

afternoon affair can potentially save you hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars. Choosing a location that isn't in high demand usually brings some savings. And no one says you have to serve prime rib, or even have a full meal at your reception. Non-traditional menus can bring those reception costs down, without cutting into the elegance or beauty of your day.

**6. Shop around:** This one may seem like a no-brainer, but it's often forgotten in all the excitement. Go to bridal shows, where you'll gain exposure to a wide variety of vendors.



Don't be afraid to comparison shop, or even haggle. Local "Mom and Pop" stores and other small, independent businesses will probably be more willing to cut you a deal against the competition, and you'll be supporting the local economy. Most bridal shows also offer many discounts, raffles and giveaways where you could win things like flowers, cake, favors or even honeymoon trips. Nothing is better on the budget than free stuff.

**7. Real vs. Artificial:** Creating your bouquets, decorations and centerpieces out of silk flowers can save you time and money. Not only can they be made up ahead of time, but, with a little care, they can last forever. However, if you just can't

imagine your ceremony without the fragrance of real flowers, don't despair. There are still ways to save. There are many flowers that are similar in color, shape and size that can be quite different in price. Talk to your florist about what blooms will be in-season at the time of your event.

**8. What can you do?** Consider what you can do yourself. Many brides save money by creating their own veils/headpieces, custom jewelry, flower arrangements, centerpieces and invitations. There are many books and internet resources available that

give ideas, as well as instructions, for bridal crafts. Don't forget to recruit your family and friends. Many will jump at the chance to be part of your special day.

**9. Think outside of the "gift" box:** This idea is perfect for those couples

who are planning their second marriage, or who are already set up with household things that are more traditionally given. Maybe a friend or family member could make something special for your ceremony, or offer services like photography or videography, instead of giving you a gift. Bridal shower guests could give gift certificates for the hair dresser or nail salon to help the bride be ready on her big day. A lot of today's couples are also making arrangements so that guests can buy vouchers to pay for special activities, or help cover other costs on the honeymoon. After all, how many gravy boats does a person really need?

**10. Don't forget about tradition:**

