

Weddings

A photograph of a bride and groom in a rural setting. The bride is wearing a white lace wedding dress and holding a bouquet of flowers. The groom is wearing a tan suit jacket, blue jeans, and a cowboy hat. They are standing next to a vintage, rusted brown truck. The background shows a green field under a cloudy sky.

*Cramer-Deeken
wedding
pg. 3B*

*Luebbert
wedding
pg. 6B*

*Michael
wedding
pg. 9B*

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photo by Savanna Luebbering

Denim, man's best friend spotlight on Cramer-Deeken wedding

By Theresa Brandt

Denim is not the first thing most people think of when they think of weddings. But for Brian and Kate (Cramer) Deeken, it was the perfect fit for their wedding at Kempker's Back 40.

"It all started with my soon-to-be husband saying that he was not going to wear a tux for the wedding," Kate Deeken said with a big laugh. "I said

fine you can wear jeans."

Kate decided to use denim throughout their wedding to tie into a simple, rustic theme. Kate's mom, Chris Cramer sewed light and dark denim runners for the tables. She also sewed up denim squares to use to set off the wedding cake and other decorations. For the head table, Cramer sewed a patchwork, denim runner.

"It took a lot of sewing," Cramer said.

"I can tell you that."

Kate bought light denim shirts for the bridesmaids to wear to get their hair and makeup done the morning of the wedding. The bridesmaids wore these over their dresses at the dance as the night got cool. Cramer used denim and lace for the flower girl. Even the ring-bearer walked up with the rings on a handmade denim pillow that Kate's mom had made.

All the groomsmen, ushers and the father of the groom and bride wore dark-colored denim jeans and cowboy boots for the ceremony. The groomsmen wore dress shirts and suspenders and the groom wore a vest and jacket.

"About an hour before the wedding all the guys' hats had to come off," Kate said. "I had to argue with a few of them

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4B

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Deeken wedding

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3B

over that, but they lived through it.”
The bride and bridesmaids wore cowboy boots with their dresses.

“Dresses aren’t really my style,” Kate said. “Neither one of us really like all the attention on us.”

That was probably a good thing because it was Brian’s dog, “Beau,” that was the center of attention at the wedding.

“Beau” has been with Brian for 15 years. The pup is part Border Collie and part Blue Heeler.

“This dog rides the four-wheeler with Brian,” Kate said. “He goes to work with Brian. He is always by his side. So, we knew we wanted to put him in the wedding.”

After a bath and with a blue bandana tied around his neck, “Beau” was ready to be a part of the big day.

“The plan was for him to walk up with one of the groomsmen,” Kate said. “Well, as soon as Brian walked up to the front (Beau) cut through the yard and went to Brian and that’s where he stayed for the entire ceremony. He just sat right there the entire time. He is such a loyal dog.”

For the entire wedding, “Beau” was at the center of things, whether it was leading the happy couple back down the aisle after the ceremony, to going on the hay ride to take pictures, and of course, he was right in the middle of the dance floor at the end of the night.

“That dog was right in the middle of the dance even with all of the people,” Kate said. “He was not going to let Brian make a fool of himself by himself.”

Kate had picked out Kempker’s Back 40 even before Brian proposed.

“I had heard about this place and I was like I want to go see it,” Kate said. “We (Kate and her mom) took a ride down there and I just fell in love with it. When he proposed, I instantly told him I knew where I wanted to get married.”

Brian and Kate had dreamed of a fall wedding but Kempker’s Back 40 was already booked. The owners told the couple they would have to wait for the following year.

“I was like nope,” Kate said, laughing. “We are getting married this year we were not going to wait. They had May 19 open so we booked that date.”

Kate admits that typically she tends to be a little OCD about things but for her wedding day she just decided that nothing was going to bother her.

“We were in the bunk house getting our dresses on and it starts to rain,” Kate said. “They had already started setting up the chairs and stuff. The guys helped take

everything back down and put it all away and then about 30 minutes before the ceremony it stopped raining.”

Everyone, including guests, helped to set up the chairs and the weather was beautiful for the ceremony and meal.

Then right before the dance was supposed to start the rain was threatening again.

“My heart just sank,” Kate said. “I was like not again. We went and looked at the radar and there was another storm coming our way.”

The bride and groom did their first dance as a married couple outside.

They also managed to squeeze in the father-daughter dance and the mother-son dance, then it was time to move the dance into the barn. “No sooner than we got everything and everyone in that barn, it was a complete downpour,” Kate said.

“We didn’t expect to have a barn dance, but it was a lot of fun.”

Family and friends were the most important part of the wedding. Members from both sides of the family were a part of the wedding day. Kate’s cousins served as her bridesmaids and they both had uncles as ushers.

“You dream of your wedding being the perfect day,” Kate said. “And everything just fell into place.”



photos by Savanna Luebbering

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Get the most out of bridal shows and wedding events

Recently engaged couples may be excited to get a jump on wedding planning. Bridal shows can be a great way for couples to meet and familiarize themselves with



local wedding professionals, all the while introducing themselves to the terminology of wedding planning.

Though they're a great source of information, contacts and samples, bridal shows also can be a bit overwhelming. Learning how to maximize time spent at shows can help couples plan their weddings as efficiently as possible.

- Start small. If the idea of large crowds is unappealing, attend the more intimate, boutique shows that are often held at local reception halls and restaurants instead of the larger installations at convention centers and hotels.

- Scout out vendors. Check the bridal show's website for lists of exhibitors and see if your desired vendors are on the list. But even if they're not, keep an open mind and use the show as a chance to compare offerings. If an event map is available, marking off must-visit booths can help save time.

- Pre-register. Pre-registering for bridal events saves time at check-in, and doing so may make you eligible for discounted tickets.

- Come prepared. Chances are each vendor is going to ask couples for information so that they can follow up with a phone call or email with more detailed offerings and estimates. Couples attending the show can expediate the process by coming equipped

with labels that feature their names, contact information and wedding date. They can then stick the labels on sign-in sheets or use them like business cards.

- Dress comfortably. Bridal expos involve a lot of walking and roaming around. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Consider a backpack or hands-free bag so you are not weighed down when collecting the swag and other handouts throughout the day.

- Ask questions. When face-to-face with vendors, rely on their expertise but don't hesitate to ask questions concerning themes,

colors, recommendations for honeymoon locations, invitation paper suggestions, and much more.

- Stay for the fashion show. Many shows will offer a runway experience to present the latest gown and tuxedo offerings. This can be an entertaining way for couples to formulate their wedding styles.

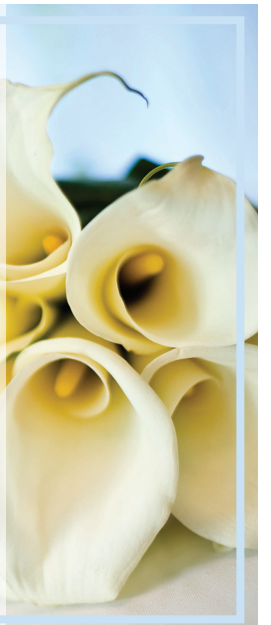
Wedding shows introduce couples to vendors and set them on the path to making decisions regarding the planning of their weddings.

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Did you know?

A wedding is a tough time to experience a bad hair day. Clothing styles, time of day and weather all can dictate a wedding hairstyle, but ultimately one of the most important factors in a wedding hairstyle is finding a stylist who understands you and can exercise your vision. A patient, understanding stylist who is open to viewing different photographs and drawing inspiration from various places, as well as running through a few trial styles, can help brides (and grooms) look their best. In fact, trials are a must to ensure that a chosen style will work with your hair texture. If you plan to get your hair colored, professionals recommend doing so about three weeks in advance of the big day so it looks natural and any potential snafus can be remedied beforehand. Your stylist may suggest a light trim prior to the wedding so that the ends are fresh and healthy. And since you're putting your faith in a qualified stylist, trust their expertise and vision. Keep an open mind to their suggestions. You may fall in love with one of the options you hadn't considered.



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photo by TLE Photography

Luebberts hold first wedding at Ely Manor

During a year-long engagement, Brittany Wilhelm, of Rolla, was looking for a place to hold her wedding, and a friend recommended Ely Manor B&B and Event Venue.

For more information, visit www.elymanor.com.

"It was a very beautiful venue, but more importantly, Mike and Trisha Ely were very accommodating and kind," said Brittany, who married Brandel Luebbert of Jefferson City in July of last year in the first wedding held at Ely Manor B&B and Event Venue. "I couldn't be happier."

Due to the heat, there was a moment when Brittany was a little scared.

"I was a nervous bride," she admitted. "I was sitting in a room waiting for the ceremony to start, and there was only one window. I looked out and I could see two people and a lot of empty chairs. I was freaking out, thinking no one was coming to my wedding, but it turned out they were waiting in the car with the AC on until the last possible minute."

As a result of the heat, Brittany said Mike provided tents for the chairs. "We hadn't talked about that, but Mike took care of it quickly and it made a big difference," she said. "He also provided speakers so we could have music."

Accommodations were also provided inside prior to the wedding.

"We went into a room where my bridesmaids and I were going to get dressed, and all of our bouquets were set up," said Brittany. "It was a great setup that really looked nice, and it also made for a nice setting for our photographer."

Brittany said she was told about some of the history of the venue, and enjoyed the antiques displayed throughout the building. One antique table was provided for the couple's sand ceremony.

"That was an added touch we weren't expecting," Brittany said, adding she will recommend the venue to anyone. "Mike and Trisha were very flexible, and let us leave a few things there overnight. It was just a great experience, and I've already told two of my friends to seriously think about holding their weddings there."

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Ely Manor B&B and Event Venue offers a historic setting

Ely Manor B&B and Event Venue, owned by Mike and Trisha Ely, along with State Tech Marketing Director Brandon McElwain, includes a house listed on the National Register of Historic homes in Linn.

Originally built as the Osage County Poor Farm in 1893, this nationally-registered historic home, is a premier events estate, featuring both an elegant manor and manicured landscape.

“Whether you are looking to establish your own historic memories at an indoor or outdoor venue, we know you will love Ely Manor,” said Mike Ely.

The three-story manor features old-world craftsmanship throughout, including high ceilings, wood floors and crown molding. The spacious first level showcases a luxurious formal dining room, sun room, guest quarters and much more.

Immediately prior to the Ely’s ownership, the property served as a special-needs home.

“We are working to keep the character and history of the property,” Mike said, noting, however, that a lot of improvements have been made since the Elys bought the property two years ago.

Ely Manor provides services for weddings, corporate events, family gatherings and guest rooms.

“Most of the events are on the weekends, but we do have events throughout the week, as well as overnight stays in our guest rooms,” Mike said.

The first and second levels are the primary accommodation levels, with both private and semi-private rooms. “The beautiful grounds can accommodate your ceremony, and also

offers a stunning setting for cocktail hour or outdoor entertainment,” Mike said.

Wedding packages are typically multi-day rentals, from noon the day prior to the event, all the way through noon the day after the event.

“This allows more time for setup and teardown, and eliminates the need to cut the celebrations short on the day of the event,” Mike said. “Your special day should not be spent worrying about coordinating vendors and details. We have an extensive library of highly qualified partners hand-picked for your type of event. Our relationships also allow cost savings which we can pass along to you. Let us help take the stress out of your day so you can focus on what is truly important.”

Guests have full access to the bridal dressing rooms, dining room, sun room, the third-floor groom’s hangout, basketball and volleyball courts, and fire pit. Coming this spring, Ely Manor will be opening the new event center overlooking the area, which will hold approximately 350-400 people.

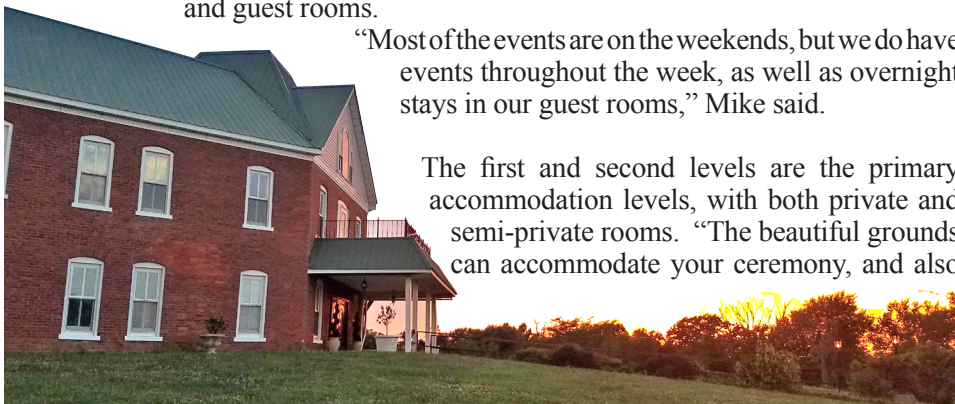
The event center is a two-level building with a commercial kitchen, bathrooms, additional parking and a dance floor made of materials from the Hearnes Center basketball court.

“We also have a lake that is almost complete and will provide beautiful backdrops for events and photos,” Mike said.

A few packages are offered, but Mike said they are all fully customizable, with options including the reception, rehearsal dinner, organizing vendors, and the bridal couple or friends spending the night in one of the guest rooms.

“The packages are typically just a starting point for our couples and they customize as needed,” Mike said. “We can assist with as much - or as little as needed. We have partnered with several vendors - from caterers to photography and pretty much anything in between.”

For more information, visit www.elymanor.com.



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Faith plays role in special wedding for Michaels

By Neal A. Johnson

Despite growing up in Westphalia, Brittany (Groner) Michael had not seen Kempker's Back 40 in person prior to booking the venue for her wedding in September of 2019. Living in Lawson, near Kansas City, when it came time to decide such things, Michael took a leap of faith, and it couldn't have worked out better.

"A lot of local weddings are held at the Knights of Columbus and Westphalia Lions Club, but I had seen pictures of Kempker's Back 40 and I loved them," said Michael, an engineer with Hallmark. "I called and booked it without seeing it in person, and I'm glad I did."

Remember that leap of faith? Michael said she booked the venue even before Colton proposed to her in the spring of last year.

"I knew the proposal was coming, and I wanted a wedding in the fall, so I wanted to be prepared," Brittany said. "I had my mom go talk to Tanya (Kempker) and look everything over. We lucked out that there was one prime date in the fall available

when I called."

With Sept. 28, 2019 secure, Brittany turned her attentions to the details of the wedding and reception.

Colton only had three items he really wanted: barbecue, country music, and he was wearing his cowboy hat.

"The band that we booked actually canceled two days before the wedding so we lucked out when OC Sounds was available to DJ the reception and dance with almost no notice," Brittany said.

"I really didn't care much about the other details," Colton said. "I knew Brittany would put together a great event."

The only thing the couple had to really debate was the song to which they would have their first dance, but eventually they settled on "Ride with Me," by Cody Johnson.

"I went to his concert last summer, and when he played this song, I started crying," Brittany said. "I called Colton and told him this was the song."

Because she lived so far away, there was a lot of planning involved. "Tanya and Dwayne were great," Brittany said. "They

opened the venue to us on Thursday so we could get in there and decorate. My mom and I brought a lot of stuff down. We didn't have to do that because Kempker's Back 40 has everything you'd need, but Tanya was excited about what we did. With the extra time, we had plenty of time to get ready in a low-stress environment."

Colton and Brittany wanted a rustic wedding, with wagon wheels and whiskey barrels, and these decorations fit well with the laid-back theme.

"We had my grandmothers' and mother's wedding dresses, and pictures of them in their wedding dresses," Brittany said. "We also had center pieces for the tables and I made different signs to hang up around the place."

As guests began arriving for the ceremony, there was a real concern about rain.

"It had stormed that morning, and I was freaking out," Brittany said. "I started making beds and picking up the bunk house to take my mind off of the weather."

Between that and making her own wedding cake, Brittany had plenty to keep her busy, but she paused to say a little prayer.

"I told God I knew we needed the rain, but I asked for 20 minutes so we could get married outside like we planned," Brittany said.

The wedding was due to start at 2 p.m. but Brittany decided to push it back a half hour to see if the rain would stop.

"At 2:30 on the dot the rain subsided, and during the ceremony, right when we started our vows, the clouds broke up and the sun shown down on us," Brittany said. "That's all anyone talked about, how our wedding was blessed."

Midway through the dance, the rain returned, but it didn't matter.

"That didn't deter anyone," Colton said. "It was a light rain, and everyone just had fun with it."

Through it all, Tanya and her husband, Dwayne, were there to make sure everything went well.

"They made it look really nice," Brittany said.

Both would recommend Kempker's Back 40 to anyone.

"It was like a dream," Brittany said. "It's hard to imagine it being any better. To plan from Kansas City, and have everything work out so well was a huge deal."

"It's a great venue," Colton added. "We're very happy."

For more information on the venue, visit <https://www.facebook.com/KempkersBack40>.



photo by Rob Schaefer with Infinite Moments

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Kempker's Back 40 provides beautiful secluded wedding setting

Kempker's Back 40 is a wedding and special events venue near Westphalia that not only has a great history, but also a wide variety of options for couples seeking to join their lives. The venue is hidden in a very private country setting with gorgeous views, a beautiful lake and two amazing 100-plus year-old barns, which were in disrepair and in danger of collapsing.

"For sentimental and historical reasons saving the barns became our goal," said Tanya Kempker, who with her husband, Dwayne, operate the business between mid-March and the end of October.

Virgil and Rose Kempker purchased the property in the early 60's. In the following years they and their 10 children worked on the farm raising livestock and crops. After Virgil's passing, the property was divided among their children. Dwayne had an opportunity to own part of his homeplace, and asked for "The Back 40," hence the name of the venue.

Dwayne and Tanya have resided on the property since. They raised their sons, Kyle and Evan, on the farm and continued the farming tradition, raising cattle and elk until recently. They now hobby-farm miniature donkeys and goats, and plant crops and flowers to attract wildlife, birds and bees.

In 2015, the Kempkers held two weddings. They had planned to start in 2016, but were approached by two couples in need of a venue due to some unexpected circumstances. The rehab wasn't complete because of a rainy summer but the Kempkers agreed to do it.

"Even though everything wasn't finished the couples were happy and it was good for us to do a couple before a full season," Tanya said.

To date, 96 weddings have been held at Kempker's Back 40.

While the property has been in the Kempker family for over 50 years, the barns were actually built by Dwayne's great-great uncle, John Bisges, shortly after the close of the 19th century. The farm was owned by the Reaker family who used the cattle barn for storing hay and wintering cattle. The horse barn was built and used to raise horses for the military. The farm's history as well as many stories were shared with Dwayne by Johnny Reaker (born 1893), who was a boy when the barns were built. He continued to live out his life in his log cabin on the farm during Dwayne's childhood.

The Kempkers purchased additional property from siblings over the years and own nearly 100 acres, with the barns being a central point of interest.

"We always cherished the barns for their craftsmanship and history," Dwayne said. "However, as years passed, they continued to deteriorate. To save the barns we made the decision in early 2015, to both restore the barns and create a venue so they may be shared, appreciated and enjoyed by others."

While repairing the barns, it was important to maintain the 1900-era barn aesthetic. Both barns were made

structurally sound, and modernized, with a new layer of oak board and bating siding added to maintain their rustic charm. "The barns should stand for another 100 years," Tanya said.

Barn 1 is a one-level cattle barn with a versatile open space able to accommodate a wedding ceremony, guests dining, or host an indoor dance. This barn has two restroom facilities and is equipped with a kitchen able to accommodate caterers or your own cooking. The interior of the barn is original construction offering the true 1900-era barn aesthetic.

Barn 2 is a two-level horse barn with a large loft. The lower level of this "bunkhouse" barn includes a large rustic bar, kitchen, sleeping space, a family lounge area and dining area. A lower level addition contains two spacious bathrooms. One has ample space and adequate lighting for the bride and attendants to get ready. The other has a shower and access to an outdoor shower with a beautiful view.

"Brides and their wedding party enjoy spending the night in the bunkhouse after rehearsal to prepare for the wedding and take photographs the morning of the ceremony," Tanya said.

A beautiful split oak staircase climbs to the open loft, which again provides space for a wedding ceremony, dining reception or dance. The interior has largely been kept original, again, offering the 1900-era aesthetic.

The large rustic oak pavilion, which provides covered outdoor space was carefully constructed to blend seamlessly with the aged barns and delivers a consistent aesthetic. The pavilion offers an outdoor space for a bar or dance floor. The pavilion is also a great alternative location if an outdoor wedding was planned and the weather didn't cooperate.

A spacious open-air patio is situated next to the pavilion and includes a large covered stage and two rustic grain bins converted to serve as bars, DJ space, etc. The patio is stained and stamped concrete, which is consistent throughout the venue's buildings and sidewalks. This space is perfect for a fair-weather starry night reception dance. It has been used for wedding ceremonies and game space prior to the dance as well.

The barns, pavilion, dance floor, stage and grain bins are nestled along a bottom field creek with a smaller creek running between them. A beautiful rustic oak bridge arches over the creek joining the spaces. The property hosts a number of outdoor ceremony locations with the most popular being a scenic rock outcrop with shade and a natural rock amphitheater seating overlooking the barns and lake. Another is a hillside location with beautiful lake background view, a level seating area and a rustic cedar structure for the bride and groom. The barns, pavilion and outdoor spaces offer versatility allowing you to make your event unique with many gorgeous indoor and outdoor options.

To accompany the rustic barns, scenic setting and versatile options,

Kempker's Back 40 has a children's play area with large deck, slide, rock climber and swings.

Kempker's Back 40 venue area, structures, fences, bridge, dance areas, indoor and out, are equipped with warm string and patio lights. The dance floor, pavilion, and both barns have popular original chandeliers made from repurposed materials.

"We have many other amenities and provide many services too numerous to list," Tanya said, noting that all

amenities and services are included with the lease at no additional costs. "We are proud of our venue and have enjoyed sharing it with others, and really hope that everyone who comes there enjoys it too."

To check availability, discuss guests accommodations, inquire about pricing or to schedule a tour, please call 573-455-2113 (home) or 573-298-2383 (cell). Facebook messaging on KempkersBack40 also works well.



The evolution of wedding favors

Wedding favors have changed — and in many cases for the better. Favors have evolved from the inexpensive trinkets purchased in bulk into more personalized mementos that guests can cherish.

Today's couples are interested in customizing their weddings and offering guests something meaningful, or at the very least, edible, so that favors don't immediately get relegated to the trash can. According to Heather Jones of Wente Vineyards in California, favors have moved from "goodie bags" toward items that are experimental and fun. Wedding planners from across the country offer these wedding favor trends that couples may want to incorporate into their own celebrations.

WELCOME BAGS

Rather than take-home bags, welcome bags have replaced the traditional favor trinket at some weddings. Many weddings have become multi-day events that ask guests traveling from out of town to attend a wedding weekend. To help greet them and make their experience memorable, couples may fill a gift bag with items guests can use or enjoy during their stay — like a bottle of locally sourced maple syrup or some handmade soaps from a nearby shopkeeper.

EXPERIENCE GIFTS

Instead of a candle or a monogrammed cake server, think of experiences to offer guests. A coupon for free drinks at a nearby

brewery, a tour of a local attraction while guests are in town or a group excursion for guests attending a destination wedding can be fun and will help guests create lasting memories.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Some couples feel that favors are wasteful and would rather set aside a portion of their wedding budgets toward giving back. In such situations, a donation to charity in guests' names can be the way to go. Guests can vote on two favorite charities advertised on a special table at the wedding reception. The one with the most votes will get the proceeds.

LATE-NIGHT SNACKS

After a night of celebrating, some guests may want the festivities to continue, but may need some extra sustenance to make it through a few more hours. Some couples are eschewing traditional favors in lieu of making room for extra food or beverage expenses that can include after-party treats. These may run the gamut from wood-fired pizzas to food truck vendors to extra desserts. A tasty take-home option also may be given, such as fresh zeppolis or beignets, or even a personalized bottle of wine. Even if the food and drink is not consumed right away, there's a good chance it will hit the spot when guests return to their hotel rooms.

Wedding favors are changing to keep up with the times and keep guests feeling extra special.

Did you know?

While flowers certainly add beauty and a wonderful aroma to wedding ceremonies and receptions, there are other reasons behind their inclusion in such festivities. In ancient Rome, brides carried or wore flower garlands because the Romans believed flowers signified hope, fertility and new beginnings. In the Middle Ages, brides did not carry flowers, but rather strong-smelling spices and herbs. The rationale was that the herbs and spices would drive away bad luck and evil spirits.

Flowers also served another practical purpose. In eras when bathing was a luxury, different flowers and herbs helped mask body odors. It wasn't until the Victorian era, when flowers were used to symbolize romantic love, that they became part of wedding ceremonies, according to Modern Weddings magazine.



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*Wedding photos provided by Rob Schafer owner of Infinite Moment.
Wedding of Brittany and Colton Michael*