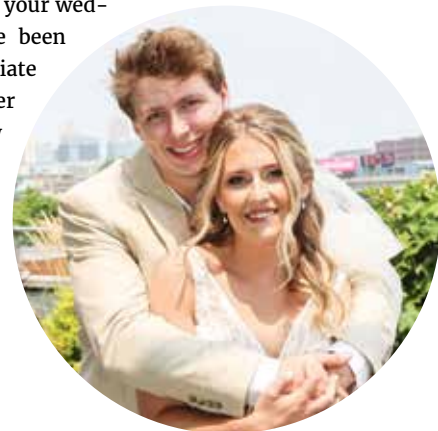
actly alike, neither are two marriages.

So, whether you're planning your wedding, just got married, or have been married for a long time, appreciate the imperfections. Nothing ever goes exactly as planned but know that is okay and be okay with it. Control what you can control. Enjoy your wedding day and every day that follows, perfect or not.

Cherish It,

to accept, but no marriage is perfect; every marriage is different. Marriage takes a lot of work and practice, but doesn't everything that we value?

I know that my marriage isn't perfect, but is anything? I am happy knowing that it is something worth working on and investing time in. There are highs and lows, but we learn from the lows and grow stronger. We enjoy the highs and strive for more. I learned the hard way not to compare our marriage to others because only you know what works for you. Just as no two wedding are ex-



This wedding holds an extra place in our hearts. We are so thankful for all the help you have given us over the years and the love that you have shared with our boys. Congratulations Molly and Riley!

Tammy
TAMMY CRYSTAL MCDONALD

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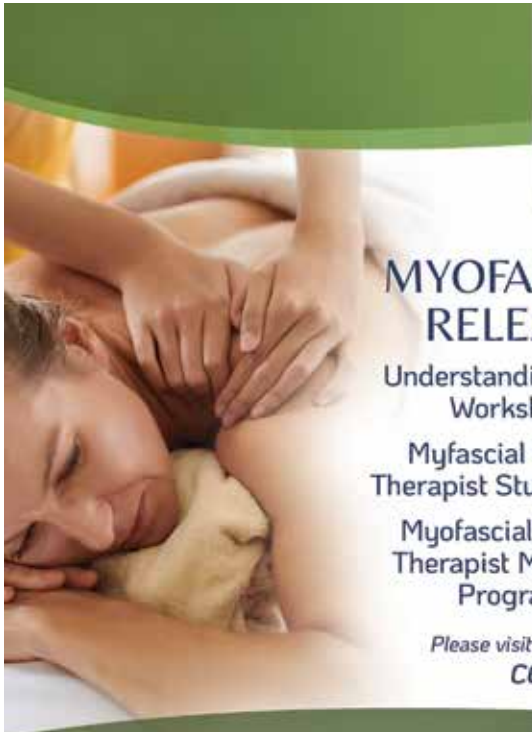
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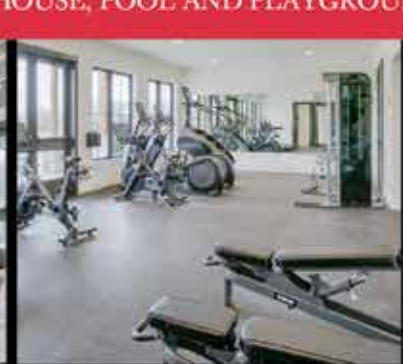
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BY DR. JILL JENKINS

Q

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A

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Q

What should I do if my child has a dental emergency?

A

Dental accidents can happen anywhere, anytime. Knowing what to do can sometimes mean the difference between saving and losing your child's permanent tooth. Pediatric dentists are available to their patients on call after hours to aid in any unfortunate emergency situations. If you have concerns for your child after a fall or bump, first call your pediatric dentist for advice. Some situations like a broken tooth to the nerve or lost permanent tooth require immediate attention. If a permanent tooth is lost or knocked out, time is of the essence. It is important to locate the lost permanent tooth and keep it moistened by placing the tooth in milk or a tooth preservation liquid or inside the cheek for an older child who won't swallow it. Call the dentist immediately or seek care at a children's emergency room that has a dentist on call. ♦



Dr. Jill Jenkins is a highly respected pediatric dentist and owner of Jenkins Dentistry for Kids. With over 20 years of experience, Dr. Jenkins has dedicated her career to promoting children's oral health and well-being. A former president of the Kansas Dental Association and delegate for the American Dental Association, she has played a pivotal role in advancing dental care standards at state and national levels. Dr. Jenkins is renowned for her commitment to cultivating a positive and joyful environment for her treasured patients and team. Dr. Jenkins remains dedicated to continuous growth for herself and her practice by incorporating leadership training, new treatment initiatives and constant personal and professional education to ensure the highest quality of care for the young patients they serve.

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“I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD HAPPEN TO ME...”

BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

“I work out—hard. I don’t smoke or drink alcohol. I watch what I eat and keep my blood sugar in check. But that Friday afternoon in May I knew something was terribly wrong.”



“It began with a sensation of indigestion and within ten minutes had moved to the center of my chest with a pounding that went through to my spine,” Trish Acton described. Emergency responders rushed her to the emergency room. Her troponin, or cardiac enzyme, levels continued to rise through the night, indicating a heart attack.

“After the episode, I felt fine but was admitted. I questioned the hospitalist; could this have been takotsubo cardiomyopathy? His response was to wait and see what the cardiac catheterization showed.” Takotsubo cardiomyopathy is also called broken heart syndrome;

it can occur after a sudden emotional or physical stress. Ninety percent of all cases occur in women. It has the same symptoms as a heart attack but is not caused by underlying cardiovascular

disease. The main symptoms are chest pain and shortness of breath; the left ventricle balloons so that it looks like a Japanese octopus trap, or tako-tsubo.

“I have certainly had extreme stress recently,” Trish continued. “But during the catheterization, I heard the radiologist gasp, ‘Well, look at that!’ and the cardiologist leaned into my face and said, ‘I’m so sorry; the blockages are too big to stent.’”

One open heart surgery, three bypasses, seven weeks of cardiac rehab and eight months later, Trish is feeling more like herself. “Thinking back, I had a little fatigue, some shortness of breath while working out and sometimes some nausea. Otherwise, I considered myself physically fit.”

In July 2019, a 17-year study of women under 55 who were diagnosed for the first time with coronary artery disease published in the Journal of the American Heart Association reported that the rates of heart disease remained flat for younger adults instead of decreasing. Dr. Liam Brunham, the study’s senior co-author, said, “This is in stark contrast to the rates of heart disease overall, which are coming down quite significantly because of improvements in education, diagnosis and treatment.

More than 60 million women, or 44 percent in the United States, are living with some form of heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States and can affect women at any age. In 2021, it was responsible for the deaths of 310,661 women, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Research has shown that only about 56 percent of U.S. women recognize that heart disease is their number one killer. The takeaway from these studies is that women need to see a physician sooner, have their cholesterol checked earlier, and focus on exercise and eating healthier food.

Since family members share genes and environments that can affect their health and risk for disease, it’s important to recognize that heart disease runs in families. The risk can also increase based on age, race and ethnicity. Trish is my sister. We have discussed the effects of genetics on our future health. She recalls that our maternal grandmother had cardiac problems, and a maternal uncle had a heart attack when he was in his late 40s. He was also a chain smoker and had a fatal stroke at 61. At my next checkup, I discussed what changes I should make in my lifestyle with my primary care provider.

As we reviewed life events and blood work over the last year, my doctor pulled up the ASCVD Risk Estimator Plus app on her phone. It’s a tool developed by the American College of Cardiology to estimate a patient’s ten-year risk of having a nonfatal myocardial infarction, coronary heart disease death or stroke. The initials stand for atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease. It’s best used to establish a reference point, forecast the potential affect of different interventions on patient risk, and reassess ASCVD risk at follow-up visits. The result of the formula—which incorporates factors such as age, sex, race, weight, blood pressure readings, total blood cholesterol, history of diabetes and smoking—places the patient in categories of low risk, borderline risk, intermediate risk and high risk. “You’re at just over 5 percent without factoring in that you have a first-degree relative who has had a myocardial infarction. At 7 percent, we have to treat with a statin to stabilize plaques that might be present,” she said.

We hope all readers, female and male, will maintain regular medical care provider appointments, cholesterol checks, blood sugar checks, stay active, put down the cigs and other forms of nicotine and eat right. Trish adds, “My advice from experience is that if you have an episode, don’t ignore it, because you will have another and that could very well result in sudden death.” Please take this information to heart...no pun intended. ♦

SOURCES: [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov), [heart.org](https://www.heart.org), [health.harvard.edu](https://www.health.harvard.edu), [acc.org](https://www.acc.org).



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SET THE MOOD: WEDDING FLORAL TRENDS

BY LINDA R PRICE

Floral creations reflect your personality and leave a lasting impression on your guests. This year's floral design trends range from classic to vibrant, monochromatic to bursting with colors, minimalist to extravagant. It's less about tradition and more about personal expression and creativity.

Sustainability, local sourcing, textures, bold color palettes and unexpected inclusions give brides and designers a no-holds-barred opportunity to express themselves. An emphasis on supporting local growers reflects a broader societal shift toward responsible consumption. This trend is driven by growing awareness of the environmental affects of mass-produced, imported flowers, which can involve systems for growth, storage and transport that consume massive amounts of energy.

LIVELY AND BRIGHT

In 2024, brides expect to use high-impact, eye-catching, vibrant colors. Guests will see a lot of vibrant pinks, oranges, yellows, purples and electric blues. Designers can create a bold look with rich colors such as emerald green, burgundy, dark blues and dark purples, adding a touch of sophistication and drama to your wedding. Dahlias, peonies, ranunculus, fuschias and anthuriums all fit this profile.

ASYMMETRY

If your vision is to break away from the balanced, rounded bouquet, centerpieces and backdrops, think about a free-form design. Florals, greenery, succulents, even additions such as small branches, weeds, herbs, grasses and fern fronds can give your display the impact of an organic creation.

Dramatic and sculptural floral elements are expected to make an appearance, with large quantities of single flowers grouped together creating fantastic statement pieces.

This approach shifts the focus away from the micro design elements, and the eye sees the overall shape of the design.



MINIMALIST

Asymmetry combines with a minimalist approach using unique elements such as dried flowers or herbs intermixed with fresh blooms. Natural-looking bouquets and arrangements with wildflowers and unusual foliage move away from traditional roses and eucalyptus. Soft

lines and floral cascades contrast with firm lines provided by twigs or succulents and provide new texture.

NATURAL

Imagine thistles, succulents and air plants that create an interesting visual effect and bring your vision to life. Mix different textures together in single arrangements or use them as accent pieces throughout your venue. Dried elements such as lavender or wheat stalks provide a rustic touch, larger-than-life dried palms give a modern boho twist. Dried banana leaves have a contemporary sculptural feel.

The unexpected, such as berries, fruits and vegetables used as seasonal accents, introduce a fresh element.

STATEMENT PIECES

A trend gaining traction is using floral arches, chandeliers, hanging and floating arrangements composed of fresh blooms cascading from a primary element of your venue design. Combined with this trend is the use of minimal, carefully designed table centerpieces that complement the statement piece. It can create a dramatic, fairytale atmosphere that surprises and photographs exceptionally well.

THE CLASSICS

Favorites such as peonies, dahlias, ranunculus, garden roses and lilies will remain popular choices; more modern blooms such as cos-

mos, chamomile, ornamental kale, scabiosa and tiny textures will be added. Not to be left out are lilies, tulips, orchids and hydrangeas. All are timeless blooms that provide a touch of romance and sophistication.

To be truly eco-friendly, consider using potted plants in your décor. After the wedding, they can be taken home, gifted to guests or replanted, making for a sustainable, zero-waste floral solution.

BARBIECORE

She's endured for 60 years; thanks to the movie, pink will be around for the foreseeable future. If you're embracing the color and trend, there are almost limitless options for wedding floral design. Pink comes in a world of hues and shades, from the lightest, most pastel iterations, warm peach tones, watermelons and corals to vibrant magenta and deep, almost purple tones.

Think about using different shapes and textures of pinks and pink-colored leaves, such as caladiums, rex begonias, arrowhead plants and all the rainbow of pink-tinted succulents such as echeverias. Pair with cymbidium orchids in a deeper shade.

REPURPOSE AND DONATE

Extend the joy of the wedding by donating your floral arrangements to a charity, hospital, care home or homebound individuals. Brides who have church weddings frequently leave their florals for a later worship service.

Chances are your city has a business or nonprofit that will organize repurposing your flowers. Forget Me Knot in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, started after Leona Davis planned her daughter's wedding and asked, "What happens to our flowers?" Following the wedding, the family divided the flowers into bouquets and delivered them to a local nursing home. "When we saw the residents' faces upon receiving the flowers and hearing the bride and groom's love story, our hearts erupted with love and gratitude. It was clear that we couldn't stop with this wedding!" she writes on the website.

No matter what your wedding theme is, choose flowers that you love and that represent your personal style and vision. ♦

SOURCES: mooncast-films.com, ebonfloral.com, melodyfrenchdesigns.co and wholeblossoms.com.



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"We're Laser Focused on Laser Hair Removal!"

BY CHRIS WESTWATER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER DEERY

With spring break, summer and weddings on the horizon, now is a great time to add laser hair removal to your self-care regimen. The team at Laser Derm Med Spa is "laser focused on laser hair removal," said Eric Leiker, CEO of Laser Derm Med Spa. "Even though it sounds cliché, laser hair removal truly can change your life by increasing your self-confidence." He has done more than 100,000 treatments in more than 15 years as a provider. He's worked with people from every sphere of life, and he's been on the receiving end of hugs and happy tears of satisfied patients.

"Patients return because of the top-notch customer service and affordable prices," he said. If removing unwanted hair is on your to-do list, schedule an appointment through the Laser Derm Med Spa website or call today, and learn first-hand how Laser Derm Med Spa sets themselves apart from the competition.

THE LASER DERM MED SPA DIFFERENCE

"We differentiate ourselves by focusing exclusively on laser hair removal without contracts, packages or high-pressure sales," Eric noted. Clearly stated pricing and information about specials can be found on the Laser Derm Med Spa website.

The family-owned business has become a local fixture at 75th Street and Quivira Road in Shawnee with 20 years in business. It has



evolved over time from a med spa with many services to one focused solely on laser hair removal. "Since 2020, Laser Derm Med Spa has invested in 10 top-of-the-line Cynosure lasers," Eric recounted. "With multiple lasers, we have the ability to customize treatments based on skin tone and hair type." In addition to staying on top of laser hair removal technology, he and his wife, Kaitlyn, director of clinical training, have grown their staff to 25 including over a dozen certified registered nurses with 100 percent retention. With so much growth, they've renovated their space to meet the needs of their burgeoning business.

"We're different from other businesses in our field because we're here to educate our patients, not sell services. For instance, did you know the darker and coarser the hair, the more effective laser hair treatments are?" Eric said, "If you're not an ideal candidate,



“Since 2020, Laser Derm Med Spa has invested in 10 top-of-the-line Cynosure lasers,” Eric recounted. “With multiple lasers, we have the ability to customize treatments based on skin tone and hair type.”



we'll be up front with you." However, for those who choose to proceed with laser hair removal, Eric explained, "Most patients do the complimentary consultation and start their treatment on the same visit without the inconvenience of multiple trips to the office." This is one example of how Eric, Kaitlyn and the Laser Derm Med Spa family work together to make their patients happy.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF, ACCREDITED PROVIDERS

"I am very proud of the culture at our office," Eric said. "We know in order to take care of our patients, we need to take care of our staff. They are the direct connection to our patients. If our staff are happy, our patients are going to be satisfied and happy as well. We're blessed to have a lot of five-star Google reviews including comments on how friendly and welcoming we are."

Laser Derm Med Spa's providers are highly skilled. "We pride ourselves on hiring RNs exclusively as our treatment providers," said Eric. "The person who is doing your consultation at the beginning will continue to do your treatments throughout the course of your series here unless you'd prefer another provider. The treatment rooms are no-judgment zones, and you will build rapport with your provider over time."

GET WEDDING READY

Laser Derm Med Spa is offering a few specials to help the bride-and groom-to-be and anyone who wants to get beach ready. "I

think most women would love to not have to shave while on their honeymoon or worry about ingrown hairs or razor bumps," Eric said. "It typically takes five to nine sessions for the best results because of your hairs' growth cycles. Each time you come back in, it's a whole different group of hairs that are growing. That's the reason for multiple sessions. You'll shave the day of your treatment, then it'll take about two weeks for that little hair root to fall out. For the next two weeks you'll likely have very little, if any, hair until another couple of weeks goes by and a new hair cycle grows in."

Visit Laser Derm Med Spa and say goodbye to your razor! ♦

Call 913-962-1869 or visit laser-derm.com to schedule your appointment today.

SPECIAL OFFERS

- Beach Ready Special: underarms, full bikini/Brazilian, full legs, linea and feet/toes for \$189 per treatment.
- Full Brazilian and underarms for \$99 per treatment.
- Guys Special: full back, shoulders, upper arms and posterior neck for \$150 per treatment.
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All listed offers are valid through March 31, 2024. Start treatment and lock in pricing for two years from the date of the first appointment. ♦



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Donkeys



don't usually come to mind as an animal that obeys commands and follows orders. They're thought of as stubborn, persnickety and obstinate. But Lauren Wiehe has an incredibly different outlook on these long-eared creatures that she loves to the ninth degree, with four of them living on her Louisburg, Kansas, farm. She is so sure of their dedication and hard work that she and her husband, Eric, have based a business on them, The Louisburro, to hire for events such as weddings and deliver drinks, food or favors to attendees.



**BY CINDY MCDERMOTT | PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER DEERY
SHOT ON LOCATION AT THE LOUISBURRO**

We made the official decision to create The Louisburro in November 2021 and began our LLC in February 2022. The donkeys live on our property as our pasture pets. Our business objective is to bring something special and unique to give your event the extra edge that helps create memories for family and friends," she shared. "My husband and I come as a team to each event and our children, Nolan, eight, and Dean, six, help around the farm to earn extra money for

all their fishing gear. One of our marketing taglines is 'Donkeys that deliver.'

Lauren refers to her furry "employees" as donkeys or donks, although "burro" can be used; it's the Spanish word for these little critters. She laughs that the alliterations of Beer Burro or Beverage Burro do have a certain charm and fit these creatures to a T.

THE CHARMS OF A DONKEY

Wedding festivities are a big part of her business but clients have also called upon

these four-legged beings for couple showers, baby showers, graduation parties, pop-up happy hours and more. "If you can dream it, we can probably make it happen," she described. "The donkeys typically join in for cocktail hour to serve beverages and help engage guests. Selfies are one of the donk's specialties." Working hours for the team are between one to one-and-a-half hours per event.

The Louisburro is focused on working with brides to seamlessly add the donkeys to



HOW IT BEGAN

Lauren points out that the use of donkeys as delivery animals for events is common in her hometown of Houston, Texas. The concept of using them for weddings has been in the works in the hill country of that region for quite some time. But when she moved north to the Kansas City region she told her husband, who grew up on a large family farm in Piper, Kansas, that is still in operation, that a barnyard full of animals must be in the picture.

"I told my husband that if he moved me to the country as soon as our kids were in school full time I would be requiring a farm with all the animals," she recalled. "Having animals is therapy to me. It brings peace to me. The donkeys are not difficult to care for. People are gushing and excited to see them at events, and it brings income to my family. We are as busy as we want to be and we're booking far in advance. We make family plans first and then book up the business."

Lauren had many animals growing up in Texas but she shares that her understanding of the positivity animals can bring was fully recognized during her time as an educator. "I taught junior high special education and coached volleyball, basketball and tennis. I had and still have a new puppy that started to go to school with me a few days a week," she stated. "I had several students that hardly said a word in class, mostly scared of being made fun of and afraid to be called on. When my puppy, Petey, would come to school, our quiet students blossomed. After that year, my co-teacher and I added several animals to our classroom, including a rabbit named Bun-bun, a rose-hair tarantula and a hedgehog. We could see a positive mood change for students any time the animals were involved. Students became conversational who otherwise rarely spoke."

She observes this same behavior with guests that she serves through The Louisburro. Smiles race across faces and conversations begin flowing about these furry servers that might be decked out in a tux or another type of costume matching the bridal theme. They also come equipped with diapers just in case of accidents. "They allow people to interact with each other in situations that they otherwise might not strike up a conversation with a stranger," she said. "It takes the anxiety out of the small talk or going to an event in which you might not know anyone. Subtle animal therapy and entertainment in one package."

Though some owners and breeders claim donkeys are not stubborn, they do have minds of their own, and Lauren adamantly states that her donkeys are obstinate. "It's their personality, and they are not afraid to let me know, gently, when they aren't happy," she remarked. "Carrots and peppermint treats motivate them. But at the end of the day, I remind all clients that they are animals and I cannot make them do anything." She is also quick to point out that not every donkey's personality is a fit for her business and that disposition is engrained in them at an early age.

But donkeys possess many positive traits that make them perfect for this type of work and the foundation for Lauren's profitable business. She notes they are one of the easiest and most docile farm animals to work with. "I often tell friends that donkeys are easier to care for than a dog or kids. Water and hay and they are good to go. They thrive with human interaction and each one has a unique personality."

the event theme. Many couples send their vision boards or colors so that Lauren and Eric can work them into the donkeys' ensemble. For their presentations, each donkey is groomed to perfection, fully sudsed up and blow dried for a neat and clean appearance. "We've done Fourth of July themes, fiestas, disco. We've had a Friday, October 13 wedding with cobwebs and bats on the costumes," she noted. "We tell clients that they shouldn't be hesitant to ask because we want to fit your aesthetic." Lauren adds that another part of her business is her wholesale peony farm also located on her Louisburg acreage. Down the road, the couple plans to add a u-pick peony patch to the farm.

With a nod to her love of great musical talent, her four donkeys are named Judy Garland, Martin "Marty" Short, Jolene (named for Dolly Parton's relationship nemesis) and Lou after Louis Armstrong. Two are trained as delivery animals and one is in the process. Baby Lou is offered for lots of petting and love.

TEACHING A BEAST OF BURDEN

Lauren and Eric train the donkeys to carry coolers that are holders across their backs and deliver bottles of wine, sodas, beers and other liquid refreshments. She notes that it is a trial-and-error process as they expand the donkeys' offerings to guests. On the horizon is the potential of carrying a flat appetizer tray on their backs, which will take a considerable amount of training.

"At first, training is just walking them and getting them used to walking with us. Then we slowly add weight on their back," Lauren advised. "We use a reward system of carrots and peppermints to train them. We also try to get them used to noise and being around kids and fast motion."

NO HEE-HAW ABOUT THIS COMPANY

While this type of business might not be everyone's cup of tea, Lauren's ability to make a success of an off-the-wall idea and build it into a solid enterprise is impressive. Many entrepreneurs look for something that sets them apart from the competition but Lauren hit that goal out of the barnyard. Her advice for others rings true for all business people no matter the mission.

"Stay true to your vision. Be flexible and open to new ideas. Do the weird thing. If everyone looks at you like you're crazy, you're headed in the right direction," she noted. "You don't want to do what everyone else is doing. Sometimes you have to pivot, but don't compromise, and don't say yes to everything. For me, some things aren't in the best interest of your business and your animals."

For particular groups looking for success that The Louisburro can help bring, she shares these ideas. "For brides, do what makes you happy for your big day. Tune everything else out. For potential clients, choose something that will make your day memorable for you. Each event we do is so incredibly unique. From a backyard barbecue birthday to black tie events, we can help make your day exceptionally unique. Make it work for everything but it may not be for everyone. For entrepreneurs, do the weird thing."

One of the most beloved donkeys for children and adults is Eeyore from A.A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*. "Thanks for noticin' me" was one of the most memorable lines from that book published in 1926 and was voiced by Eeyore. While most Pooh characters are happy, Eeyore, with his tail attached by a pin, reads a bit gloomy. But his responses can be a delightful juxtaposition to the other characters' dialogue. While Judy, Marty, Jolene and Lou at The Louisburro can be very obstinate and stubborn, even for small creatures, Lauren claims that "noticin'" this team will not be an issue.

"My first donkey that we still own came home in the back of my Infiniti SUV. We drove two hours to pick up that first donkey," she said. "They're our pets. Every morning when we feed them, they like to be loved. They like to be talked to. They're such docile animals. I would say a donkey in general is kind of low key at home. They're just not a lot of work or not a lot of effort. People love them." ♦

"Do the weird thing. If everyone looks at you like you're crazy, you're headed in the right direction," she noted. "You don't want to do what everyone else is doing. Sometimes you have to pivot, but don't compromise, and don't say yes to everything. For me, some things aren't in the best interest of your business and your animals."



*Photo by Tonya Tomony
of Expressions Exposed Photography*

ROASTED TOMATO SOUP

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



INGREDIENTS

- 3½ pounds fresh Roma or plum tomatoes, halved lengthwise (about 14 Roma tomatoes)
- 1 large yellow onion, sliced (or 2 small)
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled but kept whole
- ¾ teaspoon dried oregano
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup olive oil (Cervasi preferred)
- 4 cups chicken stock or broth (depending on the desired thickness of the soup)
- 3 tbsp. butter
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh basil leaves (optional)
- ½ cup heavy cream (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Place rack in the middle of the oven. Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees. Wash and cut tomatoes in half the long way. Place on a rimmed sheet pan cut side up. Scatter the onions and garlic around the tomatoes. Drizzle the tomatoes, onions and garlic with olive oil. Sprinkle with dried oregano, and generously season with salt and pepper. Bake for 25-35 minutes. You know they are done when they begin to caramelize and char a bit. Let cool slightly, and place roasted vegetables in a food processor or a blender and puree until very smooth. Alternatively, you can add the roasted vegetables to a pot and use an immersion blender to blend until smooth. Place the pureed veggies into a pot. Slowly add the stock or broth until the soup has your desired consistency. If it's too thick, add a bit more stock. Then add the butter. Allow the soup to simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in the cream and basil if using just before serving. Serve with green salad and crusty bread. ♦

TIPS

1: You can substitute any tomatoes you'd like. Roma, plum, beefsteak or heirloom all work well.

2: Substitute vegetable stock for chicken stock to make it vegetarian.



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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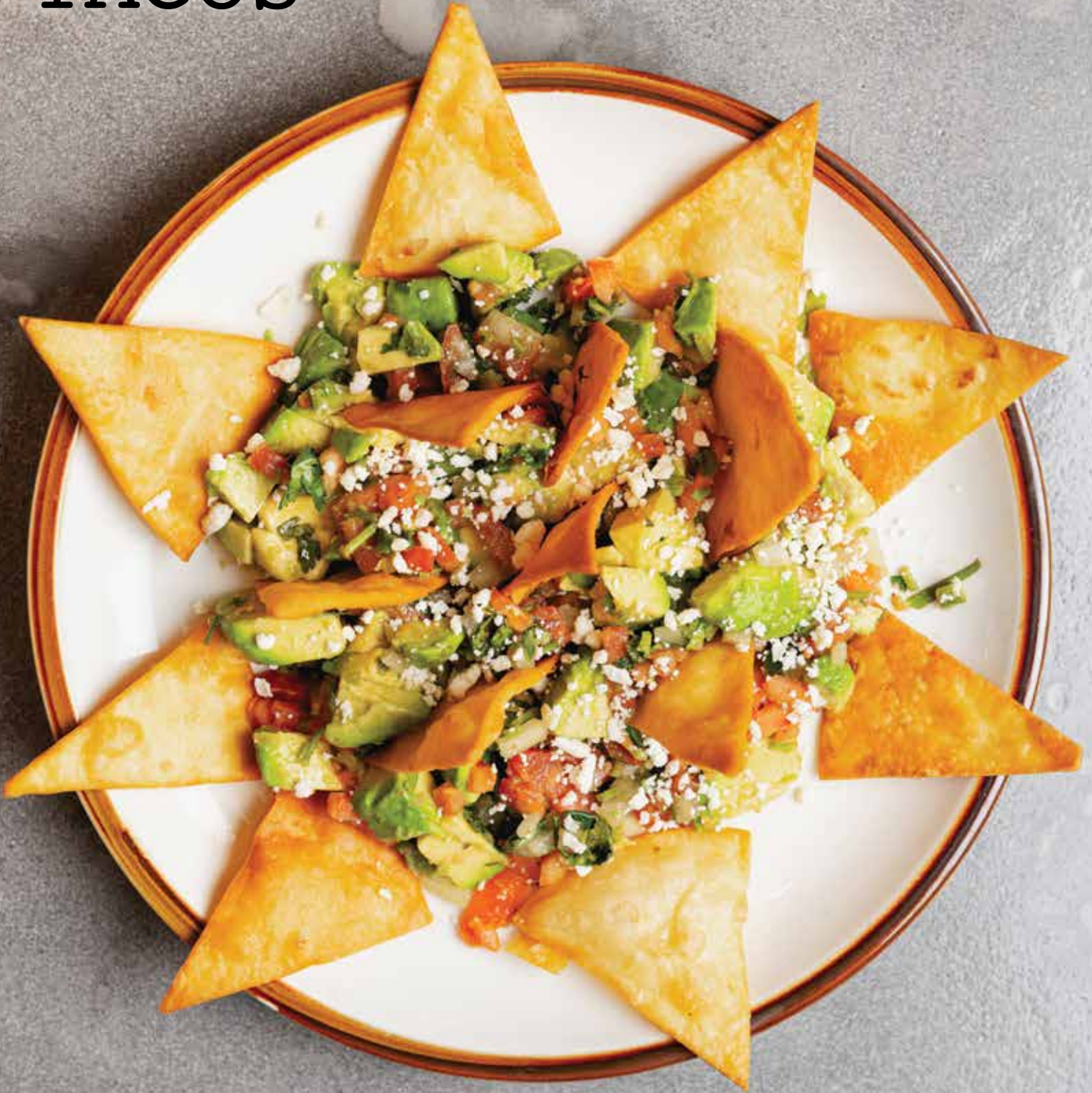
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TACOS



AND TEQUILA

I was introduced to Tacos & Tequila in Overland Park a few months ago by a friend who knew Mexican restaurants were one of my go-to choices for a night out, whether it was for a date night, time with the girls or with my kids. I've found myself making a weekly – or more often – excursion to this friendly, welcoming community cantina for the creativity and variety of their menu.

WRITTEN AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER DEERY



For our tasting, we were welcomed by the host, and I immediately felt that she and our server would recognize us and remember us on our next visit. The interior vibe is bright and colorful and it's clearly family friendly; we noted several tables with children working on coloring sheets while waiting for their meal to arrive.

"We are a family-owned restaurant, and we feel that detail is integral to our identity," said Luis Morales, co-owner with his brother, Juan Carlos Morales. "We want our guests to feel that they are a part of that family. We consider our staff members family, too, whether they're related to us or not. This is so important to us that we are closed on Sundays so that we can all rest and reset with family and have time for worship."

A company-wide conviction is that food has the power to bring us together. And it certainly has this cold, snowy early evening in January, with most seats filled. I see a number of folks who have become regulars, as I have. Since it's frigid outside, we begin with the soups, guaranteed to take off the chill. The Pozole, a hearty traditional soup, features hominy, pork, onions, jalapenos and just the right



combination of spices. It's garnished with lettuce and radish, served with corn chips. The *Sopa de Tortilla* is luscious and satisfying, shredded chicken in a spicy broth topped with tortilla strips, avocado and cotija cheese. Both are just right for a light meal or first course.

And since we're at Tacos & Tequila, we must discuss the amazing selection of tacos. Diners have a wide choice, from chicken, steak, pork, birria and vegetarian fillings. First up were the Tacos Cochinita Pibil. Cochinita pibil is a traditional Mexican slow-cooked pork dish, marinated in citrus juice and achiote paste, then shredded for the tacos. No recipe secrets were divulged, but this is a very tasty choice that's served with corn tortillas, pickled onions and cilantro. Skinny Tacos contain tilapia, chipotle sauce, pico de gallo and avocado, wrapped in lettuce, for a light touch. And for those giving up meat for a while, the Tacos Vegetarianos are corn tortillas overflowing with zucchini, yellow squash, mushrooms, spinach, onions and bell peppers, garnished with cilantro.

We can't overlook some house specialties that we observed headed to other tables. Chilaquiles Rojos sizzled with steak, creamy ranchero sauce, onions, sour cream and an egg over easy accompanied by homemade fried chips, a visual and olfactory delight. The Wet Burrito can be ordered with a choice of barbacoa, al pastor, cochinita, chicken or carne asada; it's served with rice, refried beans, lettuce, pico de gallo, lime crema, guacamole, enchilada sauce and cheese sauce. It's satisfying and suitable for sharing. The table next to us had two early teen boys who were thoroughly enjoying their Carne Asada Fries, potato fries loaded with carne asada, queso fresco, cheese sauce, chipotle sauce, sour cream, guacamole and cilantro.

I love Mexican flavors, yet I'm not an enthusiastic cook, so I asked our gracious server to fill us in on the descriptions of the meat in the dishes. Al pastor, meaning shepherd-style, is thinly sliced marinated pork roasted on a spit with pineapple. Cochinita is pork shoulder cooked slowly in a marinade with achiote and citrus juice. Barbacoa, Spanish for barbecue, is typically made with beef, traditionally seasoned with dried chilies and spices and slowly cooked until tender over an open fire or fire pit. These descriptions will direct me in the future to the flavorful choices of tacos at Tacos & Tequila.

Now, for dessert! They're all tempting, from the homemade brownie to the sopapillas, topped with butter, honey and cinnamon. We tasted the flan, a traditional Mexico City-style creme caramel custard dessert with a layer of clear caramel sauce, and the churros, fried dough pastry stuffed with dulce de leche, both creamy enough to satisfy any sweet tooth. On my next visit, I'm looking forward to the Xango, creamy cheesecake wrapped in a pastry tortilla, fried until flaky and dusted with cinnamon sugar and served with ice cream.

Tacos & Tequila's bar is stocked with a full complement of tequilas for your tasting pleasure; for variety, you might try one of the tequila flights from six well-known distillers. Margaritas have the same



variety, with a choice of lime, strawberry, raspberry, mango, peach, watermelon, piña colada and tropical. Also visually interesting is the Blue Margarita, crafted from Hornitos Plata, triple sec, Gran Gala orange liqueur, orange juice, sweet and sour and blue curaçao.

"We embrace our authentic selves to truly connect with you, making each meal an experience," Luis affirms. "We always remember where we came from and our responsibility to our community, and we seek to welcome people in, let them know that they belong, feed them well and maintain that positive connection in hopes that they pass it on."

Tacos & Tequila more than surpasses that aspiration. When the staff responds to "thank you" by saying "anything for family," it makes guests know they've found that place of connection, hospitality and the feeling of being at home. ♦

Visit Tacos & Tequila at 7901 W. 151st St., Overland Park, Kansas. Hours are Monday through Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. and Friday and Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Closed Sundays. Call 913-413-0051 and visit tacostequilaks.com for menu previews.

MARRIED AND SLEEPING APART

BY CATIE WATSON

Throughout history, the marriage bed has been a symbol of the union itself, seen by many as the tangible expression of a couple's passion and love. Sleeping together is a sign that a couple is physically and emotionally close.



Their shared bed means they want to be together. Sleeping apart, according to the traditional view, means there's trouble in paradise. Common wisdom says that couples who don't share a bed must have intimacy issues.

In the modern world of relationships, a growing number of couples are challenging the age-old traditional marriage bed and writing their own narrative for sleep. According to a 2017 survey conducted by the National Sleep Foundation, almost one in four married American couples say they sleep in separate beds.

Today, the once-unquestioned symbolism of the shared bed is being redefined, prompting us to explore married couples sleeping apart.

WHY DO COUPLES SLEEP APART?

The number of married couples who sleep apart has increased

over the past few decades, especially among younger couples. Couples cited a number of reasons for separate sleep arrangements.

Different sleep schedules. Couples may work different shifts, or one partner may be an early bird while the other is a night owl. These differences can make it difficult to get enough uninterrupted sleep.

Different sleep requirements. When spouses go to sleep and get up at different times, one of them may end up feeling resentful or fatigued about the sleep arrangement.

One partner sleeps hot. A spouse's body temperature can cause sleep disruption, especially if they're a hot sleeper and a big hugger and their partner is not.

Children. More than 80 percent of couples who say they sleep separately have children. Many times, parents sleep separately when

one parent is sleeping with an infant or child.

Health problems. Medical conditions such as snoring, sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome can make it difficult for both partners to get a good night's sleep when they're in the same room.

Desire for more space and independence. Some couples simply find that they sleep better when they have more space for themselves. This includes restless sleepers who move around in the bed and those who need to fall asleep to the sound of a television or music.

History of childhood trauma. People who've experienced childhood trauma may find it difficult to share a bed for a variety of reasons.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENERATIONS

While the popularity of sleeping alone may seem like a seismic shift for the institution of marriage, it's important to note that reasons for this decision vary significantly. A recent survey by the Naturepedic mattress company revealed the reasons couples sleep apart vary depending on their age group. A partner's snoring was the determining factor for Baby Boomers to sleep apart. For Gen X and Millennial couples, demanding careers, parenting responsibilities and the need for uninterrupted rest have led many to appreciate the benefits of separate sleeping quarters. Sleeping apart is not a rejection of intimacy for most, but an acknowledgment of the importance of individual well-being within the union. However, a quarter of Gen X and Millennials report intimacy issues as a significant reason for not sleeping together.

THE PROS AND CONS OF SLEEPING APART

There are advantages and disadvantages for married couples sleeping apart. Some of the potential benefits of sleeping apart include improved sleep quality, reduced conflict in the bedroom and increased intimacy. The last benefit may seem counterintuitive, but sleeping apart can lead to increased physical intimacy for some couples. People who sleep alone have also been found to fall asleep faster.

There are also some potential drawbacks to sleeping apart, such as increased feelings of loneliness and a loss of emotional connection. Sleeping apart can lead some couples to grow apart, putting the relationship at risk and increasing the risk of infidelity. Overall, the Naturepedic survey found that sleeping separately improved sleep quality and reduced stress, while sleeping together resulted in healthier sex lives and happier relationships. More couples who shared a bed reported that their marriage was "amazing" compared to those who slept apart.

If you and your spouse are thinking about sleeping apart, it doesn't mean the end of your sex life. For couples who are worried about moving to separate beds, Jill Lankler, a New York clinical psychologist and life coach, says communication is key to maintaining physical intimacy. To stay close, partners who sleep apart should talk about their needs and intentionally make time for intimacy.

Every marriage is unique, and the two people in it should be the judge of what's the best way to sleep. Whether it's together or apart, the important thing is to find the balance between getting a good night's sleep and keeping the relationship strong. ♦

SOURCES: *brides.com, naturepedic.com, nytimes.com and usatoday.com.*



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THE GROWTH OF WELLNESS TOURISM

BY LISA BUTLER

Let's imagine your next vacation going one of two ways. In the first scenario, you catch an early flight to somewhere warm and beachy, peruse the pool at your leisure and lie in the sun for most of your stay. You eat the food offered at the hotel restaurants or nosh on chips and salsa from the nearest beach hut, while sipping all the pina coladas you can consume in six days.



The second vacation is a little different. You arrive at your hotel greeted with a tray of healthy snacks and juices, a new workout outfit in your size and access to the in-room Peloton®. You are given a schedule of specialized healing services offered throughout your stay and a “sleep better menu” is lying next to your pillow.

Both getaways can be just as welcomed, but while we often crave an escape from our day-to-day grind, many of us could benefit from a wellness vacation. Taking a trip for our mental health is not a new concept, but the approach to how we view our break has shifted in recent years. While a week or two of holiday may have been enough to recharge our batteries in the past, the vacation itself seemed to

be quite the job; with the planning, the organizing, the financial responsibility, it could be more work than working, so we return not feeling refreshed. Top that with many of us doing work, or at least some work, while on vacation, and the whole thing may leave us a bit disheveled.

These days we are seeking a bit more. Enter wellness tourism, travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing personal well-being. While it may be a trip scheduled for wellness purposes only, such as a weekend at a spa resort, it may also mean incorporating wellness-inspired activities into other trips such as business travel or family getaways.

Wellness resorts are a good place to start, as their aim is to leave

people feeling rejuvenated by allowing them to fully indulge in self-care during their stay. Social media has helped wellness tourism grow in popularity, making retreat holidays a familiar and increasingly interesting concept. According to the culture website Thred, influencers and celebrities often endorse wellness destinations and activities, creating even more curiosity for this profitable and popular area of travel.

BLEISURE

Health-forward hotels and resorts around the world now include more than spa days and fitness classes. Think high-tech or preventive care services such as comprehensive blood tests, nutrient injections, plunge pools and 3-D scans. The shift in wellness travel has boosted demand too. In a June 2022 report, Grand View Research, a firm that studies business trends, predicted that the global wellness tourism market is expected to surpass \$1 trillion by 2030, increasing nearly 10 percent yearly over the next eight years.

After the pandemic and with the ongoing growth of technology, the lines between work and life have merged, and so have the differences between business and personal travel. In 2024, more than one in three business travelers will add a leisure element to at least one of their business trips, says research from the Global Business Travel Association. It's not just entry-level employees or millennials enjoying the connection of work and play. Managerial positions are bleisureing as well, depending on if they're traveling somewhere they want to take a peek at the pleasurable stuff.

HOW TO BOOK WELLNESS TRAVEL

The concept of wellness travel is a large canopy with a myriad of choices for all different types of stays, destinations and budgets. Momentum is building around wellness travel, and health-forward trips aren't going anywhere anytime soon. There is no better time than now to test the waters on a getaway for the benefit of body and mind. ♦

SOURCES: inspire360.com, vacayou.com, everydayhealth.com and euronews.com.

PLAN NOW!

Many travel companies, agents and online vacation planners are waiting to lead us to a valuable health and wellness vacation, but our own research and hard work may get us to our wellbeing wonder trip. Here are a few tips on any budget when booking your wellness getaway.

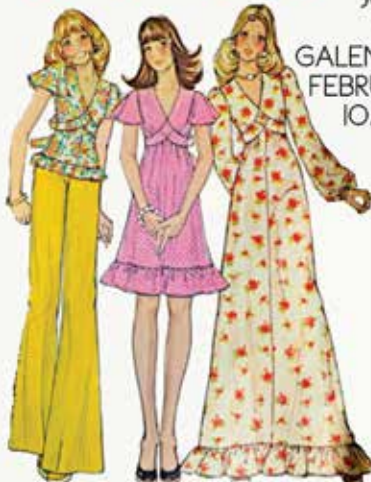
- Decide your destination, whether close to home or far away.
- Is wellness your entire trip or would you like to concentrate on health for part of your vacation?
- What is your budget? How much can you spend toward your well-getaway?
- How adventurous do you want to be?
- Are you working during this trip? Will you work remotely and enjoy some healthy sidelines of fitness classes or is this trip focused on your total well-being?
- What do you like to do? What do you hope to learn? Figure out your goals for your stay.
- Enjoy! You may find that plans change and classes or services might alter once you reach your destination. Take the time to relax and figure it out.

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A BRIDE'S BEST FRIEND

BY MEG KRAFT

Your parents will escort you, friends and relatives will support you, and on the biggest day of your life, consider incorporating another important family member: your beloved pet!



Assigning Rufus the role of ring bearer and allowing your fur baby to attend the ceremony and/or reception is a big decision. It requires a little extra planning and a lot of practice, but the end result and the adorable photos are definitely worth finding a place for your pet on your big day.

FIRST THINGS FUR-ST

Before you start shopping for your pet's matching suit or a color-scheme-clad collar, make sure that your venue allows pets on the premises. Communicate with the venue manager to confirm details regarding when and where your pet can roam. Once you have confirmation, the next step is contemplating whether your pet's behavior is acceptable for a wedding. Does your dog enjoy being

around people of all ages?

Does he show any signs of aggression? How does he react in environments outside of his comfort zone? Brides have enough responsibility and emotion to handle; adding an anxious pet to the mix is cause for concern. If your pet is relaxed in social settings, outgoing and obedient, the next step is ensuring they're properly cared for during your nuptials.

DESIGNATING A

HELPFUL HANDLER

On the most important day of your life, you will be focused on reciting your vows, enjoying your first dance and celebrating your new last name. Keeping track of the last time your dog went to bathroom is not at the top of any bride's to-do list. Many couples opt to ask a

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“Your family and friends will want to take part in this joyous celebration and watching your pet may limit this,” Jacqueline advises.

“A professional dog walker will care for your dog before and after the ceremony while you focus on your hair and makeup.”

close family member or friend to oversee their pet, but Jacqueline Rivera-Patella, CEO of Pawfect Day in New York City, emphasizes the importance of hiring a professional pet sitter to ensure your pet’s safety and your sanity throughout the day.

“Your family and friends will want to take part in this joyous celebration and watching your pet may limit this,” Jacqueline advises. “A professional dog walker will care for your dog before and after the ceremony while you focus on your hair and makeup.” Jacqueline founded Pawfect Day in 2008 and added the wedding pet sitting service when planning her own nuptials. Her wedding wouldn’t have been complete without her fur child, Eddie. “I realized professional pet wedding services were not available in my area, and I knew I couldn’t be the only one who wanted a ‘pawfect’ wedding, so I made it happen.”

Pawfect Day’s wedding sitter service includes roundtrip car service, bowtie rental, feedings, playtime, freshening up, walks, consultation and timeline review. “A professional will be relaxed, handle your pooch in a calm manner and pay close attention to exercise, feeding, watering, grooming and attention,” Jacqueline said. She explained that a professional’s thoroughness, such as avoiding areas with loud music or constant crowding as well as ensuring that well-intentioned guests aren’t giving your pet a piece of wedding

cake, is crucial. Clients also have the option of having Buddy chauffeured home if he’s ready to call it a night.

PAWSITIVE PREPARATION

Choosing the right handler is just one part of the pet planning process. The other part is providing all the necessary items to keep your pet safe and entertained. The basics include: two servings of food, treats, bowls, water bottles, toys, an extra leash, pet waste bags, wipes and veterinary information. Before you settle on a mini version of the groom’s suit, try a few different attire options to determine what makes your pet most comfortable.

Bowtie-collars, faux-tuxedo harnesses or a simple leash and collar combo are all easy ways to help Fido look and feel his best. Have your pup try on their wedding day duds a few times before the big day so they feel comfortable wearing them during the event. Give them treats during their fittings to help them associate the attire with good behavior.

SIT. STAY.

It may be hard to believe, but your dog might just prefer lounging on the couch in the comfort of her own home to attending your wedding. Don’t take it personally, but do consider what’s best for your pet. If you forgo having Spot trot down the aisle or greet guests at the reception, there are still many other ways to incorporate your love for her into the wedding day details.

Use photos of your pets as table numbers, pay homage with customized cake toppers, or send guests home with dog treat bags in honor of your beloved pup. Whether they enjoy the day by your side or celebrate from afar, you can always count on them for an enthusiastic, tail-wagging welcome home as husband and wife. ♦

SOURCES: pawfectday.com and the experience of the author.

Molly & Riley Kelly

WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

Molly Kelly, 26, holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and currently works as a day service coordinator at GoodLife Innovations, a local nonprofit serving multiple counties in Kansas. "Our organization provides housing and day services for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. I take pride in my job and find fulfillment in helping others live better. My husband and I currently live in Overland Park," Molly shares.

Riley Kelly, 23, has worked in the construction and remodeling industry for the past five years. "I enjoy being a part of the entire process of creating something out of nothing. It is fulfilling to see how an idea can materialize into reality. As a kid, I used to dream about having a certain kind of life, and now I am creating it every day," notes Riley.

"Riley and I were introduced through a mutual friend," Molly smiles. "Although we had known this family for years, it took some time for us to meet each other."

Molly and Riley had a unique proposal and wedding experience. "He proposed to me at Love Lock Bridge in Kansas City, Missouri, with a necklace he had made," she describes. "The necklace had a key charm that unlocked a customized heart charm that had our proposal





- July 15, 2023 -

PHOTOGRAPHY
George Street Photography

BRIDAL GOWN
The One Rack

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Jos. A. Bank

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Kristy Shelton,
Buffalo Mane Salon

MAKEUP
Hannah Zuercher,
Soft Glow Studio

DJ
DJ Thundercutz

FLORIST
Price Chopper

CATERER
Cupinis

WEDDING COORDINATORS
Twice the Magic



“He proposed to me at Love Lock Bridge in Kansas City, Missouri, with a necklace he had made,” she describes.





date on it. We then added the heart charm to the bridge as a symbol of our love. After the proposal, we had a gathering with all our loved ones, which was a memorable moment for me.”

The blissful couple tied the knot on July 15, 2023, at Boulevard Brewery, which Molly and Riley chose because of its breathtaking

view of the entire Kansas City skyline. Speaking during the ceremony were Molly’s best friends Madison Self and Annie Hermsen and Riley’s best friend Justin Schoenfeld. The gathering of more than 100 family and friends was a special celebration full of love.

Following the wedding, Molly and Riley vacationed in Colorado with their dog. In April, they will enjoy an 11-day cruise as an official honeymoon. ♦



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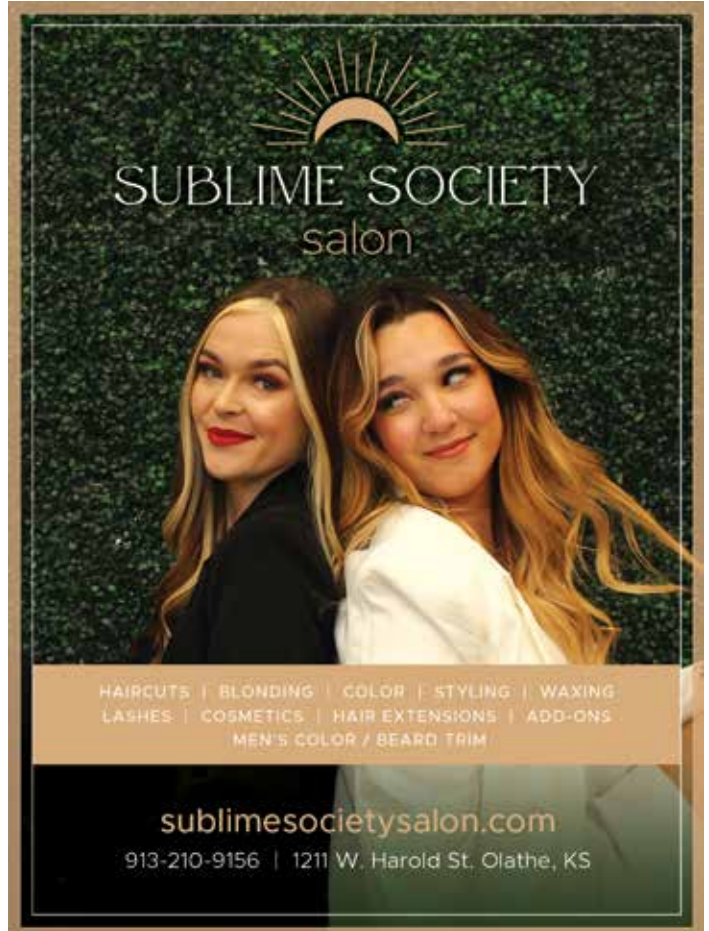


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One of Ability KC's largest fundraising events is the unique underground Groundhog Run 5K/10K race. Since 1982, the annual Groundhog Run has raised more than \$5.3 million for children receiving therapeutic and educational services at Ability KC's Mary Shaw Branton Therapeutic Preschool. The 42nd annual race occurred on January 28, 2024, at the Hunt Midwest SubTropolis, the world's largest underground business complex.

"A journey and impact of this magnitude is possible only when a community understands, collaborates and partners," said Castillo. "Together, it is a necessity to ignite conversations in understanding the inequities for individuals with disabilities across communities. We must advocate for value-based rehabilitation care models and do our part to drive awareness and action."

Ability KC can't do it alone and relies on and appreciates the hundreds of community supporters, volunteers and partners that have been with them through their purposeful journey. According to Dr. Robert Jackson, chair, board of directors, Ability KC, "The need is great, so we are fortunate the community is with us to ignite conversations, imagine possibilities and make an impact, together." ♦

To donate or get involved with Ability KC, visit abilitykc.org.



One in four adults in Kansas is living with a disability that leads to health disparities. Individuals from communities of color and those of diverse ethnicities are even more likely to have disabilities and to incur significant barriers to healthcare, education and employment. Across Kansas and Missouri, the need is great and continues to grow, but we are fortunate to have a unique organization in Kansas City that is helping thousands of individuals with disabilities reach their goals and achieve brighter futures.

Since 1947, Ability KC has been driven by the unwavering purpose of disabilities inclusion in our communities. The Ability KC team values continual advancements in expertise and innovation to support individuals with the most complex illnesses, injuries or disabilities to achieve life changing and impactful milestones.

Ability KC helps individuals of all ages who have a high level of acuity and complexity in conditions—from brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, stroke and amputation to rare conditions—through its outpatient medical rehabilitation services, Mary Shaw Branton Therapeutic Preschool, and employment and specialty services. Its approach is person-centered, building bridges between health care and quality of life to help with readiness for school, work and living independently.

"Our model is a purposeful and person-centered care design of therapies supported with medical supervision, case management, mental health and neuropsychology support, adaptive and transition services across an individual's life continuum," said Amy Castillo, CEO and executive director of Ability KC.

FEBRUARY 2024



FEB. 5

**2024 Poker Tournament
Supporting Kids Foundation**

4:00PM, CHILDREN'S MERCY PARK

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Through raising money to provide financial assistance to Kansas City families who have a child battling cancer, SKF pays for expenses such as mortgage, rent, utilities, transportation and unfortunately, funeral expenses. SKF is an all-volunteer organization; there is minimal overhead and nearly all the money raised each year goes directly to families in need. Buffet dinner provided, open bar of beer and wine from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

FEB. 11

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9:00AM, JOHNSON COUNTY ARTS AND HERITAGE CENTER

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FEB. 16 - 18

KC Remodel + Garden Show

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FEB. 16 - 18

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FEB. 17

2024 KC Brew Fest

UNION STATION

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FEB. 23 - 25

Kansas City Golf Show

OVERLAND PARK CONVENTION CENTER

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FEB. 24 - 25

KC Love Event

UNION STATION

This event brings everything that we LOVE about Kansas City together in the most beautiful and iconic Union Station and features over 100 local artists, boutiques and handmade vendors for your shopping pleasure.



CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 19)

While there may be a few money hiccups this month, you are more than able to take care of them. Trust yourself. In fact, some opportunities will arise for you to make some money using the internet. Go for it. You will be very successful.



TAURUS
(APR. 20-MAY 20)

You are feeling your bullish nature this month, which is making you more restless than usual. Your personal filters are set on low, which might be bad for everyone, including you. However, some of this inner restlessness comes from your need to balance the scales. People have taken advantage of your easygoing nature, and this is the month to set the record straight. If you burn bridges, make completely sure what you're doing before striking the match.



VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)

You feel as if you want to make a difference in the world around you, but you aren't exactly sure how to go about that. Take your inspiration to help others and to teach, and see where they might fit in this month.



AQUARIUS
(JAN. 20-FEB. 18)

The feeling that you need to be organized will hit you. Give in to it. Clearing away clutter and bringing organization into your life are good, not only for your home and office spaces, but for your inner spaces as well. This will open up the door and create room for new opportunities on the career and romance fronts.



GEMINI
(MAY 21-JUN. 20)

All of the stars indicate that this is the month to move forward with creative endeavors. You are at your charming best and the world is, literally, your oyster. Given this feeling, there is also the potential to act rashly and impulsively. Best to stay away from temptation.



LIBRA
(SEPT. 23-OCT. 22)

This will be a very busy month for you, Libra. Multitasking will be the name of the game, and when divine inspiration strikes make sure you are in a position to take advantage and act on it. You will be the chief troubleshooter at work and at home, and you will excel at it.

STAR JOURNEYS

BY MELODY BUSSEY

This is the month to become organized, and most signs will feel the need to clean, throw out, and restructure their home, office, finances, as well as their own interior landscape. Give in to this because with the physical organization will come emotional, spiritual and mental realignment that the stars support this month. Everyone's diplomacy is going to be challenged, but most signs are going to rise and shine, being a pleasure to be around and an inspirational force.



PISCES
(FEB. 19-MAR. 20)

This may be a month during which disappointments seem bent on destroying your bliss. Take heart; most of the hiccups that will occur are easily fixed and many of them are actually blessings in disguise. You will have an opportunity to be social toward the middle of the month. Definitely go to the party.



CANCER
(JUN. 21-JUL. 23)

Some of your more strongly held beliefs may be challenged and tested this month. This will also coincide with a desire to do more with your life; whether this means to grow in a spiritual, physical, mental or emotional way is totally up to you to decide. You will finally become aware of the limitations that you've been placing on yourself and take steps to remove them.



SCORPIO
(OCT. 23-NOV. 21)

You will either be everyone's best and brightest blessing or their worst nightmare this month. This is because all of your insecurities are going to surface to be examined, and you will not enjoy it. Learning to love yourself is where it's at.



ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 19)

You know that tendency you have to let little things become big things? It's going to happen again this month if you aren't careful. If you give in to this instant drama gene, then it will in turn increase your feelings of insecurity, which will in turn make you very frustrated and angry with everyone. Not good. Instead, focus on relationships with your besties and don't sweat the romance stuff. Your system could use some TLC, so focus on eating more alkaline foods.



LEO
(JUL. 24-AUG. 22)

There will be no doubt as to your opinion on any matter this month. Make sure to temper this determination with kindness so that you don't alienate those around you. You don't feel compelled to play by the rules this month. Choose wisely which rules to adhere to and which ones beg to be bent.



SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Working solo is your best option if you are given the choice. This is because your energy level is going to outstrip that of all those around you, which others may resent. Shine, be yourself, but don't do so at the expense of others.

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