

Lavish weddings

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year in advance.

Music: In addition to the organist, the couple may want to engage a professional vocalist. It's usually less expensive to employ the services of a talented choir member. For the reception, stereo tapes or records can be substituted for live music. The tapes can be rented and the disk jockey task assigned to a close friend.

Beverages: It's important that the reception hall agreement allows the couple to supply their own beverages. A

friend could be enlisted to serve as bartender. Sometimes it is advantageous to do some comparative pricing in neighboring states, because taxes can produce considerable price differences. Ohio couples, for example, have been known to drive to Chicago to get alcoholic beverages for reception parties, and the saving more than pays for the trip. Of course, serving liquor is not an absolute requirement — champagne or fruit punch or an inexpensive wine can be suitable substitutes. Cook books are filled with ideas, including recipes for mock champagne. If beverages are purchased from the hall or from

caterers, the couple should ask to return unopened bottles.

Food: A sit-down or buffet dinner is easily the single most costly item in a wedding budget, and the cost often restricts the number of guests invited to a reception. Punch and cake are a suitable and much less expensive alternative. Snacks or sandwiches can be prepared in advance at home, if care is taken to choose foods which freeze and store well.

Cake: Sheet cakes are less costly than the tiered variety, and you can save by giving the job to someone who bakes at

home rather than purchasing from a bakery. It's a good idea to insist on a taste test before placing an order for a homemade cake.

Honeymoon: Numerous hotels advertise two- to seven-day packages at bargain prices. Lodges and vacation cottages at state parks also offer attractive prices, and cabins with kitchenettes further reduce costs. Of course, the couple can defer a trip until later, when their financial status improves. Such a delay might enable them to take advantage of special excursion or off-season rates.

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