



2023

Wedding

Album

Featuring...

The Mendota Reporter
Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Zach Sweger and Samantha Holt will be married on Saturday, Sept. 22, 2023, at Camp Aramoni in Tonica.

Novel gifts for the bridesmaids

Brides- and grooms-to-be select people who are near and dear to their hearts to be special parts of their momentous days. So the chance to participate in a friend's or family member's wedding is a great honor.

A wedding party plays a key role in both the ceremony and reception. Participants do everything from helping couples make decisions to addressing invitations to providing emotional support. As so much is asked of the wedding party — particularly the maid/matron of honor and bridesmaids — it's customary to bestow gifts on those people who devoted so much time and effort to the wedding. These potential bridesmaid gifts can serve as a thoughtful and unique

to way to thank bridesmaids for all that they've done.

- **Photo books:** Gift the bridesmaids with photo books of carefully curated photographs taken throughout the wedding planning experience. Pepper the books with other photos, such as images of you with the bridesmaids at fun moments throughout your lives together.

- **Portrait wine or champagne glasses:** Beverage glasses customized with the bridesmaids' likenesses painted or printed onto them make for great gifts. Bridesmaids will enjoy sipping their favorite drinks in special glasses for years to come.

- **Personalized phone cases:** Who doesn't rely on their mobile phones these

days? Treat your bridesmaids to something special with colorful phone cases with their names embossed or printed on the outsides.

- **Wellness or spa gift card:** After all of the running around for the wedding, bridesmaids may need a little extra pampering. Gift cards to a local spa can fit the bill.

- **Birthstone jewelry:** Necklaces, rings or earrings become that much more special when they're customized to the recipients. Purchase jewelry with your bridesmaids' birthstones so they'll be as unique as each woman.

- **Friendship bracelets:** Gift each bridesmaid with beaded friendship bracelets that features all of the ladies' initials. Be sure to keep one



for yourself, and you all can enjoy nights on the town showcasing your special bracelets.

- **Monogrammed robes or purses:** A customized

pocketbook, robe or another item bridesmaids will use every day can make for an extra-special item that will serve as a daily reminder of how much you appreciate

them.

Bridesmaid gifts are a great way for brides to thank their bridesmaids for all that they've done to make a couple's wedding day special.



Mary Ann Baughan of First State Insurance goes over all of the insurance options a couple like Samantha and Zach will need once they begin their married life together.



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How to find the right wedding reception venue

Every decision engaged couples make in regard to their weddings is significant, but some may affect the day more than others. Perhaps no decision will help couples set the tone they hope to establish more than their choice of reception venue.

Reception venues are where couples and their guests will spend the vast majority of their time on the wedding day, which is why choice of venue bears such significance. With that in mind, couples can consider these tips as they look for the perfect place to host their receptions.

- Decide what you want out of a venue. Prospective brides and grooms may have vastly different ideas regarding how they want

their weddings to go, and it's imperative that couples discuss their ideal weddings prior to looking for a venue. Do you want to get married in a place of worship? Or do you prefer a venue that can

host both the ceremony and reception? Do you want an indoor, outdoor or hybrid

ceremony and reception? Define what you both want before looking for a venue and make the necessary concessions if you have different ideas in mind.

- Consider picking a venue before setting a date.

It can be wise to pick a reception venue first and then choose your wedding date based on the availability of the venue. This is especially important for couples who already have an ideal venue

in mind, and it also provides some flexibility as couples search for the venue. For example, couples

working within a strict budget may not be able to afford a preferred venue during the height of wedding season, but that venue could be less costly during slower times of year. By waiting to pick a date until you've

chosen a venue, you're increasing your options.

- Consider your guests. Though couples, particularly those footing the bill on their own, should prioritize their desires when choosing a reception, it's important they also consider their guests before making a final decision. A venue that's accessible and located near transit hubs like airports and train stations will increase the likelihood that more people can attend. In addition, if children will be invited, a venue that includes family restrooms, including at least one with a changing table, can make parents' nights much easier.

- Consider your budget. The Knot 2021 Real

Weddings Study found that couples typically spend around 30 percent of their overall budget on the venue, which makes this decision the biggest one in terms of the financial commitments a couple will have to make. Couples may be tempted to choose an awe-inspiring, costly venue for their reception, but they should consider how devoting so much of their budget to the venue will affect the rest of their big day. The best reception venue might be one that won't eat up too much of your budget.

- Consider the package. Venues vary in terms of their reception packages. Some may offer catering, including beverages, with

each of their packages, while food and beverage might not be part of other venues' offerings. If you find a venue you love but it doesn't offer catering services, seek estimates from area caterers to determine how much it will cost to feed and serve your guests. Many couples find it more convenient and less stressful to pick a venue that offers on-site catering, though plenty of others have had no trouble after choosing a venue and separate caterer.

The bulk of a couple's wedding day and night will be spent at the reception, making choice of venue one of the more fun and important decisions they'll have to make.



Zach and Samantha peruse the many fine dining selections offered at Main Street Station, which is a perfect venue to hold a rehearsal dinner prior to the big day.

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The tradition behind bridal veils



Though couples can plan wedding ceremonies and receptions how they see fit, many weddings are steeped in tradition, some of which may be more subtle than others.

One longstanding wedding tradition revolves around a bride's attire. Historians differ regarding the origins of the bridal veil, but some trace this tradition all the way back to Ancient Greece. Others suggest bridal veils were first popularized within the Roman Empire by people who believed that the veil protected the bride from evil spirits as she walked down the aisle. Traditions surrounding bridal veils even differ within various faiths, so the veil may signify one thing at a Jewish wedding and something en-

tirely different at a Christian ceremony. Veils also have long been seen by some as symbolic of purity.

Despite their long-held position in wedding lore and tradition, veils are no longer

seen as a must-have. Nor are brides who choose to wear a veil beholden to having it cover their face as they walk down the aisle. In fact, many modern brides now flip their veils over their head as they

walk down the aisle en route to saying, "I do." Regardless of how brides who opt for veils choose to wear them, there's no denying the enduring popularity of this tradition.

Historians differ regarding the origins of the bridal veil, but some trace this tradition all the way back to Ancient Greece.

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Kayla Adams of First State Bank goes over the different options Samantha and Zach have when opening a new savings account after they become bride and groom.



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Five financial tips to help newlyweds start on the right foot

(StatePoint) Spring is in the air and with it, ushers in wedding season. If you're about to get married or just walked down the aisle, here are five things to do to ensure your financial health.

1. Determine how you will handle finances. They say money can't buy love and happiness, but talking about it in a marriage, or even beforehand, goes a long way. You'll want to discuss whether you'll have a joint bank account and credit cards, separate accounts or a combination of the two. It's a personal decision, so consider the pros and cons. It's also a good idea to know the roles you will play. For example, will you or your partner pay the day-to-day bills? The other person may want to manage the monthly mortgage and auto expenses,

or even the long-term investments and retirement funds. If you need help coming up with a plan, you may want to seek the advice of a financial counselor.

2. Get life insurance. When you get married is a perfect time to take steps to protect your loved ones if something unfortunate should happen. "If you have people who depend on you—chances are you need life insurance," said Lou Colaizzo, senior vice president, of a nationally-known insurance company. "While it's hard to think about the possibility of not being there for a loved one, it's so important to plan for." Colaizzo recommends people consult with their insurance agent to determine the life insurance that's best for them.

3. Protect your bling. Chances are you spent a lot of time and money picking out rings you'll love and wear every day. Unfortunately, burglaries are more common than you may think. According to the FBI, there were more than 1.1 million burglaries in 2019. Protect your wedding jewelry, and any other expensive jewelry, by adding these items to your homeowners or renters policy. It is advisable to have photos and documentation of the value of the ring and other valuable jewelry in the event of a theft or a loss.

4. Update your car insurance. Notify your agent to make sure you're both covered to drive each other's cars. You may also be eligible for savings, such

as a multi-car discount or bundling your car insurance with homeowners and/or life insurance. Additionally, some insurance companies offer a lower rate for married couples.

5. Make updates to your records if you change your last name. It's a big decision and takes a lot of work if one of you decides to change your name after marriage. It's important to be patient and diligent as the entire process may take several months. Remember to update all the appropriate forms, including a new Social Security card, driver's license, passport, bank accounts and credit cards, among other considerations. Additionally, notify your employer for payroll and health insurance coverage updates.



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Samanth and Zach enjoy the comfort of a love seat from Meyers Furniture, one of the many choices of furniture available to decorate the home of newlyweds.



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A guide to wedding day floral arrangements

Various elements come together to complete a wedding day visual. Floral arrangements are one such component that can create

a special and awe-inspiring ambiance.

Flowers appeal to at least three of the senses. Their delicate aroma can help

a venue smell fresh and inviting. And it's hard to deny the visual appeal of a stunning floral arrangement. There are colors, sizes, textures, and much more that can cater to any theme. In addition, flowers can add a tactile element, even if guests do not go around touching the blooms.

Flowers convey so much during weddings that it's important to make finding a florist a priority, according to the wedding resource The Knot. The following is a guide to understanding floral arrangements that may be included in a wedding.

Bouquets, corsages & boutonnieres

The wedding party, bride, groom, and parents of the couple are set apart from others at the wedding

ceremony by the special flowers on their attire and in their hands, among other indicators. Boutonnieres are a single bud pinned to the left side of a gentleman's jacket. Corsages can be attached to a dress, but are now often worn on the wrist. Bouquets are held in hand. They can be a few flowers gathered together, or more extensive displays. Bouquets may feature bare stems, or stems may be bound and hidden beneath ribbon and fabric.

Some couples also have a small tossing bouquet to use later in the day. Flower petals for a flower girl to drop down the aisle also may be part of the floral plan.

Ceremony flowers

Guests often are first introduced to floral arrangements at the wedding cer-

emony. Potted or vase-encased flowers may bookend the couple at the altar. Seats or pews may be adorned with flower sprays to draw attention to the aisle, known as aisle markers. These are subtle choices that enhance the ceremony space.

Reception components

Flowers may truly shine during the reception. They're one of the most important components when decorating the space. Flowers serve as centerpieces, so the guest list and the number of tables will dictate how many centerpieces are required. These centerpieces can be elaborate or simply a few loose flowers in vases. Florists can customize the look depending on couples' budgets. Some additional reception flowers can include

installations on arches or on anything hanging like a floral backdrop for photo opportunities.

Tips and tricks

Couples should create a list of everywhere they would like to use flowers and present it, along with magazine clippings or planning boards, to show florists what they have in mind when shopping services, according to Hummingbird Wedding Advice. A 2021 survey from The Knot reported that the average cost for wedding flowers was \$2,300. It's important to set a strict budget so florists can present ideas that are in line with what couples can spend. Many expensive looks can be replicated with in-season flowers or less costly alternatives.

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What is a wedding reception without a cake? Samantha and Zach look over some of the wedding cake choices that are offered at Sullivan's Foods.



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Finding the perfect wedding dress to make your big day special

Planning a wedding requires making many different decisions. The choice of wedding attire is among the most crucial decisions that couples must make. Whether the wedding is traditional or customized to suit couples' personalities, brides and grooms want to look their best when they say, "I do."

Many brides-to-be spend a significant amount of time looking for their ideal wedding dresses. What defines the right gown depends on personal preference and is unique to the person doing the search. For example, a dress that sets a fairy tale scene for one bride may not necessarily align with the tastes of another. According to Bridal Atelier, the average bride-to-be tries on try three to seven dresses



before finding the right one. The following tips can help those shopping for dresses find a look that makes their big day even more special.

1. Don't get hung up on perfection

Many brides get caught up as they search for the one dress they consider perfect.

No dress is likely to check every box. Getting hung up on a desire to find a dress that has it all may make it hard to see the beauty in other dresses. Remember, with the talents of an experienced tailor or seamstress, most dresses can be tweaked to suit your vision of the ideal gown.

2. Consider the season

Getting married during the hazy and humid days of summer is an entirely different experience than tying the knot during the heart of winter. The fabric of the wedding dress should complement the season, whether it's lightweight and breezy for a warm day, or more substantial and cozy when darting to the ceremony in snowfall.

3. Flatter your figure

Chances are brides-to-be

know which cuts and styles are most flattering. Mimic those style choices in the wedding dress. If you want to take focus off of full hips, choose a basque or asymmetrical waistline. Gowns with substantial straps or higher necklines may be better if you have a larger chest. Sheath and mermaid style gowns are options if you are confident with your figure and want to show off your curves.

4. Try a bit of this and that

Don't go into a wedding dress appointment with firm parameters. Although you may have a ball gown style in mind, after trying on other options something with a less voluminous silhouette may actually catch your eye. Many brides also automatically defer to strapless gowns, when various straps

and sleeves can be very appealing.

5. Arrive with a firm budget

Weddings can be costly. It's important to set a bud-

get for the wedding dress just as you will with other expenses. There are plenty of dress designers across a wide spectrum of price points.

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Whitney Stiles of Eureka Savings Bank discusses the mortgage options available to Samantha and Zach when they become new homeowners.

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**Congratulations
and best wishes
to Samantha
and Zach on
your upcoming
wedding,
Sept. 22, 2023!**



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