

70 GORGEOUS PLACES TO GET MARRIED

# CALIFORNIA WEDDING DAY

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VENUES FROM  
WINE COUNTRY  
TO THE DESERT

## SMILE!

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that Wow*

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TOP CATERERS

383  
Beautiful  
Ideas

TO MAKE YOUR WEDDING PERFECT

# Bride Ideas

## PHILANTHROPY GIVE & GET MARRIED

The relationship of Michelle Goldman and AJ Manas began on a 2014 girls getaway to the Windy City. Michele locked eyes with a handsome man and fueled by Champagne, she planted a kiss on the unsuspecting stranger. The next night, in another bar on a different side of a city with 3 million people, just as AJ was explaining the mystery kiss to friends, Michelle walked past. The couple's official meeting was followed by months of long-distance phone calls and texts between Newport Beach, where Michelle lived, and Chicago. After only 10 days of face-to-face time, AJ was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma. "The moment he told me, I knew I was in love and that I was going to help him through this," Michelle recalls. "I also knew he was going to be OK because our love story was just beginning."

After 18 weeks of chemotherapy (and intense getting-to-know-you sessions), AJ was cancer-free, and the pair knew they could handle "in sickness and in health." The couple decided to use their wedding not only to declare their love,

but also to fight cancer. Thus, the idea of a wedding for a cause was born with the proceeds benefiting the Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF).

They turned to Rani Hoover of Rani Hoover, Inspired Weddings & Events, LLC. Having never planned a wedding as a fundraiser, Hoover was skeptical. But the enthusiasm was contagious, and the Santa Barbara-based planner became the first donor. Hoover used her solid reputation to convince other vendors to get on board by making a donation or discounting services so the difference could be given to LRF. "Our mantra became 'This is meant to be' because everything clicked into place," says Hoover, adding that donations were the only item on the gift registry.

The event design came together just as easily. They immediately settled on Sunstone Villa in Santa Ynez. The ceremony and reception were united by a uniform color scheme (soft blushes, creamy whites, eucalyptus greens and touches of gold), which was found in the flowers, linens and cake. It was also important to the couple to fill the soiree with sentiment, so the bride's mom made both of



Michelle's dresses, a friend officiated, and the after-party cigar station by El Cañito Cigars (thecigarrollers.net) was a nod to AJ's Cuban heritage.

"It was so rewarding to help make their dream of helping others come true," Hoover says. "And the best part is that they far exceeded their fundraising goal." Between the wedding and a Chicago reception hosted by AJ's family, the newlyweds collected \$91,000 for LRF. —Carrie Bell



▲ To represent the blending of two families and the beginning of a third, the couple and their parents combined three red varietal wines to create a custom vintage, which they named "Manas Milestone"

### THE GIVING SPREE

Choosing to add a philanthropic angle to your wedding is a great way to share your passion for helping others; just be sure to communicate to your guests why the particular organization is important to you. Include information about the organization in your wedding invitations, on your website and even in the wedding program. Whatever method you choose, don't let it be the sole focus of your big day!

- Take a cue from Michelle and AJ Manas and ask vendors to donate their service fees to an organization.
- Add a silent auction. Ask businesses to donate goods and services and guests can bid during cocktail hour.
- Instead of a traditional registry, choose your favorite cause and ask guests to donate.
- Organize a wedding raffle. Sell tickets prior to the wedding and select the raffle winner before the bouquet toss.



### VENDORS FOR THE CAUSE

- CALLIGRAPHY:** Perfect Fête Designs (perfectfetedesigns.com)
- CATERING:** Catering Connection (cateringconnect.com)
- FLORIST:** The Flori.Culture (thefloriculture.com)
- PIANO:** Encore Piano Moving (movemypiano.com)
- HAIR AND MAKEUP:** Team Hair & Makeup (teamhairandmakeup.com)
- MUSIC:** JP Hunten Music (jphuntenmusic.com)
- LIGHTING:** Spark Creative Events (sparkcreativeevents.com)
- RENTALS:** Archive Rentals (archiverentals.com)
- LINENS:** La Tavola Fine Linen
- PHOTOGRAPHY:** Justine Milton Photography (justinemilton.com)
- RENTALS:** Town & Country Event Rentals (townandcountryeventrentals.com)
- VENUE:** Sunstone Villa & Winery (sunstonewinery.com)
- VIDEO:** Blue Kite Cinema (bluekitecinema.com)
- WEDDING PLANNING/DESIGN:** Rani Hoover, Inspired Weddings & Event LLC (ranihoover.com)

The Flori Culture incorporated fresh peaches alongside the orange- and blush-hued floral arrangements ▼



◀ The event had an Italian ambiance thanks in large part to the Tuscan-inspired Sunstone Winery setting. The ceremony area was nestled amid the vines under a four-poster pergola accented with billowy fabric and a wine barrel.

JUSTINE MILTON PHOTOGRAPHY



▲ Brass shelving, mirrored signage, crystal chandeliers and flickering candles added glam to the vineyard setting



Guests prepped custom bags filled with dried herbs and eucalyptus leaves at the toss station ▼



▲ The couple wanted to spend time with all of their guests, so Hoover came up with a play on progressive dining by positioning sweetheart chairs, decorated with a garland and cursive golden "Manas" sign, at four different farm tables, and the couple switched seats after each course



◀ The reception took place outside the winery's limestone villa; Guests lingered over a wine-paired four-course Mediterranean feast

**KEEPSAKES**

*The Art of the Marriage Contract*

Artist Karin Cole found her passion while planning her wedding. Determined to have their nuptials be a celebration unique to their relationship, Cole chose to design and draw everything—from her invitations to her ketubah. And that's when inspiration struck. Cole realized her destiny was to paint custom ketubot (Jewish marriage contracts) that personify a couple's relationship, marriage and wedding. Cole's creations feature handwritten calligraphy and custom paintings on museum quality paper. Through conversations with each couple, Cole finds special touches to make each one unique. This includes anything from favorite flowers and colors to embedding Hebrew words such as "beshert" ("meant to be") and "ahava" ("love") into the tree of life. "I have painted animals or objects to represent special nicknames for a spouse," notes Cole. "One bride asked for a bear holding a honey jar to represent her husband's nickname, Honeybear." From beach proposals to wedding venues, the inspiration has no bounds. And couples looking for a unifying design can have Cole create custom hand-painted invitations. "One of my favorite parts is seeing the ketubah at each wedding," says Cole. "Seeing the final art piece come to fruition and the couple in love side by side next to their very personal and meaningful ketubah is what this is all about for me." —L.M.B.



A beehive was added to this ketubah as a nod to the bride's nickname, Honeybee

LEFT: JUSTINE MILTON PHOTOGRAPHY; RIGHT: MAYA MYERS PHOTOGRAPHY

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From our family of love to you,  
we bring our coordination  
and design skills to plan the  
wedding of your dreams!

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DÉCOR THEME

Designer Disney

Old Hollywood and Disney were the seeds of inspiration for Katie Lynch and Matt Feige's summer wedding at The Roosevelt Hotel in Hollywood (thehollywoodroosevelt.com). Working with Los Angeles' Natalie Sofer Events (nataliesoferweddingsand-events.com), the couple infused the hotel's glam aura with a "boho-jungalow" vibe that evoked Disneyland's Adventureland, without being over the top. "We wanted our guests to feel like they were at a warm, open, super-fun party," says Katie, who admits she is obsessed with bright colors and tropical greens. "We wanted to introduce the [Disney] concept without it feeling like a Disney wedding and incorporate our style." They kept the Mickey moments restrained and subtle through small touches, such as the music: Their first dance was to the Sherman Brothers' classic "On the Front Porch," from the Disney film *Summer Magic*, and they cut the cake to *The Little Mermaid's* "Kiss the Girl." To fulfill Katie's love for everything bright and tropical, Seed Floral infused the event's design with leafy greens and bright pink florals. —L.M.B.



For their first look, the couple met at Disney's El Capitan Theatre, the perfect fusion of Disney and old Hollywood, with the stage curtain as their backdrop



CAMRYN CLAIR PHOTOGRAPHY

GIFT BAGS

STYLISH SWAG

Bride-to-be Kristen McCauley gave her sister and two of her best friends a five-star greeting to her spa- and adventure-themed bachelorette getaway weekend at The St. Regis Deer Valley in Park City, Utah. These welcome bags were bursting with goodies that the group could use throughout the weekend and even included something to wear for the penultimate meal, a celebratory bridal luncheon. Gifts included trail essentials for a hike, and treats such as Essie nail polish, Rocksbox jewelry, Plum Pretty Sugar dresses and more, for both the weekend getaway and the wedding day. A schedule of events was tucked into each canvas tote to keep the group up to date and informed about the weekend plans. And the love kept coming as sweet treats and turndown gifts were added to their treasure trove of gifts each evening. —L.M.B.



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