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*Wedding*  
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## LET'S TALK ABOUT PRETTY FLOWERS, LACE, WHITE GOWNS, AND SOME MAN-LY SUBJECTS, TOO!

How did that 1964 Dixie Cups song go? "We're going to the chapel and we're gonna get married!" That's still a great song! A real classic (in my opinion), but then again I love the songs from the 60s, because they tell stories from a much simpler time.

Quite a lot has changed in the last 51 years since that song was released, but some things have remained the same – such as the fact that people who are in love often times take that ultimate leap of commitment and faith, gaze into each other's eyes, and commit to spending the rest of their lives together – no matter what! I think that that's pretty sweet! (Besides, divorce is always an option if it doesn't pan out). But we think that it is so sweet, in fact, that we've devoted a whole issue to this very happy moment in people's lives! But if you're already married, or if you are anti-weddings or anti-marriage, or you just don't care about the whole thing – that's OK! We have plenty of interesting articles and stories in this issue ... you may just have to look past some of the flowers, pretty white dresses, and lace.

Our artist feature brings you Rowena Gill, who amongst other things, designs and makes wedding dresses right in Millbrook, NY! Our business profile this month is that of Joanne Scasso of Country Gardeners Florist in Millerton. If you don't know Joanne, she's one hard-working lady, and funny, too! This month's real estate feature examines the very niche-oriented wedding venue rental business. I found it quite interesting to learn that some local venues (primarily farms) rent their facilities to help offset other costs of running their facilities.

Our Mary O'Neill brings us three stories this month, two being related. The first two examine the traditions and trends when it comes to getting engaged and then what you should know and look for when buying a ring. She then dives into the whole last name thing – to keep or to change, that 'tis the question! Another question, one that Claire Copley asks, how green is your wedding? Never thought about the impact that a wedding has on the environment? Well, that's OK, Claire will tell you all about it!

Melissa gives some honeymoon, or vacation if you prefer, choices. She also dives into some wedding dress trends – guys, you may want to skip that one. But don't worry, we have a special themed issue coming for you in May!

- Thorunn Kristjansdottir



FEBRUARY 2015

This bride said "I do" after walking down the aisle and looking her best at The Interlaken Inn, the moment being captured in time by wedding photographer Alicia King.

Cover photo by  
Alicia King Photography

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By Brandon Kralik  
arts@mainstreetmag.com

What immediately impressed me as soon as I entered the showroom at RG Couture was the sense of quality, the elegance of the hand made dresses which are literally fit for the Duchess. In fact, wait until you read her story, of how Rowena Gill came to create wedding dresses that has women coming from New York City, upstate to Millbrook! It is truly magical.

When I walked through the door of the RG Couture shop, a woman who I presumed to be the owner talked, happy and animatedly to a customer, I thought, a friend. I immediately became comfortable in spite of the fact that this was an unusual place even for me to be. I felt a sense of affirmation though, a reminder that even in today's situation of mass production and temporality, there exist people who believe in quality, in design, beauty, and craftsmanship. I find this comforting. Here is a woman making wedding dresses who really takes the time to build, to orchestrate around the pattern of the female form, in all of its wonderful and varying shapes, similar but not at all the same. The similarities between her craft and building a cathedral struck me. The dome of fabric, the flying buttresses, the hand sewn bodices sparkling like stars as ones gaze rises toward the steeple, into the heavenly face of the bride.

Rowena explained to me, "People don't realize that everyone is the same in that we all have things about our bodies that we are insecure about. We think that the beautiful person we see over there doesn't have insecurities, but they do. The idea is to accentuate the things about the client that they are

already comfortable with. I have seen their bodies change. I have known some of my clients for years, and have seen their confidence grow, their posture, everything. As I work with them I see their trust in themselves improve." This is the subtle advantage of cultivating beauty. There is an energy that comes with a thing that is handmade, where good intention has been put into the making of a dress, of a painting, or a piece of furniture, and that helps in giving it unique and desirable qualities. It is something that is not necessarily bought to be resold, but purchased to be enjoyed.

#### The history of weddings and Rowena Gill

The Victorians are the ones who put weddings on the map. In that time, some of the dresses were blue or gold and not really white at all. Rowena said, "At first it was this wealthy family marrying this wealthy family and then everybody sort of wanted to get married. Before it was only big powerful families that got married, but it evolved into something that everybody wanted to do."

And when it comes to the dress in today's world, Rowena explained: "I encourage clients to go out and look around and to try on dresses so they begin to understand these big dresses. Then when they realize that they can't find anything to fit them, then they come back and I work with them."

Rowena Gill is from England, but was brought up in France where she attended "Studio Bercot" Paris. Her work has been featured in numerous publications including *Bridal Guide*, *Max*, *GQ* and *Vogue*, to name just a few. She has been commissioned by Yves St. Laurent, Emmanuel Ungaro, and the Duchess of York. She is more than a dress maker. She is also a designer and a jeweler.

The RG Couture website, which is a joy to look at, talks about how Rowena has always had

a desire to create fairy tale dresses. But one day, when walking through the small back streets of Paris early one morning, something sparkling in the dust bin caught her eye. Upon closer inspection she discovered it to be a box of beautiful antique crystal beads. She was approached by an elderly gentleman who explained that it was he who discarded the box whilst in the process of clearing out his attic, and told her that he had more if she would like them. Ever since this auspicious beginning, Rowena has been designing and making her fantastical repertoire of necklaces, chokers, bags, and beaded jewelled dresses. Working with Swarovski Crystal, linked with tiny jet and glass beads, her work is often incredibly intricate and some of her large pieces can take months at a time to complete.

"I start with a muslin, which is a white fabric, like a canvas. I explain it to them as a canvas. I start drawing on it, taking it apart and it becomes my pattern. Sometimes I will put designs down on paper but often I just keep it on the muslin. Then we go back into the back room and start cutting and I get out the big marker and determine where the lines will go. It is all about proportions. Certain seems should hit in certain places and that's unique to everybody."

She shows me a dress that she is working on which adorns the mannequin in the shop, explaining that there will be a skirt, and when the skirt comes off there will be an evening dress underneath. And then she returns to the process.

"Once we get the pattern out of muslin right, sometimes I do two, then we begin with the fabric, and that will behave differently than the muslin. So it is a stage process that takes about three months. I meet with clients every two weeks for about two months."



### The materials and Millbrook

A lot of the silks are from the East, the lace from France, the designs for the bead work is from India, and Rowena does most of that herself, although she also works with other professional craftsmen and women.

"Living here in Millbrook is good." Rowena explains, "I wanted to raise my son in the country, and so I can do that here and still remain connected. I go down to the city once a week to purchase fabric, beads, things for all of the specialty work that I do. Once in a while I will meet clients in the city, but usually they make the effort to come here."

Rowena focuses on weddings, but also does red carpet events and other special projects like the Millbrook Hunt.

### Coming across the pond and serendipity

Rowena Gill came to the States from England in the late 90's, at which time she made a line of high-end jewelry from the crystal beads she had found in Paris and she shared with me a wonderful story about how it came to be that Saks Fifth Avenue bought everything she had made. She was living in California, where she lived with her partner and he knew how big her jewelry was in London. He knew all of the write-ups and runway shows that Rowena had succeeded in landing and at his encouragement, in fact his insistence, she flew to New York where she had never been before, by herself, with everything she had made.

"I was staying up at 195th street in Harlem and was just overwhelmed by the whole thing, New York for the first time, and not knowing where to go, or exactly what to do. I was a bundle of nerves there with my jewelry cases," remembers Rowena.

"But, the first morning, I made myself go out and get in a taxi and I asked the guy, 'Where do people buy nice stuff?' And he said, 'You would like to do some shopping?' and I just asked him to take me to SoHo or Chelsea. 'Just take me to where there are beautiful things,' and he did. There I was, walking around SoHo when someone suggested that I go to Fragments on Greene Street, which I did, and when I walked in, the guy there, a very nice man, said in a bit of a panic, 'There you are! You're late!' I was so nervous that I didn't know how to say that he didn't know me. But he told me to go in the back room and get set up, so, I did! And in a matter of seconds after I got it all laid out on the table, the buyers from Saks came in and I saw him just looking at my jewelry wondering what was happening and who I was, but the lady just fell in love with it and said, 'This is great! Where did you find her?' and they bought everything!" After one day in New York she had sold everything, and landed a contract with Saks.

"I phoned my partner and told him that I would be taking the next plane home and he exclaimed, 'What do you mean you are taking the next plane home? You've got to stick with it, you can't do it in a day.' I then replied, 'But I have done it in a day! I'm coming back!' Of course there were other



Photos by, opposite page: Lucia Stuart. Top: Brandon Kralik. Left: Rowena Gill, model Frankie. Right: Colleen Hartling.

hurdles after that, but it really was sort of a miracle. Things happen for a reason."

Intention of course plays a big part in it, it isn't all random. The jewelry had to be created, the trip to New York booked and so forth, but it really can sometimes feel like things were just meant to be. When one puts one's effort in the right direction it can all come together.

### Manifesting intention

Another entertaining example of how the magic of intention manifested itself in her life was when she returned to England for a few years after 9/11, and how she came to work with the Duchess of York. Rowena describes it as a massive series of coincidences, as if there were such a thing.

"I was sitting around with a few colleagues reading magazines, good friends actually, we had known each other a number of years and followed each other's careers, and we see in one of the pictures that the Duchess is wearing one of my necklaces! So my friends say, 'Oh we should write to her and tell her that you are in town!' It was sort of a joke but yeah, why not? We wrote a letter out there at the bar and sent it away to the Duchess. About a week later I get a call and the voice says, 'This is the Buckingham Palace office,' and they asked about my work and if I could come meet with them and they were serious and I got excited and, 'Well yes!

Of course I can!' About that time I detected laughter and I knew then that it was my friends from the pub. Another week passed and I got a second call and at first I thought it to be them again, but I went along with it. After the phone call I said when I saw them, 'Come on you guys, that was you.' But it turned out that it was the Duchesses' office and so I ended up actually meeting her, and she was phenomenal! Really she is one gracious lady. Since then I have done several projects with her."

The rich life experiences that Rowena Gill has to share add to the luxury of visiting with her and learning about her craft. I had expected to find a big bench of space age Huskvarna sewing machines or something in the back, but behind the scenes sits her Rolls Royce, as she calls it, the old Singer Sewing machine that was given to her and which has a long history in Millbrook where she lives and works. I would say that when you are in the area stop in, but it is more appropriate to say, make it a point to journey to Millbrook, should you have the desire for a fairy tale wedding dress, and experience the sheer magic of Rowena Gill. ●

For more information visit Rowena's website at [www.rowenagill.com](http://www.rowenagill.com) or email [rowenagill@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rowenagill@yahoo.co.uk).

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**Christopher Kennan** is a coproprietor of Little Gates Wine Merchants in Millerton, a Board Chair of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, and is on the Board of TownScape in Millerton. Chris is also an avid marathoner and an occasional actor. As you can tell he is a busy man, but he finds being involved in Millerton very rewarding. "It is a happening little town." Chris says Little Gates has had the pleasure of supplying bubbly to weddings, anniversaries, large parties and everything in between. Chris chuckles as he says "weddings of course usually start and end with champagne." If you ever have any questions about bubbly, Chris invites you to Little Gates to learn more and you just might walk out with a new favorite. Cheers!



**Jessica Sagendorph** has been with Elizabeth's Jewelry & Gifts in Millerton for five and a half years. She loves making people happy, and she also loves wearing the jewelry! "Sometimes people will see me wearing a certain piece of jewelry and so I'll often times sell the piece right off of me!" Jessica is just as passionate about running as she is about jewelry. She has done two half marathons and lots of 5k's. "After my half marathons I usually wear my medal in the store!" Jess encourages guys who are ready to pop the question to come to the store even though they aren't positive about what type of ring his better half would like. She or one of the Elizabeth's Jewelry staff members will walk the groom-to-be through a few simple questions to help him find the perfect ring!



**Carlos Unite** is a Lakeville resident and an employee of LaBonne's Market in Salisbury. He has worked there for eight years and his duties include everything imaginable! He pitches in wherever he's needed. Carlos enjoys interacting with the customers, making sure they get what they need, and is a familiar face to all. He also calls himself a jack-of-all-trades and had a handyman business for a period of time. He grew up in Lakeville and enjoys the area because of its rural charm. Carlos has been married for 31 years, has two children and enjoys spending time with them and with his dog, Riley. He's an avid swimmer, hiker, biker and enjoys camping. He's also an avid UConn women's basketball fan, because they are amazing.



**Lori Hoyt** is the proprietor of Lori Hoyt & Co. Salon in Salisbury, CT. She has been a stylist for 23 years and trained at The Paul Mitchell Institute in San Diego, CA. She moved to Salisbury in 1983 and has been in her present location, at 199 Main St., for eight years. Lori really enjoys her profession and working with clients to give them the look that they want. She loves interacting with people and feels as if she knows most of her clients pretty well. Lori is married and has two children that keep her busy in her free time, and she spends much of that time attending their sporting events. She also rides horses and hikes the scenic trails in the area. So, "Who cuts your hair?"



**Stephen Spurduto** is the owner of Housatonic Art and Framing in Cornwall Bridge, CT., having moved to the area from Westchester seven years ago. He provides professional custom-framing at a reasonable rate with a fast turnaround time. He enjoys the design aspect of his work and seeing the clients' pleased expressions when they see the finished product. He is a graduate of the Brooks Institute of photography in Santa Barbara, CA and worked for many years as a professional photographer. When he first arrived in the area he was employed as a cook at the old Bairs General Store in Cornwall Bridge and cooking is another passion. Steve likes the change of seasons and also enjoys golfing, fishing, playing basketball, and is a movie fanatic. Let him frame something for you...you wont be disappointed.



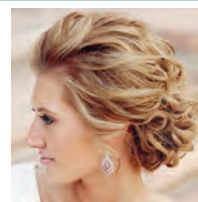
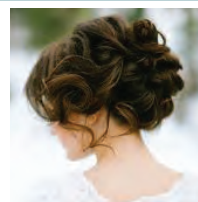
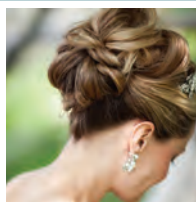


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## MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:

## a (bride's) fitness journal

By Thorunn Kristjansdottir  
info@mainstreetmag.com

How many of you made a New Year's Resolution relating to health and fitness? Quite a few, I'm guessing. So how goes the resolution? We're about a month in now by the time this issue reaches you, and so I ask: are you still going strong? I hope so!

When it comes to my health, I don't make New Year's Resolutions anymore. I make all year resolutions and commitments to myself and to my well-being. I made one such about seven months ago and I challenged our readers to join me in the quest for a healthier lifestyle. I thought it fitting to check in at this juncture, for one because right around this time marks six months or so since I challenged you. Secondly, this is our "wedding issue" and I am a soon-to-be bride, and so I obviously and understandably want to look my most gorgeous and fit-test on my wedding day. Are the two points related? Surprisingly they are not! They are just coincidental – I swear. I began my quest for a healthier lifestyle before we even picked a day for our big day. But I won't deny the fact that one has definitely helped fuel the other.

At summer's end I set out to achieve and maintain a healthier lifestyle. As I wrote in this column at the time, I had accomplished the eating portion quite well (or so I thought), and so my goal was the exercise portion. How and what you eat and how you move are the two key elements in your health and fitness after all. I admitted at the time that I was one of those who didn't allow myself the time to exercise, so I enlisted the help of Kevin Finn, a personal trainer, to get me moving – literally. In the last six months, I've worked with Kevin on average of three times a month (with a few breaks in between). And yes, that's only an average of (barely) once a week, so not really a drastic exercise regimen with a trainer. But during the other six days of the week I took matters into my own hands. I began working with Kevin in September and from that time through early November, I power walked and/or jogged a few miles every or every other day by myself. I continued to ride horses and do barn chores every weekend (if you've ever lugged hay bails, you know what I'm talking about), and I also did different exercises at home.

### The game-changer

Kevin also challenged me to commit to and take on *The South Beach Diet* when after about a month of working with him I asked why I wasn't seeing more results. He said that if I wanted to get serious that I needed to actually get serious. In regards to *The South Beach Diet*, Kevin said that for me it wasn't so much that I needed to "detox" from sugar

nor drastically change my eating habits, but it was a challenge to sharpen me up. But let me tell you something right now, taking on a partial *South Beach Diet* challenge (which was combined with my exercising) changed everything!

For a long time I've had a set weight in mind that I wanted to attain. And I know, I know, weight doesn't equate to fitness, and muscle weighs more than fat. I know this. But in my mind, by achieving this specific number, I took it as a given that I would be a fit person weighing in at that specific number. And as I wrote in September, I had a rude awakening when Kevin told me my body fat percentage. So with all of that going through my head, having incorporated somewhat frequent exercise into my daily routine (compared to before), and thanks to *The South Beach Diet* changing how I viewed and consumed food, do you know what happened? The pounds melted off.

I'm a person who struggles with every single pound. So you can imagine my delight when the scale started flashing numbers back at me that were not just my goal weight, but I had actually surpassed my goal weight! How? By staying active, and changing (just slightly) how I thought about and consequently consumed food.

### Losing total body weight

I have lost nearly 10% of my total body weight since last summer. For those who don't know me, I'm a fairly tall woman (5'10+), but I'm by no means overweight, so it's not like I had a tremendous amount of weight to lose. I'm like most people out there who need to get fit and can stand to lose a couple of those darn pounds! So when I recently realized that I had lost nearly 10% of my total body weight in just over six months, yes, I did pat myself on the back for a hot minute, but then it was back to work – staying the course.

### The holiday challenge

From Thanksgiving and through the New Year, Kevin and I only worked out once or twice together. And whereas the weather had changed and got cold, I was no longer going out for my walks like I had been doing. (I hate the cold, and if I don't have to I don't go out in it). So yes, my walks were nixed. This did worry me especially through the holidays, specifically in regards to increased (holiday) food consumption, less exercise, and an even busier work schedule (which meant more sitting). But you know what I found? Here's where *The South Beach Diet* stuck with me.

Following just a few steps outlined in the book had really transformed my thinking, and I believe also my blood chemistry. I no longer craved certain foods. I had a sugar cookie over the holidays with

sprinkles and I immediately spit it out after taking a bite because it tasted fake and like chemicals. I made wiser choices during the holidays, because I no longer craved the bad choices, like the sugar cookie. I still had some sweets and I didn't deprive myself, but the slight changes were what made all of the difference in the world. I would have cheese, but I'd skip the cracker. I would have more meat and vegetables with the main course and that sometimes led to not even wanting dessert. These minor changes made a big impact.

Shortly after Christmas I was cleaning out my closet and came across a pair of jeans that I had worn some years (and pounds) ago. They were my favorite pair and I had refused to get rid of them because I swore I'd fit into them again. I tried them on a year or two ago and couldn't even get them up past a certain point. This time, not only could I get them up and button them, but they were close to fitting me like they did when I bought them. I've still got some work to do, but I now feel that I have the foundation and tools to help me stay the course for a lifetime. And an impending wedding will of course help that cause even further!

### Bridal fitness

I'm an all-or-nothing person, and if I do something I do it 100%. I don't get in shape for an event, I get in shape as part of a lifestyle choice. So I'm not going to tell you that for the next few months that I'm going to get into "bridal shape." Yes, I'm going to continue to get into better shape, lose a few more pounds, tone and strengthen – and will all of that work and dedication make me look and feel better on my big day? Of course. But guess what: because I've made a lifestyle choice, and I've worked on it and continue to work on it, I am more likely to stick with it after the wedding. That is what Bill Burke of North East Fitness & Wellness said in last year's wedding fitness article. It's not a quick fix, but it's a lifestyle choice and commitment. At the end of the day, that is more important.

As part of a lifestyle choice, I don't have a goal of just toning my arms for that strapless dress or my stomach for a skinnier waist, but I have a goal of continuing to be an all-around fit and healthy person. With that being said, I don't want to target just one area, but I think of my fitness and body as a whole. And that is how I want to train. I cannot wait for the weather to warm up so that I can get back out to walk, but in the meantime, I've taken up yoga and I use every opportunity to move as an opportunity to exercise my body. Laundry day can double as an exercise day! Park the car on the far end of the grocery store parking lot. The small adjustments and changes add up, and at the end of the day they make all the difference! •



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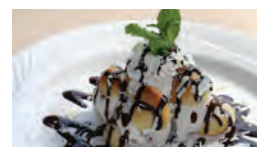
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# a blooming business

COUNTRY GARDENERS FLORIST, MILLERTON, NY

By Christine Bates  
christine@mainstreetmag.com

*When you interview Joanne Scasso at Country Gardeners Florist in Millerton you don't sit down. You follow her around while she answers the phone, checks information on the computer, puts newly arrived fresh flowers into the refrigerated case, and talks to customers. "I don't sit. I don't sleep." She is a blonde whirlwind that the late John Harney affectionately nicknamed, "Sunshine" and she is this month's Main Street Magazine entrepreneur.*

## Have you always worked with flowers? How did you get started?

I started working in a flower shop when I was 15. I went to college to study physical education for exceptional children at SUNY Cortland, but discovered that I really wanted to work with flowers. I left before graduating and was hired at Kent Greenhouse. I worked there for four years learning about plants, and, most importantly, about customer service. [See our interview with Bruce and Debbie Bennett of Kent Greenhouse in *Main Street Magazine's* December 2014 issue]. I started my own business in 1986, first in Amenia and then moved to Millerton the next year. Initially I shared the rail depot space with David Gavin Hair Salon; that's now occupied by Leslie Flood Interiors. When I first started my own business, Debbie and Bruce let me continue working mornings for them so that I could make ends meet.



Above left: Joanne Scasso with her husband Jay and son Stone. Right: Country Gardeners refrigerated case is always filled with flowers. Below left, top image: The store is located in Millerton's first train station. Bottom image: Country Gardeners specializes in the unique, like this wreath of feathers.



## What was most helpful to you in starting your business?

I was really lucky to find an accountant, Rick Bianchi in Hudson, who guided me through the process of setting up the business and books. He still does all of my tax returns.

## When did you move into this charming building?

This is an 1851 railroad building that I bought from Salisbury Bank in 1992 in a foreclosure sale. It was the original train station here in Millerton and had been moved twice as the railroad lines expanded. For a number of years it was the notorious Red Barn Tavern when Millerton had 14 bars and the drinking age in New York was 18. When I got it the roof was on the floor and it probably should have been torn down, but we saved it.

## Has your relationship with Salisbury Bank been important?

When I was 22 they gave me a line of credit because they knew I was a hard worker. The bank also gave my husband and me a mortgage when we built our house. And when this building became available they insisted I buy it and made it possible. They remain one of my clients.

## Have you ever done a business plan?

Not yet.

## How were the early years?

When I opened there was one florist in Millerton, but the owners were getting older and less interested in their business. Before I opened I told them about my plans. They didn't mind and six months later they retired and closed their shop.

In the early 90's there was a tremendously active local Chamber of Commerce. We put 75 whiskey barrels of flowers up and down Main Street. We bought the gazebo and made benches. There was so much energy. Millerton has always had that.

## How did the recent recession affect you?

Is it over yet? It seems that everyone has become thriftier. We have twice the number of customers who spend half the amount as before the recession. Our revenues really haven't changed. You always need to change your business to fit the economy. We can't sell roses for \$30 a dozen anymore, but we can sell tulips for \$10.

## What's changed in the business since you started?

A big change is the wholesale availability of flowers. I can order from our wholesaler in Newburgh before 10:30 in the morning and get a delivery on the same day by 3:00 pm.

Continued on next page ...



Our mix of customers has also changed. Now we have maybe 50% weekenders and the rest are local residents. You know that Millerton has had weekend visitors since the 1850's and they're not all rich.

As flowers are more readily available at cheaper prices in supermarkets we have had to become more specialized to compete. Look at this feather wreath we just made (see previous page). We need to have something that no one else has.

### How important are weddings to your business?

We do at least one wedding every weekend. I was married at Interlaken Inn in 1990 and they continue to be one of my biggest customers. But we supply weddings all over the country. We even sent flowers to Dallas, Texas. Arnoff helped us with the packing and the arrangements arrived in one day. I'll go anywhere to do a wedding. I've taken flowers on the ferry from Cape May to Delaware. I've flown to Phoenix, bought flowers wholesale and put together bouquets in a hotel.

I'm also the venue coordinator for Lionrock Farm, providing information and showing future brides around the property (see article page 23).

### What's the most expensive wedding you have ever done?

We like to work with everyone. I would never hurt anyone's feelings. It could be a wedding with only one boutonniere and a bouquet. Probably the most expensive wedding came in around \$15,000. But I also have other items for rent – serving tables, vintage vehicles like 1954 and 1979 Ford trucks, I've got a whole barn of stuff to rent.

### What don't people know about the florist business?

They probably don't understand how difficult it is to handle a perishable product. And I really only have a hunch on what to order.

### Do you ever take time off?

Once a year we go on vacation for a week some place warm during the winter. Otherwise I'm pretty much here seven days a week. I don't know what I would do with myself if I had a 40 hour a week job.

### What do you like the most and least about your business?

I like the fact that every day is different and that tasks are so varied. And everyone does everything from taking out the trash to arranging flowers. There's no hierarchy here. My least favorite activity is bookkeeping.



Above and below: Country Gardener flower arrangements ready to be delivered.

### Do you have any other businesses?

My husband Jay Scasso owns Seagull Roofing and Siding. We own and manage rental properties together, and we also have a horse hay business.

### What do you love about our area?

There are so many kind people that live here. People who anonymously help those in need. And our local businesses help each other. If we don't have lilies in stock I'll call the florist in Salisbury and send clients over there. Izzy of Battle Hill Forge built my iron gates. I buy flowers in the summer from local farms like Silamar. John Harney used to buy 150 daffodils from me and walk up the street just giving them away to women. I miss him so much.

### What's the toughest part of your business?

Finding good people to work here. Over the years I've participated in the CAPS program at Maplebrook School, which provides internships for students so they can learn a profession. Chris, my most recent full-time hire, came from that program.

It's difficult finding motivated young people who will show up and have some idea about customer service. Answering the phone politely, opening doors, carrying arrangements to a car. Retired people help us out and are eager to work.

Every business here has the same problem of finding good employees. Applicants ask "What will you pay me," instead of explaining what they can do. In fact, I'm looking for staff right now.

### How involved is your family in this business?

My husband Jay has his own business here in Millerton. He might make a delivery for me, but we each run our own business. Our son Stone, who is now 14, was born on a Tuesday and his first day at the shop was on Thursday two days later. He helps out a lot.



### Do you have recommendations for anyone starting out?

Try to have a background in business. It's much easier that way. And you have to really like what you are doing. It has to make you happy.

### What other interests do you have?

Horses. I ride whenever I have time. •

*For further information about Country Gardeners Florist call (518) 789-6440, visit them in the Railroad Plaza in Millerton or online at [www.countrygardenersflorist.com](http://www.countrygardenersflorist.com).*



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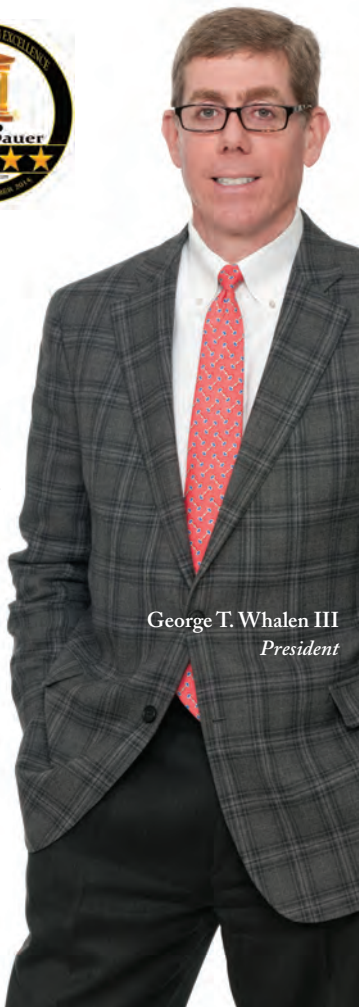


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GREAT GASTRONOMY

## morgan's at the interlaken inn



By Thorunn Kristjansdottir  
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Up until my visit I knew only what I had been told: Morgan's Restaurant at the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, CT was both a fabulous restaurant and a well-kept secret. A well-kept secret you ask, and why is that? I think it has to do with the fact that the Interlaken is primarily associated with being a great hotel/resort that we recommend to family and friends to stay at while they're visiting the area, or we associate it with being a very popular wedding venue. But they have a fantastic restaurant there, too! So I was pretty excited to go and check it out in person.

When I phoned Morgan's to make my reservation, I was very pleasantly surprised to learn that I was speaking with Brandon Scimeca himself, the executive chef. And a few days later when we arrived for our dining experience, shortly after having been seated, Brandon came over and introduced himself and told us a little bit about the menu. Brandon, although being pretty youthful looking, has quite the extensive culinary resume. He hails from the New Orleans area and from an early age has loved everything food-related, which led him to attend the Culinary Institute of America. He has worked in some of the best restaurants in Atlanta and California, and he's traveled, worked, and cooked all over North America and Europe. So with a resume like that, I quickly dove into the selections before us on the menu.

### The atmosphere and menu

The Interlaken has a very cozy and welcoming feel to it – that goes for the feel and atmosphere of the restaurant as well. You just feel as if you're at home. Our waitress was tremendously accommodating, very friendly, and knowledgeable about the wine list and menu choices. And when it came to the menu choices – I wasn't sure where to start, because there were quite a few choices that you don't normally see on many other local restaurant menus.

The appetizer choices began with the Potato and Roasted Garlic Soup; the salad choices ranged from the Skyfarm Local Baby Greens with herbs and flowers with shaved Fall Vegetable Crudites to the Heirloom Kale Salad with Granny Smith apples, black olive crunch and ricotta salata (pictured above, second image from left in bottom row). There was also the choice of the Roasted Rainbow Baby Carrots with nuts and seeds and local goat cheese and honey, or how about the Crudo of Salmon with shaved fennel, French radish, lemon oil or smoked sea salt? That sounds good! Two choices that I thought were unique were the Whole Vermont Quail that was stuffed with vegetables and seeds, and the Whippoorwill Farm Chicken Liver Mousse which came with pickled red onions and grilled crostini. If those choices don't entice you, there are a few others including the Grilled Octopus and the Berkshire Pork Belly.

The Entree choices were just as vast and delicious sounding. The top item on the menu was the choice of A Tasting of Vegetables which comes with purees and grains – for those who are staying away from the meats. But for the carnivores among us, you can choose from locally raised veal, roasted venison, the Morgan Burger (which uses local Whippoorwill Farm grass-fed meat), Hudson Valley Duck Breast, Roasted Chicken Breast, or there are also a few fish dishes like the East Coast Swordfish and the Crispy Seared Arctic Char. All of the Entree choices come with perfectly paired vegetable sides that range from smoked potatoes or Fingerling potatoes, to wild mushrooms, caramelized pearl onions, butternut puree, Lacinato Kale, pickled and golden beets, and so on and so forth. But as for which vegetable is paired with which meat, you'll either have to go to Morgan's or check out their menu online!

We had made a family affair out of this dining experience and so we were able to order and try quite a few of the choices on the menu, in addition to Brandon so kindly bringing us two additional dishes (like his newest fish special, pictured far left, bottom row).

We began by ordering the Kale salad, which was really tasty, nicely paired and presented; a traditional Caesar salad (not pictured), and also a beet salad (pictured in large center image, top row). The beet salad was really fun, and it was an interesting and complimentary combination of textures and flavors.

For our Entrees, the men decided to go with the Grilled N.Y. Strip Steak which was set atop delicious Brussel sprouts. I opted to go with the chicken option which came atop Kale and beans – the chicken was amazingly tender (pictured top right). The child in the group proudly ordered a grilled cheese with ham and french fries from the Kid's Menu (pictured bottom row, third image from left). He amazingly finished every single bite, with the adults volunteering their unwanted services when it came to "helping" with the fries. My mother decided to try the Grilled Short rib of Beef which came with delicious potatoes and a butternut squash puree (pictured top left). She admitted that this wasn't something that she'd normally order, but we are all glad that she did! I think that this dish may have stolen the show, and when Brandon came by to check on us I asked him how in the world he goes about making something this delicious, because it just about melted in your mouth. He explained the whole process, and said that he slow-cooks the beef for 72 hours, and that he then pairs it with complimentary sides. Indeed he did! Yummy!

We were totally stuffed, but when we were told that they make their own ice cream on premises and that it's really good, we found an ounce of room and had to try for ourselves. We tried the traditional Vanilla, the Malted Vanilla, and also a Vanilla with Marshmallow. Wow! Talk about an impressive and perfectly flavored and textured ice cream! Thank you Brandon and the staff at Morgan's for a wonderful evening! ●

For more information, you can reach The Interlaken at 1 (800) 222-2909, or through their website at [www.interlakeninn.com](http://www.interlakeninn.com). And don't forget to join the Dining Club for 25% off!





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# Rural WEDDINGS

By Memoree Joelle

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Photos courtesy of their respective farms

Top: Herondale Farm. Three images on right: Locust Hill Farm. Two images left: Madava Farms.

Every couple wants the place they get married to be special. After all, there is little point in finding the perfect dress, the right cake, the beautiful flowers, and all of those other wedding details if you don't have the space for them. And while there is no perfect venue, there is always the venue that will be perfect for you. A chic, glamorous city rooftop affair is one way to go, but for the country mice among us, a rural wedding spells true love. Whether you want your ceremony to be simple or extravagant, our area is home to beautiful vistas that make magical backdrops for this momentous occasion in your life. This is by no means a complete list, but a few rural, outdoor options that each offers something truly unique.

## Locust Hill Farm – Ghent, NY

Susan and Kirk Kneller own 5% of the world's dwindling population of female American Milking Devons. But it isn't the cows that draw engaged couples to their ninety-acre farm in Ghent. Breathtaking views of the Catskills, and a landscape made up of pastures, hills, and even a stone garden wall make this an extraordinary location, with exquisite views at every turn.

Adding to the rustic agricultural feel is a collection of well-maintained antique farm equipment, from 1930's-era tractors to vintage wagons, and serves as either indoor or outdoor décor. A Federal style barn brings more charm to the venue, and serves as indoor space as well. In the summer months, a zip line over the pond gives you the childlike freedom to engage in a little post-wedding fun, dropping you from fifteen feet above into cool, pristine waters. Or, stay dry and simply enjoy a spectacular sunset from the hilltop – post-wedding bliss. Locust Hill Farm is located only ten minutes east of the Hudson train station, as well as the entire city has to offer. And not to forget that this IS a working farm, after all, they offer custom beef

orders for wedding dinners, whether you're having an elegant sit-down dinner or a pig roast. Couples can choose to be married in the stone gardens, at the spring-fed pond, or in open pasture with Serengeti type views of the Catskills.

## Madava Farms – Dover Plains, NY

You probably know Madava Farms for their Crown Maple syrup, a rich, high quality maple syrup that has become a household name. And if you associate its sweetness with love, you and your spouse-to-be can marry right under the hundred year old maple trees. Eight hundred acres of unspoiled land make for plenty of beautiful, open space, and all of this only eighty miles north of NYC. The farm opens its farmhouse on the property to the bridal party on the big day, and invites the happy couple to stay the night after the ceremony and reception. Small details, like personalized gift baskets for the happy couples, make this venue unlike any other. The farm hosts weddings all year-round, but is just perfect for a Fall wedding, amidst red and golden foliage.

## Herondale Farm – Ancramdale, NY

Herondale Farm isn't just all about cows. While it is the go-to for 100% grassfed and grass finished beef, pastured pork, lamb, and chicken, there is a hidden gem on the other side of the pastures from the farm store that you know and love. Tucked away from the road in a clearing with views of only trees, hills, and perhaps a few grazing sheep, you'll find a perfect spot for a farm wedding. A permanent yurt situated on the property provides indoor space if needed, and you are always welcome to bring in tents. Owner Jerry Peele also rents a farmhouse

Continued on next page ...



that sits adjacent to the Herondale Farm store, so if you book early you can wed on the property, stay the weekend or even honeymoon for longer, and have the convenience of walking right across the way to shop for dinner. Rising with the roosters is optional.

### Catskill View Weddings & Events at Thor Icelandics – Claverack, NY\*

Situated on seventy acres of land that offers one of the few completely unobstructed views of the Catskill mountain range, this Icelandic horse farm is possibly the most unique venue in the area. Owned by Kristjan Kristjansson and wife Johanna, the farm hosts weddings and other special events throughout the year. A working horse farm, it is the only one in North America that doubles as both a working Icelandic horse farm and a wedding venue.

Choose from three different locations for your ceremony and reception, including two different tracks (which otherwise are used for training and competition) or the hilltop, which offers a spectacular 360-degree view that's truly unique. On clear days, you can see from New Paltz to Albany, making this a particularly popular wedding spot in warmer months. The farm works with local vendors as much as possible and will help the bride (and groom) locate tent rentals, caterers, and anything else needed so that the special day can be tailored according to your hearts' desires. As for the Icelandic horses, they can be included in your ceremony or not appear at all, but most couples opt for at least a few photos with these majestic creatures.



Above, farm photos: Lambs Hill, donkeys and all! Above, flower photos: Sol Flower Farm. Below left: Catskill View Weddings & Events.

### Lambs Hill Farm – Fishkill, NY

Lambs Hill is a small farm focusing on natural beauty. The grounds, buildings and vignettes have been designed with fashion and wedding photography in mind. This venue's rustic, turn of the century style, set off by a stunning 180 degree Hudson River view, will make you and your partner feel as if you are hovering amongst the clouds. Views stretch from Mt. Beacon to the Catskill mountains and everything in between, yet the farm is only minutes from Beacon's Main Street. Owner Charlotte Guernsey describes her farm's charms: "Our site is secluded, private, and blessed with gorgeous sunsets followed by the sparkle of cities below. Our farm compliments the mountain setting with cedar split rail fencing and a Ralph Lauren inspired horse barn suite custom-built from hand picked stone from the mountainside along with brick reclaimed from the historic Dennings Point Brick Works dating back to the late 1800's, early 1900's." But perhaps even more charming are the mini-donkeys, Icelandic horses, and guinea hens on this lovely, sustainable, working farm.

### Sol Flower Farm – Millerton, NY

Wherever you choose to tie the knot, no wedding is complete without beautiful flowers. But having them shipped in from far away places isn't very sustainable, and thus, it isn't very romantic, either. Fortunately, local flower farms like Sol Flower Farm

in Millerton offer an alternative. Sol flower grows over thirty varieties of annuals and perennials to choose from, giving you plenty of choices that are chemical-free and 100% organic. Farmer and owner Andy Syzmanowicz grows using sustainable methods to preserve the land, and offers both full service floral design or bulk flowers if you'd prefer to do it yourself. His design team, headed by himself and Emily Sartor, creates elegant arrangements that reflect the changing seasons of the Hudson Valley. Every detail, from seed to the final touches on the bride's bouquet, is handled thoughtfully, and you can customize to your heart's content. All flowers are cut from the fields the day they are delivered, and the farm welcomes you to visit the fields to watch your flowers grow throughout the season.

Because the design team is increasingly in demand for weddings and other events, booking early is highly recommended. Visit the Sol Flower Farm website for pricing and photos. ●

*All of the venues mentioned in this article are LGBT friendly.*

*For a complete list of wedding venues including farm locations, inns, and restaurants in Columbia County visit [www.columbiacounty-tourism.org](http://www.columbiacounty-tourism.org), in Dutchess County visit [www.dutchesstourism.com](http://www.dutchesstourism.com).*

*\* Catskill View Wedding & Events is operated by Thor Icelandics LLC, which is owned by Kristjan Kristjansson, the father of Main Street Magazine's publisher, Thorunn Kristjansdottir.*







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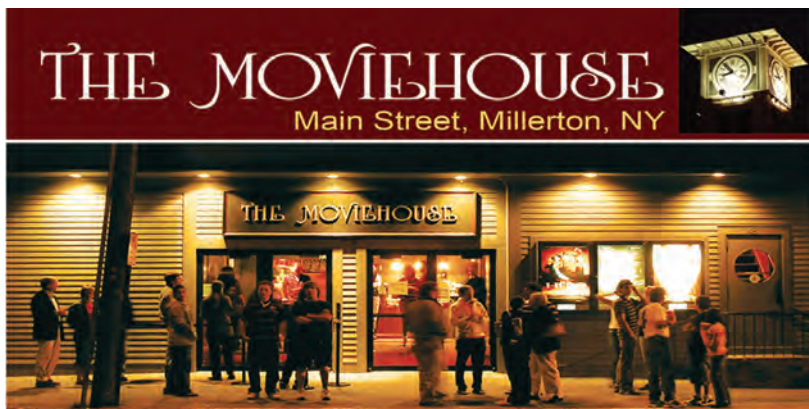


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# the wedding venue business

## RENTING FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

By Christine Bates  
christine@mainstreetmag.com

*In this month's wedding issue our real estate article explores why some property owners are profiting by renting their real estate as a unique location for weddings.*

It usually starts by accident. A friend, a relative, a caterer asks if they could use their property for an upcoming wedding. And then there is the realization that, at fees ranging up to \$10,000 per event, this could be an interesting income stream to help pay taxes, feed the horses, or, in the case of nonprofits, support their mission. But, just like any other business venture, it requires hard work, marketing, and planning.

### Thee Ellsworth Manor

Thee Ellsworth Manor sits on top of Ellsworth Mountain, one of the highest points in North-western Connecticut, overlooking 2,000 acres of protected land in Sharon with far reaching views of Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut. A few years ago a family friend asked permission to use the mountaintop estate for a wedding. Now Ellsworth Manor's owner, Gary Olsen, has expanded the space for ceremonies with a grand view. Over a thousand trucks of dirt have climbed the mountain to create a larger, level area for wedding parties with granite boulders strategically placed to prevent guests from falling over the edge.

With the launch of a website and an advertising campaign, Olsen is "Just trying to get our name out there. There's no place like this." Wedding parties enjoy the mountaintop for the entire weekend, including the manor house built by Olsen's Norwegian immigrant father, Norwald Olsen. The wedding venue fees help Olsen support his thoroughbred horse breeding and racing hobby.

### Lionrock Farm

Lionrock Farm is a 600-acre working farm located on a breezy hill growing corn, sunflowers, hay and rye. For the last several years Lionrock has hosted Trade Secret's annual May sale event, which raises money for Women's Support Services and attracts



Above: On a clear day Thee Ellsworth Manor in Sharon has 100-mile views. Photo courtesy of Thee Ellsworth Manor. Below left: Lionrock offers an indoor swimming pool as well as a barn, a cottage, and miles of views. Photo courtesy of Lionrock. Below right: The Circa 1799 Barn in Ancramdale permits only four weddings a summer. Photo: Shiraniko Photo.

hundreds of shoppers. Its origins as a wedding venue accidentally began last year when a friend asked if they could use the property for a wedding. Elaine LaRoche, the owner, saw the potential and selected Joanne Scasso [see article on Country Gardeners Florists in this issue] as a venue coordinator. Word spread quickly and the location is already fully booked for 2015 and taking reservations for 2016. "We don't market, we're a farm. Weddings do not intrude on our main business, and with wildly swinging agricultural commodity prices, weddings add to the sustainability of the farm," according to LaRoche. A wedding reception with less than 100 guests can be held in the barn and larger weddings must be tented. The wedding party has the use of the "cottage" for the weekend and, best of all, the indoor swimming pool.

### The Circa 1799 Barn

Advertising copywriter, "Hey, you never know," and voice over actor, Paul Spencer fell in love with Dutch barns and finally located one in Fort Plain, New York, 80 miles further upstate from his weekend home in Ancramdale. The 1799 barn, which he describes as a "Cathedral in the wilderness," is 50' wide and 45' long and almost four stories high. Spencer moved the barn in 2001 and decided to defray some of its cost by hosting weddings. He estimates it will take 300 years for the barn to pay for itself.

"We only host four weddings a year because we're generally only upstate on weekends and there are



precious few of those. It's not our day job and we don't want to start feeling like it is. We are not a wedding factory. We don't do generic, off-the-rack events. The people who come to us are looking for a unique, unforgettable experience – one that their guests will be talking about for years to come."

Unforgettable is not cheap. The Circa 1799 Barn charges \$9,900 for the use of the barn and surrounding field, including some limited use of the house by the wedding party on the day of the wedding. It doesn't include catering, tents, tables and chairs, or port-a-potties. In an e-mail to *Main Street*, Spencer wrote, "That's a whole lot of money in my book, and it's probably a whole lot of money in yours too. It's certainly more than your average wedding venue. But the barn is anything but average. There's nothing else like it."

Continued on next page ...



### Catskill View Weddings & Events

Catskill View Weddings and Events\* at Thor Icelandics is located on a working Icelandic horse farm in Claverack, NY, and is the only Icelandic horse farm that doubles as a wedding and events venue in North America. It too got into the wedding venue business because a friend asked if they could have their wedding at the farm. Besides being home to 50 or so Icelandic horses on the property, the venue offers a panoramic and unobstructed view of the Catskill Mountains with beautiful and dramatic sunsets – which, along with the horses, are the prime attractions of the venue.

The difficult task for any new venue (and business, for that matter) is to “Get the word out to the right customer base,” according to owner Kristjan Kristjansson. “We’re very reasonably priced compared to comparable venues, and we believe that we have something that’s different and unique.”

### Ragamont House

Ragamont House in Salisbury, CT has evolved from an unwinterized derelict summer inn to a Greek revival mansion between two churches on Main Street. Pete Hathaway, a former decorative art expert for Christie’s, bought it in 2002 and after two years of renovations opened it as a high-end antique shop. Three years later it evolved into a treatment house for recovering alcoholics with superb food prepared by chef Bruce Young.

Serendipitously in early 2011, Ragamont was approached for a very special event to commemorating a local resident who had died tragically in a horseback riding accident in Colombia. “It was our first reception and it just kind of snowballed from there. We became caterers and had our first wedding in the garden that summer. Now the one-acre, very private garden and house regularly hold



Above top: Catskill View Weddings & Events boasts both grand Catskill Mountain views and Icelandic horses. Photo: Alicia King Photography. Above left: Greg and Dana Koman walk up Hurlburt’s Hill at Bartholomew’s Cobble with their dog on their wedding day. Photo: Katy Baker. Above right: Wedding chuppah in the Camp Ramah amphitheater overlooking the lake. Photo courtesy of Susie Levithan. Below: The romantic scene at The Ragamont House under the tent and at night. Photos courtesy of Ragamont House.

weddings for up to 200 people. As long as we do the catering and planning, there’s no charge to have your wedding here.”

### National landmarks, camps, and parks

There are also less grand and less expensive locations that welcome weddings. Places with special meaning for the bride and groom. Bartholomew’s Cobble in Ashley Falls, MA is part of Massachusetts’ Trustees of Reservations and is designated as a National Natural Landmark. At the top of Hurlburt’s Hill there is a 20-acre upland meadow with a view of the Housatonic Valley. Rene Wendell, the Conservation Manager, is happy to assist with weddings. “I filmed one of the first gay weddings in Massachusetts. If people need benches or tables, I can usually help out with that.”

For only \$500 the top of the hill can be reserved for ceremonies with less than 60 people. The bridal party is driven up the hill, but everyone else has to walk. “Last year we had a wedding in late October. They had coffee and bagels at the Visitor’s Center and then everyone hiked up the hill in a snowstorm. Lots of people discover this special place and fall in love with it. There seem to be a lot of engagement proposals here,” Wendell commented proudly.

Similarly, Camp Ramah in Wingdale can be used for a wedding weekend when camp is not in session. “As soon as we started talking about getting married, my husband and I knew it had to happen in camp. Our best friends are from camp. We grew up there. We met at camp. Now we are the luckiest two people in the world because we got married in

the best place on Earth,” said bride Susie Levithan. Guests stayed in cabins and Aby Laznik, the veteran camp kitchen cook, prepared the meals for 185 guests.

If you happen to live in Salisbury you can get married on the shores of Lake Wononskopomuc, more commonly referred to as Lakeville Lake. Any town resident can reserve The Grove building before the Memorial Day or after the Labor Day weekends for only \$750. Grove manager Stacey Dodge said that spring 2015 is already filled up. The large meeting room with a roaring fireplace can accommodate 123 people inside seated at tables, or 350 for cocktails only. Built recently as a facility for senior citizens in Salisbury, all venue fees go to support the senior’s program.

All of these out of the ordinary locations inspire wedding planners, brides and grooms to create a totally personal, memorable event. For venue owners, whether they are public spaces or private estates, hosting weddings not only provides extra income to help maintain unique properties, but an opportunity to share them while looking their best on a very happy day. ●

#### Websites:

[www.theeellsworthmanor.com](http://www.theeellsworthmanor.com); [www.lionrockfarmevents.com](http://www.lionrockfarmevents.com); [www.circa1799.com](http://www.circa1799.com); [www.catskillviewweddings.com](http://www.catskillviewweddings.com); [www.ragamont.com/special events/](http://www.ragamont.com/special%20events/); <http://www.thetrustees.org/places-to-visit/berkshires/bartholomews-cobble.html>; [www.ramahberkshires.com](http://www.ramahberkshires.com); <http://salisburyct.us/livinginsalisbury/towngrove>

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without the cold of winter to give it sweetness."

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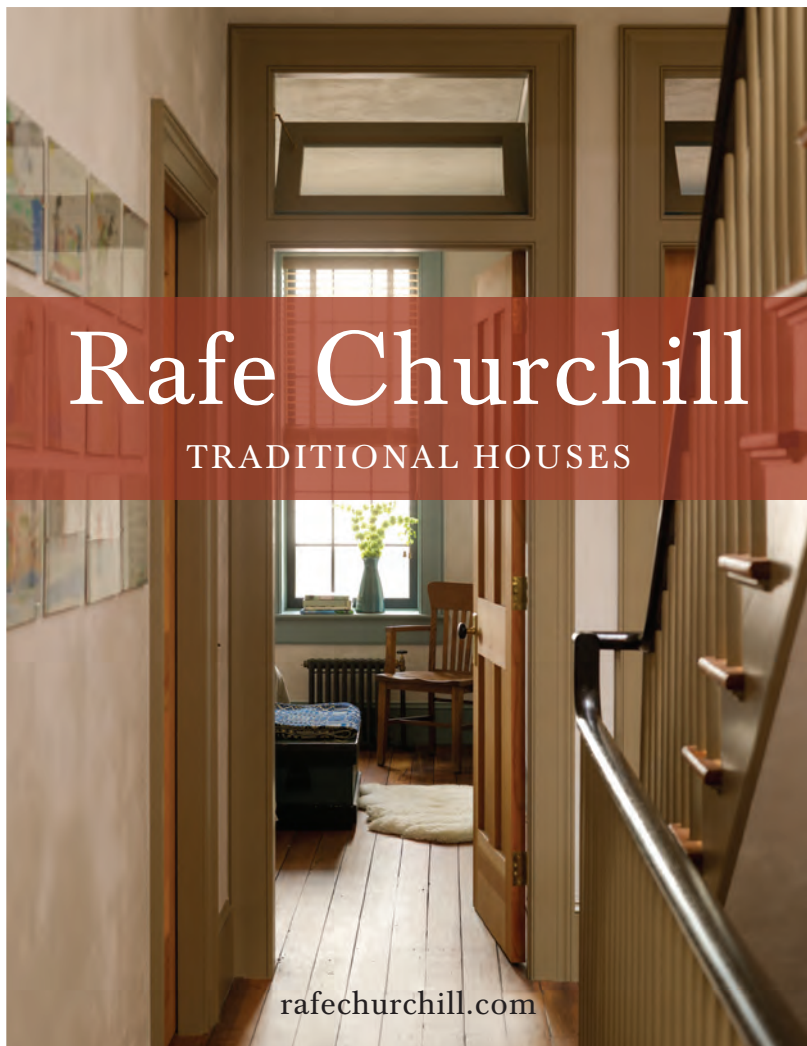


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# rules of engagement

## FROM PROPOSAL TO VOWS

By Mary B. O'Neill  
info@mainstreetmag.com

In the space between the proposal and the vows is the engagement. A highly symbolic milestone in your commitment to each other, it precedes the formal civil and spiritual wedding ceremony. This event is typically marked by popping the question and presenting a ring.

The practice of getting engaged is still alive and well, and industry trends show that we just passed the most popular time in the calendar year to get engaged. From Thanksgiving until New Year's Day is when there is a definite spike in sales of rings and rings to wedding planners.

In 2014, XO Group, Inc., parent company of the wedding planning website TheKnot.com, released their 2013 Real Weddings Study survey on all things wedding. In that study, 16 percent of the 13,000 brides surveyed became engaged in the month of December. In a 2014 article in *The Atlantic* on the subject, it is estimated that 33 percent of engagements occur during that period, with a corresponding spike in jewelry sales from October through December. Matthew Andersen, Event Director at jesGORDON/properFUN event planners and part-time Sharon, CT resident, includes Valentine's Day in the engagement cycle as well.

Further statistics from the Real Weddings Survey indicate that the average engagement is 14 months and the average cost of the ring to be about \$5,500.

### The proposal

The engagement starts with arguably the most life changing four-word question in existence. Yet, the way in which "Will you marry me?" is asked has come a long way from the traditional bended



All photos in this article by Alicia King Photography

knee approach. Andersen, a 25-year event planning veteran, observes that with the birth of social media and our societal fixation with reality TV, videos and selfies, the question remains the same but the medium has changed.

If Marshall McLuhan is correct and the medium is the message, then indeed the engagement process has changed quite a bit. "Just go to YouTube. You can see pages and pages of marriage proposal videos, one more elaborate than the next," comments Andersen. "This has definitely changed the engagement process and it has potentially become a major planning event for the prospective groom."

So much so, that there are now marriage proposal planners in our midst. Andersen points to Manhattan-based Brilliant Event Planners who can help brainstorm ideas for \$495, and for up to \$10,000 can actually help you create the ambience and stage the question. Cyrano de Bergerac could have made a bundle in today's proposal market!

One place where Andersen sees tradition staying intact is in asking for the bride's hand from her parents. According the website GroomGroove, a man can accomplish this traditional act with a modern twist by approaching both parents, stating his love and intentions for their daughter, and asking for their blessing on the union. This respects tradition but is more in keeping with the times, considering that the bride-to-be is no longer viewed as a piece of property being transferred from her family to her husband's. Plus, the groom-to-be earns respect (and

a few brownie points) from her parents.

Andersen sees a new trend that is gaining purchase in the engagement process – the proposal party. This is not to be confused with the more formal engagement party. It typically follows right on the heels of the proposal, is a surprise for the bride, and involves family members.

### The ring

Engagements today still typically involve a ring. But Andersen is seeing the rigid adherence to a diamond engagement ring starting to waver in favor of the assertion of personal style. There are growing trends for non-diamond rings. A popular style, thanks to Princesses Diana and Kate, is the sapphire surrounded by diamonds. In Andersen's experience, the bride-to-be often signals her thoughts regarding the ring style so the groom is not flying completely blind.

Lest you think that straying from a diamond engagement ring is a form of blasphemy, you should know that the use of diamonds for this purpose is a relatively new practice dating back to the 1940s. Started by you guessed it – advertisers – it was an attempt to revive flagging diamond sales by the De-Beers Company, who at the time had a monopoly in diamonds beginning in the late 1800s.

Remember the "A Diamond is Forever" campaign launched in 1947? A diamond's durability



Continued on next page ...



and indestructible nature was a metaphor for a lasting relationship and the diamond's rarity and brilliance symbolized a man's love for his woman. How could something so small say so much? The success of this campaign is obvious even today.

### The ring's dark side

The ring worn by Hobbits Bilbo and Frodo Baggins wasn't the only one with a dark past based in power and dominance. In the long history of the engagement ring one can see it as a symbol of a man's ownership of a woman.

In the time of the caveman, cords of braided grass were tied around a woman's wrists, ankles and waist to bring her spirit under his control. In ancient Egypt, a silver or gold wire was worn around the third finger of the left hand, which was thought to be connected by the *vena amoris* directly to the heart. In 2nd century B.C.E., according to Pliny the Elder, women had home and away rings of iron and gold to signify the binding legal ownership of her. In early A.D., puzzle rings were used by sheiks to tag their wives.

Add to this the practice of the dowry, where a man would pay a settled amount for the woman's hand in marriage. This recognizes the fact that the woman is leaving her father's home to join his.

Then there was the whole virgin thing to keep in mind. If a man broke off his engagement a woman could be left in a precarious societal and economic position. This kind of attitude about a woman's virtue persisted well into the 20th century even if the dowry was no longer de rigueur. Laws to address this are known as Breach of Promise to Marry laws. These laws began disappearing in the U.S. during the 1930s.

Yet, attitudes about virtue did not. A woman without virtue was still seen as damaged goods with compromised prospects and economic viability. This coincides quite nicely with the rise of the use of diamond engagement rings, according to legal scholar Margaret Brining. A 2012 article in *The Atlantic* outlines her theory that the diamond engagement ring was an insurance policy for a jilted woman and that the rise in their popularity was connected to disappearing legal recourses. It was collateral and some degree of economic security against the no-longer-enforceable breach of promise to marry, not just the sparkly bling it can be viewed as today.

I present Andersen with these arguments of the seamy underside of the engagement ring as vestiges of ownership and subjugation of women. He comments that in his experience, very few women refuse a ring on principle. He observes that in his long history of making weddings happen, "Couples don't focus on those origins. They just don't apply anymore, especially with women being on more



equal economic footing to their partners."

### The mangagement ring

If Michael Bublé can wear a mangagement ring to honor his wife's South American traditions then maybe all men should. Is there any other standard of behavior one need apply in this situation?

Yet, despite the best efforts of Bublé, jewelers and advertisers, mangagement rings have not really taken off. Earliest attempts to introduce such a ring in this country date back to 1926, yet according to XO Group only five percent of engaged men wear them. It may be because men do most of the asking and therefore present the ring. For that to change, the way the proposal has traditionally worked may have to change as well.

Even Andersen, who wed his long-time partner Tom last year at the Interlaken Inn in Lakeville, Connecticut does not see a big trend for mangagement rings in same sex engagements. What he has noticed is that more men in general are wearing wedding bands today than in previous generations.

### Same sex proposals

Changes in laws regarding same sex marriages have definitely caused an uptick in the wedding industry. However, these couples are not bound by the same traditions that govern heterosexual proposals and weddings. They are liberated from many of the rules of engagement and are freer to make the marriage process very personal to their own relationship.

In the absence of the more formulaic man ask woman format, how do you know who is supposed to do the asking? Andersen observes, "I get that question a lot. There is no right way to do it, no tradition that needs to be followed. For Tom and me it was a natural unscripted proposal. We had talked about hosting a surprise wedding at our combined 100th birthday party. Well, that part did not happen but our 100th birthday party did. In



the midst of toasting, I was describing this earlier plan to our friends and family. And then it just came over me. Right then and there I proposed to Tom. We had not discussed it in advance. It just felt like the right time and place to do it."

### Making it personal

Despite the role of tradition and trends, the proposal, engagement ring, and ensuing celebrations should reflect what is important to the couple. The road to engagement can be guided by tradition but should not be dominated by it. Andersen maintains that the biggest and most refreshing trend he sees is the injection of the bride and groom's personality into the wedding process. The biggest rule is that there are no rules. Let your relationship (and budget) guide the process and you can't go wrong. ●



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# diamond mine

## BUYING AN ENGAGEMENT RING AT ELIZABETH'S JEWELRY

By Mary B. O'Neill  
info@mainstreetmag.com

Mounted between the baguettes of CVS and Grand Union in Millerton is the gem of Elizabeth's Jewelry and Fine Gifts. Inside is an oasis of elegance and friendly customer service, making it the perfect place to tackle the seemingly daunting task of picking an engagement ring. Betsy Trotta, owner and operator of Elizabeth's, shares her wisdom about selecting an engagement ring. Trotta is an Accredited Jewelry Professional and possesses the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) Diamond Certificate.

According to Trotta, customers should consider purchasing a ring "that they would want to have for the next 50 years. Many choose classic designs that never go out of vogue. Our most popular style is a pavé setting with multiple diamonds, giving the ring an antique vintage appearance. These styles can be classified as Edwardian jewelry, a style that originated in the early 1900s." For Trotta, "There is something romantic about a distinctive antique style ring that is made with all the security of a new mounting."

As for the setting, more customers are requesting platinum. "It is a more expensive option but the outstanding durability of the metal is appealing," explains Trotta.

### Helping out the fellas

In Trotta's experience, the diamond is still the most popular stone for engagement rings. However, occasionally there is demand for blue sapphires in the mounting. "The contrast of the dark blue sapphire and white diamonds is really elegant. Sapphires are known for their durability, so it is a practical choice as well as an attractive one," she states. In addition, she has sold a few mmanagement rings (see story on page 27).

True to industry trends, Trotta sells most of her engagement rings between October and the end of the year. "The holidays tend to be a sentimental romantic time. It is a nice time for the couple to celebrate an engagement with each other and their families," observes Trotta.

At Elizabeth's a man typically picks out a ring on his own. Sometimes a woman will come in first and give an idea of what she would like. "We take detailed notes and try to guide the gentleman in that direction. If we don't have any information, we can ask several questions to help us get an idea of what she would love," offers Trotta. This is where personal customer service can really help a fella.

In finding a ring that will fit the wearer, the team at Elizabeth's typically asks about the person receiving the ring. Questions include:

- Does she wear white or yellow gold?



All of the rings above are from- and available at Elizabeth's Jewelry. Photo by Thorunn.

- What does she do for a living? (Typically women who work with their hands or are very active do not like the high-set mountings).
- Does she wear vintage jewelry or classic simple jewelry?
- What shape might she like? Round, princess, emerald, and Asher cuts are the most popular.

The responses to these questions give Trotta an idea on style. Then she wants to know what is important to the woman. Referring to the interplay between the four Cs of diamonds (cut, clarity, color, and carat), Trotta investigates whether the recipient wants a larger diamond, or is the clarity and color going to be most important. "It helps to have an idea of the budget. This gives me a good starting point to show him what I think she would like, what we can bring in for him to inspect, or what we can make."

### A relationship of trust

Shopping locally for this most important purchase helps to ensure a personal relationship of trust which Elizabeth's takes very seriously. But it works both ways. Trotta enjoys being part of the story of the rings she sells. Her favorite story? That's an easy one.

Recounts Trotta, "This past summer we had a gentleman come in who lives in Europe. He was hiking the Appalachian Trail and was able to get a ride to the store from another hiker. He said someone told him about our store on the trail. He ordered and paid for an engagement ring. We kept in touch with him through e-mail and texting as he and his girlfriend continued to hike toward Maine. The week before July 4th, we express mailed the ring to a post office in Maine. He picked up the ring, proposed on top of a mountain at the end of the trail on July 4th. It was fun for us to be a part of that journey."

### How to buy a diamond

The Gemological Institute of America (GIA) is

a non-profit organization whose mission is to "Ensure the public trust in gems and jewelry by upholding the highest standards of integrity, academics, science and professionalism through education, research, laboratory services and instrument development." The GIA devised the 4 C method for evaluating a diamond. The information below is from the GIA Diamond Buying Guide.

#### • Choose a jeweler as you would choose a doctor.

Your jeweler should possess the necessary expertise and be able to answer your questions clearly as well as help you discern comparisons between diamonds according to the 4 Cs as well as cost.

• **Understand the 4Cs of diamond quality.** This will help you understand the relationship between a diamond's quality, value and price.

**Color:** actually this is the absence of color. The less color in the stone, the more valuable it is.

**Clarity:** this measures the amount, size and placement of internal "inclusions" and external "blemishes." A "flawless" diamond has virtually no imperfections.

**Cut:** this is not the diamond's shape. Rather it is the proportion and arrangement of its facets and quality of workmanship. The amount of brilliance, sparkle and fire in a diamond is determined by cut.

**Carat:** this is the diamond's weight. Typically, the higher the carat, the more expensive the stone.

• **Insist on a diamond grading report.** This report is from an unbiased, scientific source such as GIA and is considered proof of what you are purchasing. Some of the differences in diamonds are so subtle that they can only be seen in a laboratory setting. This report ensures quality.

• **Protect your purchase.** The Diamond Grading Report becomes the basis for appraising the value of the ring for insurance purposes. •

*Elizabeth's Jewelry and Fine Gifts is located at 110 Route 44 in Millerton. (518) 789-4649 [www.elizabethsjewelry.com](http://www.elizabethsjewelry.com). For a downloadable guide to the 4Cs and further information on how to buy a diamond, go to <http://gia4cs.gia.edu/EN-US/index.htm>.*



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# the non-wedding wedding dress



The dress choices are endless; whether it be traditional or non-traditional, or something in between. You can go with a modern twist on a classic style, or focus on a small detail – the possibilities are endless. Depicted above are a few select choices from designer Jenny Packham's latest collection. Photos courtesy of Jenny Packham.

By Melissa Batchelor Warnke  
info@mainstreetmag.com

The first non-wedding wedding dress I fell in love with was in the June 2008 issue of *Vogue*. Sarah Jessica Parker was in character for the shoot as *Sex and the City*'s Carrie, wearing a gray and white floral gown with gorgeous pale pink tulle cascading down the steps of the New York City public library. Glamor, grit, and whimsy in a single dress; it was absolutely marvelous. The elaborate photo spread was a barely-veiled advertisement for the upcoming *SATC* movie in which Carrie was scheduled to finally marry her man – but in a style all her own, naturally. I gasped, ripped the page out, and hid it somewhere – who knows where, seven years later – for my very future self. The gown, I'd later learn, was Dolce and Gabbana.

I didn't know my very future self would be a writer, and I didn't yet understand that "price upon request" was haute couture code for "you will never own this dress." But that singular heavenly image stuck in my mind through dozens of friends' and family weddings, when I experienced that same sense of awe in unfamiliar touches. Every bride is beautiful; every dress is beautiful (well, most dresses. Front bustles should be criminalized).

It's a great time to be getting married. In January, the *New York Times* highlighted a study that concluded "being married makes people happier and more satisfied with their lives than those who remain single." A month earlier, the *Times* noted that the divorce rate has been dropping for the past 30 years. Friends on Facebook and Instagram are

dropping like flies, each ring photo signaling a new domino in the chain has fallen.

If the marriage pushers are getting you down – if you're divorced, single, opposed to the institution, or a spent bride-to-be – come sit with me. The *Vogue* magazine moment was my singular moment of fantasy wedding mania. I joined Pinterest for the purposes of this article, and now feel that either I or the brides compulsively "pinning" save-the-date envelopes to their wedding pinboards must be immediately medicated. And yet – the dresses. The dresses I can get into.

Nearly 200 years after Edgar Allen Poe wrote "there is no exquisite beauty without some strangeness," I went trolling the caverns of the internet for just that. I bring you the very best of the slightly unconventional – pastel, tea-length, covered-up, contemporary bohemian. With a few adjustments, these trends will suit whether you're the bride or in the pews.

## 1. Tea-length

Let's be up front about it; this tea-length dress is Carolina Herrera (pictured page 34). Renée Zellweger is her brand ambassador; she wore, naturally, Herrera for her wedding. Their wedding dresses run from \$1,200 to more than \$10,000. Considering that the average American bride spent \$1,281 on a wedding dress in 2014 (still gobs of money for a piece of cloth), most Carolina Herrera styles are way beyond the possible.

"What if we'd like to retire someday? Or own a home?" you ask. I shall share the secret with you: the replica seamstress. Replica seamstresses can take the look you like and recreate it for a fraction of the cost. Please bear in mind two caveats. One, wedding dress designers like Carolina Herrera, Dolce and Gabbana, Vera Wang, and others are true artists. They may have more money than God, but – call me old-fashioned – I believe art has value and should be paid for. The ethical thing to do is to take inspiration from designer gowns, not to attempt to recreate them stitch for stitch. Secondly, do not use a replica seamstress without a solid reference! My most glamorous friend had a dress made in China by a seamstress whose team worked under fair conditions making a living wage. The dress had butterflies on the train that moved their wings when she moved; the craftsmanship was extraordinary. Another friend sent her mother's wedding dress to a seamstress one town over for some 'adjustments'; it came back with an odd belt and unwelcome applique flowers. Do your homework in advance to prevent stress after.

Tea-length is a look defined by its simplicity, making it a terrific style to make or have made. My attachment was originally sentimental; my mother wore a tea-length dress when she married

Continued on next page ...



my father, because it was in fashion, because she was thirty-one and didn't feel like prom ruffles, and because they didn't have a budget for extravagance. It was the 1980s; more than thirty years later her tea-length dress still looks classic, and completely modern, in photos. Tea-length creates a stunning impression of ease, while maintaining the elegance that too often goes missing in more bohemian styles. Audrey Hepburn married in a long-sleeved tea-length Balmain in 1954; no cleavage, no fuss, no watching her step. Natalie Portman wore a long-sleeved tea-length Balmain in 2012. Like my mother, they wore flower crowns.

## 2. Covered up

Long sleeves are a trend not reserved simply for the tea-length crowd; they've been popping up all over the place, including on iconic bride Kate Middleton's Sarah Burton for Alexander McQueen lace number. I strongly believe that women should dress in whatever way makes them feel happy and comfortable. With 67% of American women cohabitating before marriage, the veiled and virginal bride image is a little yesterday. Having said that, I have witnessed many a sister spilling out of her strapless or taping up her backless last minute. These are looks that create drama and suspense, but perhaps not the kind you're looking for on your wedding day. The sexiness of the covered wedding dress can be subtler, but striking. See: Solange Knowles, 2014's most memorable bride, in a collarbone-covering cream-colored sheath and floor-length cape.



Above in numeric order: 1 & 3, details of the contemporary bohemian style – the hair, dress, and barefoot sandals. Photos courtesy of Day 7 Wedding and Engagements, weddingchicks.com. 2 & 4, Inbal Dror's low-back, beaded dress has a huge trained tulle bottom and a matching parasol. Photos courtesy of Inbal Dror. 5 & 6, Lazaro Wisteria's ball gown with a touch of color. Photo courtesy of JLM Couture. Below left: Carolina Herrera Tea length embroidered dress from Carolina Herrera's Fall 2014 runway. Photo courtesy of Carolina Herrera.

Enter this gorgeous Inbal Dror number pictured above (images 2 and 4). High-neck, low-back beaded top. Huge, trained tulle bottom. Matching lace parasol. Matching zip-up coat to put on while traveling to and from the wedding. Not only does a short coat feel practical for the Fall / Winter brides, but it's evocative in the same way a rabbit hand muff is; of something precious, squirreled across time.

## 3. Contemporary bohemian

I mentioned in my tea-length manifesto that elegance can go missing in bohemian styles, and I stand by that statement. There are only two ways to pull off a bohemian wedding style. One, be a bohemian before your wedding day. I don't want to see an investment analyst traipsing down the aisle in a feathered muumuu, I just don't. Two, the details and tailoring should be perfect; no fraying, no loose beads, nothing tie-dyed. The line between bohemian and a disaster is razor-thin, and if you have to ask you've already crossed it. The sole exception is coiffure; there is nothing more devil-may-care than an elegant dress with messy hair.

Having said that, these bohemian 'barefoot wedding sandals' I found in one of my Pinterest excursions are so wonderful (see image 3). The bride, Liz, wrote "those barefoot sandals were the bane of my existence in the weeks leading up to the wedding. I wanted them so badly but it was difficult

trying to get them shipped in time from Turkey from someone who didn't speak English. They arrived in San Antonio as I was walking out the door to drive to Austin at the last minute possible, and ended up being my absolute favorite detail of the day."

"And glad I am that they arrived; what a fashionable way to dress up the barefoot beach thing, and skip the pinching satin heels thing in one go."

## 4. Color

How to resist? This Lazaro Wisteria ball gown reminded me so much of the first gown I loved, that Dolce and Gabbana that dared beyond ivory (images 5 & 6). With tulle layers of wisteria and ice blue, this dress is decadent, totally impractical, and unquestionably original. The colorful wedding dress is having a well-deserved moment in its fabulous history. Anne Hathaway did it perfectly in an off-the-shoulder sweeping Valentino, gently dipped in pink at the very bottom. Elizabeth Taylor wed Richard Burton in yellow chiffon; for Eddie Fisher, she chose forest green. Jerry Hall wore printed Balinese fabric, and Lisa Ling shone in embossed red Vivienne Tam. It's all possible.

Brides-to-be, I wish you the glamour of Elizabeth, the ease of Audrey, and the playfulness of Solange on your aesthetic journey to the aisle. May you and your mate enjoy many stylish years together. ●



See Video



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how  
GREEN  
is my wedding?

All photos in this article by Alicia King Photography

By Claire Copley  
info@mainstreetmag.com

The wedding industry in the U.S. is telling us to spend more, go bigger, top the trend. The Internet is awash with wedding planners, bloggers, suppliers, planning tools, and even a site that offers wedding statistics, trend tracking and industry reports to “provide strategic insight and analysis of specific topics and trends for the wedding industry.”<sup>1</sup> It is generating some 70 Billion dollars for U.S. business. It is also, sadly, turning a blind eye to the environmental damage that 2.5 million events each year wreck on our habitat.

According to *The Green Bride Guide*,<sup>2</sup> the average wedding produces 62 tons of carbon emissions and 400-600 lbs. of garbage. Costs for the privilege are skyrocketing: here in the Hudson Valley area the average cost of a wedding in 2014 was \$42,444<sup>3</sup> (cheaper than Manhattan’s \$86,916 average!). These costs include everything from the venue, the dress and invitations to food, drink and photography. Everyone is winning, except the rest of us.

There is a movement afoot to promote and support the concept of “Green Weddings.” The notion of a green wedding (forget Hippie-style weddings in a creek) is simply one of responsible planning so that all aspects of your important day have a minimal impact on the environment. Incorporating green elements doesn’t have to mean compromising style or substance or going cheap. (In fact, a green wedding can save consumers roughly 20 percent or more – no small attraction). The real issue is about negating harmful ecological effects that events of this scale and scope cause. Couples can enjoy dream weddings while incorporating environmentally conscious planning. The basic principles for planning a greener wedding are simple: reduce, reuse, recycle.

### Reduce

Size and location will be the biggest factors in determining the environmental impact of your event. Each guest adds to the consequences. Think about the environmental impact of people flying (or even driving in separate cars) long distances just for the wedding. Multipliers abound: china and glassware (X the energy and labor they use in cleaning, packing, storing), invitations (X trees used), table decoration (X flowers cut and shipped). Staying close to home will reduce the carbon footprint of your event and increase benefits to your community. Looking at ways to integrate your special event into the ecology of your area can only enhance the pleasure and pride you reap.

Sourcing your wedding locally greatly adds to the benefits to the community your wedding can produce. It puts resources (in the form of money) back into your community. Here in our corner of the world, almost anything can be found locally, from farm venues to artisanal pickles to micro-breweries and distillers. We have an endless source of local creative talent and artisanal growers. Try to focus on growers and providers that are growing organically and using organic products in their presentation. At the very least, have this conversation with all potential providers as that, in itself, can add environmental awareness to your community.

For the venue, local farms, museums, galleries, and public spaces all offer exciting possibilities as well as opportunities for your expenditures to benefit your community. Of course, the ideal location for environmentally friendly events is outdoors and we certainly have no shortage of beautiful spots here. Keep logistics in mind though, you don’t

want to have trucks belching diesel fumes hauling in supplies, workers, and guests.

Choose the venue first and use it to inform your choices of dates and flowers. Think boom times. If you love peonies – have your wedding in an outdoor garden in May. Let your setting provide a natural source of (uncut) flowers. If you select a farm wedding in July, think about the abundance of black-eyed Susan’s and Queen Anne’s lace that grow everywhere in our area. Using readily available wildflowers will make a big difference in your budget and your impact. Most of us never think about the high environmental costs of shipping flowers in from Europe or California. Many commercial flower growers grow their crops in a haze of pesticides and fungicides that are causing serious pollution to our soils and killing healthy insects and pollinators. Consider these factors in your decisions.

You may save money and other resources by using potted plants and herbs as decor and party favors. Herbs have a long narrative tradition in weddings (to ward off evil spirits) and provide fragrance and bloom to the moment, regardless of season. Use your local nurseries and herb farms as sources. Brides might even select potted shrubs and flowers that they want to replant at home. Everything can be recycled.

### Reuse

Invitations, save the date cards, R.S.V.P. cards and envelopes, travel directions, place cards and other necessary information for the event all add to wed-

Continued on next page ...



ding costs and engender huge waste. The use of wedding websites helps cut down on paper waste. Still, many people still prefer to tread the paper trail. Think it through for your special situation but try hard to reduce the amount of paper you use. Using on-line invitation services can be a blessing. Many offer invitation tracking, guest list management, and reminders, and can eliminate hassle, huge costs, and a massive source of paper waste. But are all your guests email users?

If you do want to stick to paper invitations you can use 100% recycled papers. This will save resources (in the form of trees) and possibly money as well. At the very least, use recyclable papers – all cotton papers recycle best. Make sure you ask your stationery provider or printer about these options and don't forget the ink. Many toxic inks are still used and will pollute the recycling process.

And then there is the dress that somewhere dozens of workers work dozens of hours so you can pay hundreds of dozens of dollars to buy it, wear it once, and “save” it for a next generation bride who will not wear it. Rather than spend a year's salary on it, think about finding a local designer to rework your mom's wedding dress into a chic 2015 original. Go simpler, cheaper, and more original.

The food is, perhaps, the key factor in any party. Here in our area we have no shortage of caterers, chefs, and facilities that source their ingredients from local farms. What you might spend for organic quality you will definitely save in transportation, storage, and labor costs. Choose in-season produce: fresh asparagus in spring and lovely winter squashes and Brussels sprouts in winter. Using local organic farmers as the source is a win-win proposition: You are getting the highest quality food and flowers while at the same time supporting the efforts of local farmers and growers, chefs and caterers, and supporting ecologically sound growing practices. Thinking local is key. Paying for all the ancillary



materials and services involved in your wedding is not offsetting the environmental loss, it is simply supplying financial support for the purveyors.

### Recycle

Other ways to plan for an environmentally friendly event relate to the waste produced. This is an important conversation to have with your venue. If they don't have a sound method of recycling, find local food banks and charity thrift stores in your area and make arrangements for donations and pick-ups after the wedding. Many areas can access organizations such as TheSpecialE.com that arrange to rescue and distribute leftovers from your event to people in need. Make arrangements to recycle flowers and potted plants to local area hospitals, hospices, community gardens, and shelters. At the very least, see that your food and flower waste is composted.

But suppose that you do not want the “bother” of recycling the huge amount of waste you will generate. You can build into your budget money to purchase “Carbon Offsets.” This is basically a way of making a donation equal to the carbon emissions generated by an event. There are businesses and websites devoted to creating and selling these offsets. The companies charge based on your resource use and invest your money back into projects that help build clean energy and carbon-reducing projects. A website called NativeEnergy.com has a

calculator that will help determine the carbon footprint of your event and offer offsets. Other helpful offset sites are Terrapass and MyClimate.

As the planner, or at least the supervisor, of your special day you should take on the responsibility of practicing environmentally friendly planning. This is rarely included in the commercial planner package. There are “Green” wedding planners to help you should you need it. Having a greener wedding is an opportunity to support providers and growers who have incorporated social and environmental responsibility into the ways that they do business. When you start the conversation about greener choices with your local providers, as well as your guests, you already add something to your community. If each couple made just one eco-friendly decision for their wedding this would mean 2.5 million efforts. It's definitely something.

There are hundreds of creative ways to make a “Greener” wedding and feel proud of the efforts. Spend a little time online, talking with vendors and artisans in your community, and with the newer books that have been published to help. It will make your Special Day more special for everyone. ●

<sup>1</sup> [www.theweddingreport.com](http://www.theweddingreport.com)

<sup>2</sup> *The Green Bride Guide: How to Create an Earth-Friendly Wedding on Any Budget* by Kate Harrison. Sourcebooks Casablanca, 2008

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ctpost.com/news/slideshow/Most-expensive-places-to-get-married-in-2013-82997/photo-3414192.php>



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# the world's your oyster

By Melissa Batchelor Warnke  
info@mainstreetmag.com

When choosing a honeymoon locale, the world's your oyster. If you have the budget for it, you could travel to Paris, the Mediterranean, Bali – any one of a million fabulously romantic places. The mere thought of all the world's unseen spots makes me itch for a visit to Expedia's daily roulette of travel deals. Or you could stay close to home, taking time to play tourist in your own backyard. As a native Lakevillian, I've often marveled at the enthusiasm of the leaf-peepers driving through, the Appalachian hikers poking around town, and the enchanted Hotchkiss parents. When I drove a Californian from New Hampshire to the Berkshires, he simply couldn't believe how beautiful (and exciting!) the scenery was. I love the idea of changing your view rather than your location; of holing up at a nearby B&B, catching a matinee at the movie theater, and going for a long hike with your phone turned off.

Or you can invite your wedding guests along for the ride. After my parents' wedding, they rented a party house in Plum Island, NY, where dozens of out-of-town guests came to crash with them. It was a practical choice – my dad's green card wasn't processed so they couldn't travel far, their budget was small – but a legendary one. The eclectic, and largely unacquainted, crew that gathered there reminisce about it more than 30 years later.

If you're looking for a more traditional honeymoon, I've got you covered. Here are a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

## Take a trip on the Trans-Siberian railroad, from St. Petersburg to Beijing

I know what you're thinking; there's no swim-up bar in St. Petersburg. Wrong you are my friend, there's one at the Ambassador Hotel. But the true attraction on this train is the opportunity to trace Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago* – one of the most romantic books of all time, and an equally fabulous movie. Is there anything more captivating than Lara

and Yuri, drawn into a torrid affair as battlefield nurse and doctor? Before *Fifty Shades of Grey*, there was *Zhivago*. Stop in Perm, Russia – better known as the pseudonymized “Yuriatin,” where Yuri's wife Tonya kept an estate.

## Eat fried skerpikjøt in the Faroe Islands

Between reading *Bon Appetit's* captivating feature on Leif Sørensen, the acclaimed chef who cooks exclusively with ingredients from the Faroe Islands, and *The Atlantic's* 2012 photo essay, a visit made its way onto my bucket list a few years ago. This remote, independent Danish territory has extraordinary cliffs, caves, and incredible vistas. With only 50,000 residents in the entire archipelago, there's nothing to stress about – except getting a reservation at Sørensen's world-famous Koks.

## Walk across the Athabasca Glacier, in North America's largest ice field

The glaciers of western Canada are both extraordinary and rapidly disappearing. Don't miss the opportunity to take a skywalk in Jasper National Park, drive around in the glacial-travel-vehicle Ice Explorer, and go caving with ice picks.

## Picnic and practice French in Montreal

Montreal has always been one of my treasured places; I've visited in the winter (not recommended), summer, and fall. Last year, we took a day train there from New York City, watching the landscape change and sun set as we wove up the coast and crossed into Canada. Airbnb places are cozy and cheap, the food is fabulous, the architecture is gorgeous, and there are tons of parks for lounging, snacking, and swimming.

## Snorkel and shake your tail feather in St. John

St. John, British Virgin Islands, is such a special place. Since it doesn't have its own airport (sister island, St. Thomas, is the travel hub), it loses out on a lot of the tourist foot traffic. All the better for

you! Dance the night away at Duffy's Love Shack, while sipping their signature Dr. Feelgood's Vile Foaming Liquid. Appreciate the glory of the Mahi Mahi Sandwich at Skinny Legs. St. John has some of the best snorkeling in the world – you won't find a bad beach, but Cinnamon Bay, Pelican Rock, and Trunk Bay have extra charm.

## See what all the Michigan people are talking about in Michigan

Have you ever noticed that anyone who is from, or spends the summers in, Michigan will absolutely never stop talking about it, and even find ways to sneak it into totally unrelated conversations? A die-hard Michigander recommends visiting Saugatuck, Petoskey, Mackinaw Island, Torch Lake, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Pictured Rocks, and Manitou Island. If you must blow dry your hair to live, skip Manitou; we're talking camping, cabins, and lake water. If that's not your style, take an evening sailboat ride around the Leelenau Peninsula, home to 25 wineries.

## Hole up at a charming bed and breakfast in Scottsville, Virginia

My best friend loves The High Meadows Vineyard Inn so much that she named her business, High Meadows Health, after it. This quaint bed and breakfast is done in cheery Victorian style, with happy chickens, bright colors, crackling fireplaces, and even a glorious peacock named Henry. Its location in Scottsville – a tiny town outside of Charlottesville, Virginia – makes it a super sweet and relaxing place to spend time, but also gives you proximity to the restaurants and entertainment in U.Va's college town. If that's not enough, they make a decadent two-course breakfast from scratch every morning.

Happy adventuring, lovebirds! If you need a chaperone, just give me a call. I'm always here for you. ●

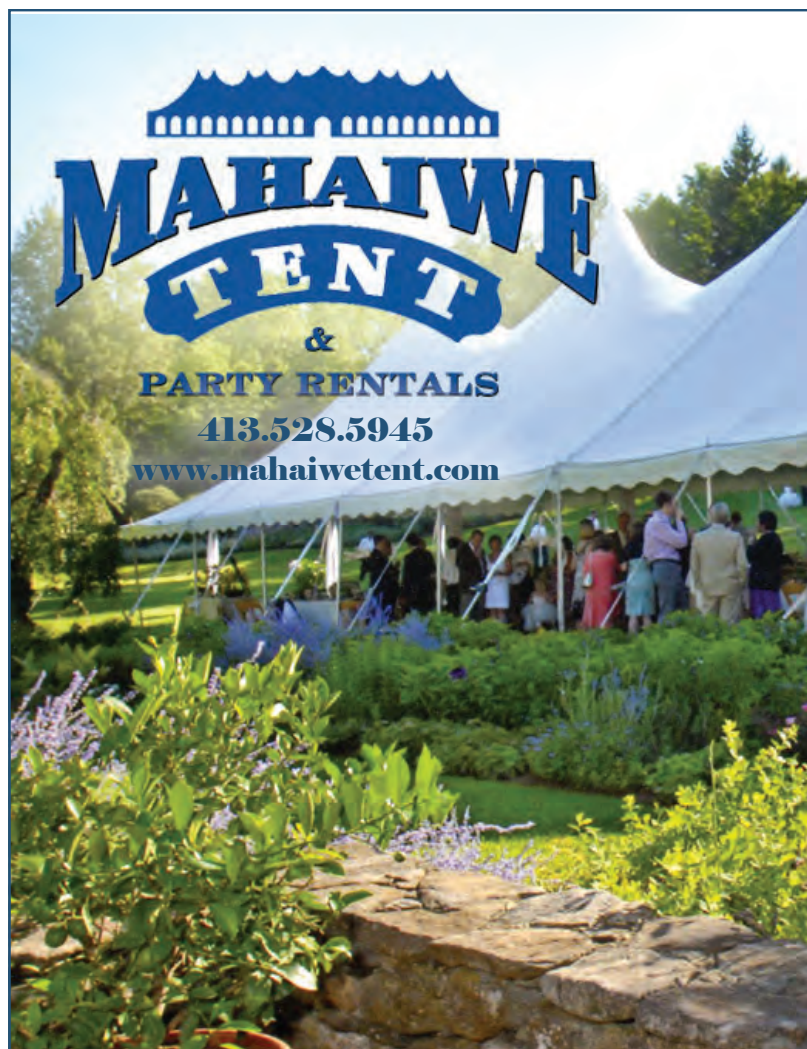




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# a name changer

## MARRIAGE AND A WOMAN'S PREROGATIVE

By Mary B. O'Neill  
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In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo questions, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." If the star-crossed lovers had made it to the altar they would have discovered that there is quite a lot in a name. There is much to consider in the post-marriage name-changing game and while tradition still holds, complexity abounds. In this regard, Macbeth could have quite easily asked the question, "To keep, or not to keep," but that would have been a whole different play.

### What's mine is yours

Recent surveys about women taking their husbands' names after marriage have revealed that the practice is rebounding after a brief decline. In a 2009 study in *Social Behavior and Personality*, which examined wedding announcements in the *New York Times* from 1971 to 2005, women keeping their own names rose to 23 percent in the 1990s but declined to 18 percent in the 2000s. In a 2013 poll by *Huffington Post*, that figure has dropped to eight percent. Given these numbers the trend for women to change their names seems here to stay. The brides most likely to keep their names? Typically those with higher educational and professional achievements as well as older brides.

### What's yours is mine

While today a woman changing her name is a choice one exercises for personal and family reasons, there was a time when the act held grave implications. Under the laws of coverture, common in England and the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries, when women married they took their husbands' names and gave up virtually everything else. To quote Sir William Blackstone in his *Commentaries on the Laws in England*:

"By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is therefore called ... a feme-covert...."

In the mid-1800s these laws began to change and in 1848, New York passed the *Married Women's Property Act* which increased the rights of women to own property to an unprecedented level. Vestiges of these laws persisted into the mid-1900s in some states.

### Yours, mine, and ours

Today, women – and men – have many choices when it comes to the name game. For simplicity,

and because it is mostly women faced with the decision, the choices outlined below are assuming the woman is considering the change, but it can go both ways. Same sex couples are not insulated from these challenges as well.

Here's a run-down on the options illustrated in italics by our Shakespearian Juliet:

**1. The keep it option:** This one is obvious. She keeps hers and he keeps his. It's simple until it's not, which seems to be when and if children come. As columnist Anna Quindlen has observed while defending the keeping of her name, "Now, there are two me's, the me who is the individual and the me who is part of a family of four in which, in a small way, I am left out." *Juliet Capulet*

**2. The take it option:** Usually it's the woman to take the man's name, but sometimes it goes the other way. Believe it or not, this option of a man's right to change his name due to marriage is not available in more than a few states. *Juliet Montague*

**3. The many-headed hyphen option:** She can hyphenate her name and that of spouse in whichever order sounds appealing – or wins the coin toss. Another option is to use the two names without the hyphen allowing you to drop one in situations when you feel the whim to do so. *Juliet Capulet-Montague* or *Juliet Capulet Montague*, which on school absence notes can be shortened to *Juliet Montague*

**4. The last is the new middle option:** She can drop her real middle name and replace it with her maiden name. This option is quite popular but is also not allowed in some states. *Juliet Ann Capulet* (she didn't have a middle name so I am making one up) becomes *Juliet Capulet Montague*

**5. The Vitamix option:** She and he can blend both names and create something new and fabulous, that is, unless the surnames are Upworth and Chuckless and they end up with Upchuck or Worthless. *Juliet Capugue* (wouldn't have worked out well for her either)

### Change it once and you will change it a thousand times

If you decide that changing your name is how you want to go, there are quite a few items to consider. You probably want to wait until after the honeymoon, since some of the document and record changes take time.

Your marriage license is only the beginning of an official name change. Other documents to change and offices to notify are your Social Security card, driver's license, passport, bank and other financial accounts, credit cards, payroll department where you work, post office address, rental agreements, doctors' offices, insurance companies, voter registration, alma maters, and utility companies. Each has their own set of procedures and documentation requirements.

Alternatively there are services that will do this for you – for a fee of course. Yet the cost seems quite reasonable (\$25 to \$50). Given the amount of time you would spend filling out forms, waiting on hold, or standing in lines, this seems like the biggest bargain of your wedding planning budget. Two of these are [www.missnowmrs.com](http://www.missnowmrs.com) and [www.hitchswitch.com](http://www.hitchswitch.com).

Brides today will also have to consider their online presence. Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter – whatever the online medium you subscribe to, they all have to be changed as well.

### Name your pleasure

Choosing your married moniker should be a choice that resonates with you and your new spouse. Whatever option you take there will always be upsides and downsides, but despite Shakespeare's views on naming roses, names are part of your identities both new and old, and they should reflect your past and your newly-joined future. ●



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# 3 engaging activities for inquisitive couples

## BACKYARD TRAVEL IN THE HUDSON VALLEY

By Paige Darrah  
info@mainstreetmag.com

We'd like to introduce you to our newest writer, Paige Darrah. She contributed a story in last year's November issue about how the Hudson Valley is the new Brooklyn. Well, Paige has now moved to the Hudson Valley full time and will be contributing to this publication in a new series that we've dubbed "Backyard travel in the Hudson Valley" where she's going to explore the many and different fun things that are to be found here – in addition to some other interesting articles. The first insertion ties into our wedding theme where Paige examined a few activities that are ideal for newlyweds, or for those who are looking for a little local romance!

### Less separate togetherness

It's easy for couples to fall into the habit of separate togetherness à la Woody Allen and Mia Farrow, especially when the individuals don't enjoy doing the same things. Maybe you want to re-watch *Mad Men* episodes on Netflix and he wants to play NBA 2K15 on Xbox. Now you're in the living room and he's in the bedroom; one episode turns into five and the next thing you know you've forgotten what color his hair is.

Weekends can easily slip away in this manner, so in an effort to reclaim togetherness I've compiled some engaging activities for couples to pursue as a pair here in the Hudson Valley – Backyard Traveling, if you will. Don't worry, antiquing isn't on the list.

### 1. Field-to-glass anyone?

We'll kick it off with a tour and tasting at Hillrock Estate Distillery in Ancram, NY. Okay fellas, here's your reward for noticing that last haircut.

At the distillery (among other places) you notice that the nouns 'rye,' 'scotch,' 'single malt,' 'whiskey,' and 'bourbon' seem interchangeable. Even my scotch drinking husband is fuzzy on which is which. Enter Jeff Baker – owner of both Hillrock Estate Distillery and the 'field-to-glass' trademark.

"We're one of the few truly field-to-glass whisky operations in the world. I was looking for something that connected to the region, and we've lost that sense of place in the spirits world. The craft movement for spirits could be just as important as it's been for wine."

Sound familiar? Jeff explains: "If you take a Pinot Noir grape from Burgundy and plant it in California, you get a totally different wine. There's no reason to think that whiskies wouldn't be the same way."



Hillrock has the aesthetic flavor of Ralph Lauren and *Architectural Digest* (with a splash of *Restoration Hardware*). As you drive up to the malt house you're greeted by two Australian Shepherds gazing off into the distance (who punctuate the idyllic setting perfectly. See image directly above and to the right of this paragraph, photo courtesy of Hillrock Estate Distillery).

"Storm and Shadow do more than stroll across the fields," Jeff explains. "They're also 'farmland security.'"

### Distillation process

After the organic barley is harvested from the Hillrock fields, they spread it out on the floor upstairs (see image top, photo courtesy of Hillrock Estate Distillery). Then begins the rudimentary yet labor intensive process of raking it around like a naughty Zen garden. The Scots used to do this but there are only about six distilleries in Scotland that still have floor malting operations.

"You can't find malting houses like this anymore – they would've been in little villages in Europe in the 1600 or 1700s to provide malt to make beer for the town," Jeff told us.

After a 45 minute walking tour you'll be led to a large table that's the same color as the white oak barrels the whisky gets its beauty rest in (apparently a lot of the flavor comes from the barrels).



Now, I can only assume that the majority of you ladies aren't avid rye/scotch/single malt/whisky/bourbon drinkers, especially without diet coke. Don't worry ... there's also cheese. You'll sample Hillrock's four whiskies between nibbles of bread and cheese. You're served roughly three tablespoons of each whiskey – you won't be wobbling home or anything.

"Whiskies go really well with creamy cheeses and things like foie gras. And don't let anyone tell you that you can't put ice in there if you want to," Jeff said. We all take a sip of the Rye. I gag a little bit. Jeff, pointing to an elegant carafe: "Those waters are for you guys. It's okay to drink water." (Paige is depicted tasting the Rye directly above).

Tim Welly, Hillrock's head of ops, recommends pairing your whisky with Chaource (pronounced 'sha-roose'), a bloomy rind cheese they pick up at

Continued on next page ...



Chaseholm Farm in Pine Plains. (I ordered some for myself online through Chaseholm's website).

Tim: "If I was just going to have one drink an evening (I like to have two) it'd definitely be our Rye. It has this incredible spiciness to it. To just smell it, you get this sensation of baked bread and roasted grains. I'm a Manhattan and an old fashion whiskey drinker." Tim reminded me of the Phi Deltas at my alma mater – charming, casually regal, and well versed in the art of recreation. As a Manhattan and old-fashion whiskey drinker, he's certainly the Don Draper of Hillrock.

After our whiskey distillery tour we're now sure of the following: it's not scotch unless it was made in Scotland, 'whiskey' is a macro catch all term; and it's okay to drink before lunch if it's field-to-glass.

#### Tim Welly's drinks and some info

- An old-fashioned = Hillrock Rye Whiskey + muddled orange + Maraschino cherry + a little sugar
- A 'perfect' Manhattan = Hillrock Rye Whiskey + sweet vermouth + dry vermouth + lots of bitters
- Wine Enthusiast gave Hillrock's bourbon 96 points.
- Hillrock is open for reserved tours/tastings Thursday-Sunday, 11:00 am-4:30 pm and will accommodate other requests if possible. To make a tour/tasting reservation, please email [info@hillrockdistillery.com](mailto:info@hillrockdistillery.com) or call the distillery at (518) 329-1023 or visit them online at [www.hillrockdistillery.com](http://www.hillrockdistillery.com).

#### 2. Dinner and a "Food Enthusiast" session at Hyde Park's CIA

Hyde Park is in west Dutchess County. It's where FDR was born and it's where some of the best chefs in America are trained. Hyde Park also has a Dairy Queen.



Above: "I hate chef hats. When I was at the CIA we called 'em coffee filters. Hated 'em then, hate 'em now." –Anthony Bourdain, *No Reservations*, Hudson Valley episode.



Above: No judgement if you go to the Graham & Co. hotel just to buy the Catskills vs. Hamptons T-shirt. This minimalist (i.e. not fancy) hotel was started by four Brooklynites. Photos courtesy of Graham & Co.



The Culinary Institute of America was founded in 1946. Many of the chefs-to-be live in dorms on campus. It took seeing a man in his mid-thirties smoking a cigarette outside in lobster-themed pajamas for me to realize this. (Unfortunately these pj pants are not sold in the CIA bookshop/gift shop. I checked). What is immediately obvious is that these folks have found their tribe – they're in their element. You can feel it in the hallways of Roth Hall as you wade through the smell of steak and bread.

I recommend eating at Bocuse. The food is prepared by students (though you can't tell) and serves traditional French cuisine with modern twists and ambitious presentation (I'm pretty sure I ate a flower). Go on a weekday and make semi-early reservations so you can see the students. We sat next to a gaggle of them eating dinner at Bocuse on a Wednesday night. Things got existential when they started talking shop:

A chubby future chef: "Hey guys, do you think cooking is an art or a craft?"

A less chubby future chef: "I love this question."

A loud future chef: "It's both."

The CIA offers non-credit 'Food Enthusiast' classes on Saturdays. Haven't stepped into your kitchen in years? No problem. Classes like Bistros & Brasseries, Hors d'œuvre At Home, and Food & Wine Pairing 101 start up again in March and provide a welcome environment for novices. In 2.5 hours you'll "explore the fundamentals of marrying wine with food and learn how to select the best wine for a meal." Always a useful skill. Plus you get to keep your official CIA apron and chef's hat after your food enthusiast session.

#### Pop-up restaurant and tours

The CIA kicked off the spring 2015 semester by opening a pop-up restaurant called Pangea featuring super healthy fare (try the Root Vegetable Couscous Tagine or the Roasted Celery Root). Pangea will be around through May.

The CIA does public tours on Mondays at 10am and 4pm, Thursday through Friday at 4pm. Reservations are required (this place is pretty famous), call (845) 451-1588 or visit [ciachef.edu/newyork/](http://ciachef.edu/newyork/) or [bocuserestaurant.com/](http://bocuserestaurant.com/).

#### 3. Catskills Getaway: Stay at The Graham & Co and dine at "Gramercy Tavern in the Catskills"

For those edgier HV couples who want to do some backyard traveling – this one's for you. This place is a great alternative to tired B&Bs with tacky furniture and waaaaay too many pillows on the bed.

*Afar Magazine* (which is basically my favorite travel mag) dubbed The Graham & Co a 'stylish and affordable winter retreat' in their January 2015 issue. It's hipster without being too showy about it (i.e. they refrained from using bird silhouette decals. Good call). A bearded man in overalls gives you a PBR at check-in.

I imagine it's where Thoreau would have stayed if he'd needed a break from Walden's pond. Graham & Co will lend you one of their quality townie bikes, and they spark a fire ring in the evenings. You and your significant other can sit by it and talk about your feelings. Once that's finished, you guys should go to dinner at the restaurant Graham & Co has labeled "Gramercy Tavern in the Catskills." The restaurant they're referring to is Peekamoose Restaurant & Tap Room. Some people say this is the best restaurant in the Catskills (I'm one of 'em). Chef Devin Mills is an alum of Le Bernardin and Gramercy Tavern (which explains Graham & Co's rebranding efforts).

After dinner you kids can roast some marshmallows at Peekamoose's brass fire pit. S'mores are an admittedly immature dessert – you look anything but elegant when the graham cracker breaks and you're juggling chocolate and marshmallow trying to hold it together. But this is America and combining high fructose corn syrup with the rugged outdoors is what we do. Plus you'll get some fun pics.

Graham & Co is located in Phoenicia, NY. Their rooms start at \$125 per night. For reservations or more information visit [www.thegrahamandco.com](http://www.thegrahamandco.com). Peekamoose is open Thursday through Monday, 4pm–10pm. Visit them online at [www.peakamooseresaurant.com](http://www.peakamooseresaurant.com). •



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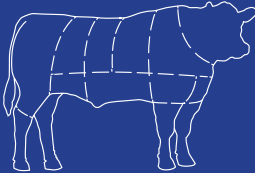
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All photos courtesy of Mikael Moller

By Memoree Joelle  
info@mainstreetmag.com

October 1, 1971 fell on a Sunday. It is a day that Chef Mikael Moller recalls with clarity, easily bringing back to life his thirteen year-old self as we spoke in the dining room of his restaurant, Charlotte's. "That is a day I will never forget," he reflected, explaining its significance in the history of his love affair with good food.

Moller's father, a butcher who taught him from early on about different cuts of meat, was friends with a prominent hotel owner, and arranged for his son to observe a day in the hotel kitchen. That October day in Sweden, Moller not only observed, but also got a taste of how to cook in a professional and fast-paced environment. "I made sixty-eight Wienerschnitzel that day," Moller recalled. After that, he bicycled everyday after school to help out in the kitchen – peeling potatoes, washing, chopping, and most of all, enjoying the camaraderie. At age fourteen, the chef there offered him a full internship, and after a lengthy interrogation, a very young Moller proclaimed that what he wanted in life was to become a chef. He laughs now about those days when the guys in the kitchen called him "little one." But he didn't stay little for very long. As he shot up in height, so did he in rank, and being a quick study, he was quickly promoted to Executive Chef.

### From the UN to NYC

Moller then joined the UN Peace Force for a six-month stint in Cyprus, (the voyage of which was his first time on an airplane) where he was in high demand for being the only one who really knew how to filet a fish and wield a frying pan. Upon returning home to Sweden, he easily found work in the kitchens of numerous hotels and restaurants, and eventually opened his own place, aptly called "New York, N.Y.," years before he made his way across the Atlantic.

Once he did land in NYC, he hit the ground running. After getting a foot in the door as a bus boy at the distinguished Manhattan landmark, Ruelle's, he was promoted to a chef position there within three months. From there, he became inter-

ested in catering, and that's when he discovered the original Charlotte's, where he worked as chef for six years before buying it with his wife, Alicia. The couple met on the job, and once making it their own, operated a successful business for twenty-five years. (See picture above right of the Mollers).

In 2006, they found their current property, and made the leap to move upstate to make a new home for Charlotte's in the hunt country of Millbrook (see large image taken at night of the entryway to the restaurant). Moller confides that he sometimes misses the excitement of the city and heyday of the 80's and 90's, when he catered elaborate affairs for Sotheby's, *The New York Times*, Lincoln Center, and other prestigious clients. He declined television appearances in those days due to being camera shy, but was convinced to do radio promotions for Angus beef and Butterball turkeys, which he looks back on with humor in his eyes.

### The offerings at Charlotte's

Today, the change of pace is different, but far from slow. In addition to being a full-service restaurant and bar, Charlotte's operates as a busy catering business, handling both on and off-site parties, birthdays, small weddings, and everything in between. Alicia handles much of the catering side of things, while Mikael heads up the kitchen. The menu changes daily, because Moller is serious about good, fresh, seasonal food. He sources as much as he can from local farms, including beef from Lone Silo farm in Connecticut.

In warmer months, an outdoor veranda with idyllic views of the hills and neighboring horse farm fit the mood of summer dining in the Hudson Valley. A large, outdoor wood-burning grill offers additional seating, perfect for sipping a pre-dinner cocktail or a glass of wine from their award-winning list. In fall and winter, a warm, cozy yet elegant bar and adjoining dining room are kept warm by a roaring fire (see picture top right), and French doors open into an adjoining dining area and larger ball room for parties and events. The restaurant's rambling rooms feel spacious, but intimate, like a large, well-

appointed country home (actually a renovated 19th century church).

In February, diners are hard-pressed to choose between Osso Busso, a pork shank braised with vegetables and herbs in pork stock, over garlic mashed potatoes, and the seafood crepes, filled with Maine lobster, White shrimp, sea scallops, and crabmeat, tossed with lobster béchamel. And of course, there is always a succulent steak. Moller is particular about working with a top-notch French butcher in Canada, because, as he aptly puts it, "I want quality, I love good food, and I don't serve anything less." He grew up in a family that appreciated food, and harkens back to his mother's Swedish crepes and pork chops in remembering his childhood favorites. As an adult, there isn't much he doesn't like if it's prepared well. When asked if there is any food he has a distaste for, he had to think for a moment. "I don't like okra. It seems to me more like something from a floral arrangement than something that goes on a dinner plate." Fresh Striped Bass, venison, and duck are more up his alley. And those dishes are, of course, on Charlotte's menu.

Mikael and Alicia Moller opened their Millbrook location on October 1, 2006, exactly thirty years to the day – and on a Sunday – from that memorable October day in Sweden when Moller first entered the world of cooking. Fortunately for Millbrook locals and those who travel from afar to eat well, the Mollers are here to stay. They still regularly cater events in NYC, but if you want to meet the man who cooked a Beef Stroanoff that changed your life, or prepared the filet of sole that you dream about you'll have to make your way to 4258 Route 44 in Millbrook, New York. •

*To inquire about catering, or simply to make a dinner reservation, contact the restaurant at (845) 677-5888 or online at [www.charlottesny.com](http://www.charlottesny.com).*





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# a medley:

THREE LOCAL STORIES OF “I DO!”

By Sarah Ellen Rindsberg  
info@mainstreetmag.com



Leo Blackman and Ken Monteiro's wedding was memorable for several reasons one of which pertains to one of the guests – Christine Quinn, the former Speaker of the New York City Council. Monteiro served as treasurer for her various campaigns and was hired as Executive Director of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project. They have been friends for years so when gay marriage was legalized in New York state, Quinn was asked to officiate.

Another part of the process was also memorable for a totally unexpected reason – a policy in effect at the *New York Times*. The couple sent in their wedding announcement in the hopes of having it included in “all the news that's fit to print.” When the *Times* inquired as to who would be officiating and whether that person was certified to perform marriages, an obstacle surfaced because Ms. Quinn was not officially certified in this capacity. Enter Maureen Bonds, Justice of the Peace in Amenia (at that time), to conduct the ceremony.

The date 6/9/12 was chosen, “to help me remember the date,” Blackman laughs. Quinn spoke before the ceremony, next to the creek on the couple's property in Wassauc. A swath of Marimekko fabric, suspended between two trees provided a stunning backdrop. “It started off gray. Then the sun came out just before the ceremony – just like in the movies,” Blackman says.

A lasting legacy of the wedding is present at Amenia Town Hall. The couple had requested contributions for a garden in lieu of gifts. In the spring of 2014, plantings and benches appeared.

## From the Himalayas to the Grove

After Alex Harney proposed to Caitrin Harney at 18,000 feet in the Himalayas, some down-to-earth planning began. Alex cites the reasons for choosing The Grove in Lakeville as the venue: “It's beautiful, affordable, and I grew up at The Grove.” And so, on a gorgeous day this past September, the 27th

Clockwise: Alex and Caitrin Harney, photo by Edward Acker. Whitney Cipkowski and Jake Martino, photo by Jessica Le Fleur Photography. Leo Blackman and Ken Monteiro, photo by Tom Ligamari.



to be exact, that is where they were joined in holy matrimony.

Vows were exchanged at the water's edge in front of a pergola. A very special tradition was followed, that of the Irish candle ceremony. This one was conducted in memory of Alex's grandfather, John Harney, founder of Harney & Sons Fine Teas. After each parent of the groom and bride lit tapers, the couple lit the large Unity candle, symbolizing their bond. In deference to the breeze, candles were sheltered in hurricane lamps.

Two ring bearers played a special role. The groom's cousin and the bride's nephew delivered the rings at the appropriate time, each welcoming the couple into their respective families.

And even though the couple met at a purveyor of coffee, Irving Farm, here, the focus was on tea. Party gifts included Paris tea, and tea brokers from Japan and Germany attended.

After the wedding dinner, a truck rolled in – a food truck that is. The bride loves tacos, so they were delivered for all to enjoy.

## 1,000 cranes and one missing officiant

On her wedding day, Whitney Cipkowski did the usual – hair, makeup and donned a gorgeous dress. She arrived at the Taconic Wayside Inn in Copake Falls in all her splendor. The D.J. approached and said that the event was running behind schedule and asked whether she would like him to put it back on track by commencing the proceedings. She agreed, and when the music started, she processed

down the aisle.

When she reached her fiancé, Jake Martino, something was amiss, or to put it more bluntly, something was missing. They held hands and Cipkowski addressed the crowd, “Thank you all for coming. Does anyone know where the officiant is?” After a few minutes, it was evident that the officiant was nowhere to be found. Martino enlisted his father's help. Glenn Martino stood between them and improvised, “Jake and Whitney, I love you both. Let's do this.” Promises to obey each other were exchanged and they recessed down the aisle, laughing every step of the way.

The party was held amidst 1,000 cranes, paper ones that is. Cipkowski's maid of honor had come across this tradition online and it was adopted. Traditionally, the father of the bride would give 1,000 cranes to the newlyweds to encourage them “to have patience in marriage like in folding cranes.” The cranes, all in white, were hung from rafters, lilac bushes and trees, in honor of Cipkowski's late father.

The next day, the happy couple had brunch at the officiant's house and were duly married. Cipkowski summed it up well: “Lots of family, lots of love, and good stories.” ●



*From the bottom of the well to the top of the glass...*



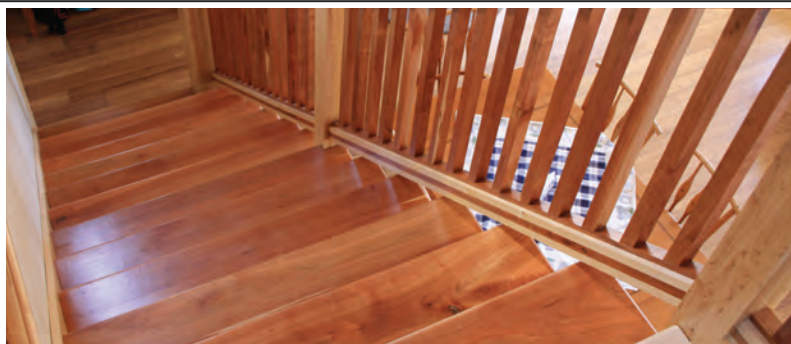
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SomethinsGottaGive started as a web based business in early 2012 and in the fall of 2013 opened its current shop in Lakeville, CT. The shop, along with the website, highlights handcrafted items with many pieces being from local artisans. James Knight, the proprietor, has been in the retail business most of his adult life. Starting his career in Birmingham, AL and New Orleans, LA, he made his way north to New York City working mostly in the luxury goods market (Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman, Gucci) with sidesteps into landscape/gardening, catering with Glorious Foods and waiting tables in Provincetown, MA. The main design material in the store is wood – beautifully handcrafted tables from Bryan Jernigan, wooden vessels from Frank Grusauskas, hand painted mirror frames by Walter Irving, and decoratives/made to order furniture from Michael Robbins. You will also find the work of new photographers like David Young and Skot Yobauje and a select group of midcentury modern pieces. James says “We have just released three new videos on YouTube and have started work on a new web design. With the new site launching in the Spring I am really excited about the future of SomethinsGottaGive and working with the creative people residing in the tri-state area.”



## Saperstein's

Clothing and footwear department store. (518) 789-3365. 41 Main Street, Millerton, NY.

Saperstein's Department store opened its doors in downtown Millerton in 1946; originally next to the diner, where Hunter Bee now calls home. Lew recalls his father, Irving, asking him to join the business in July of 1977 and Lew replying, “I’ll try it.” To that he added, “Here I am today – still trying it and trying to figure out what I want to do when I grow up.” Saperstein's takes great pride in offering superb customer service in addition to carrying quality name brands and serving generations of customers. Although many lines are extensive, making it impossible to stock everything, there's no need to worry, they do special orders, too – at no extra charge. All merchandise is reasonably priced, oftentimes less than what you could find online and without the hassle. In 1998 they added Sarno & Sons suit and tuxedo rentals to the Saperstein's offerings. A perfect choice for proms, weddings, or any special occasion. Prices start at \$59 and include everything but shoes (but they offer them, too). Stop in to see the gals at Saperstein's for more information and browse the catalog. And if you need a pair of Carhartt's, stop on by for a pair. We've got you covered.



## LSF Weddings

Lifestyle and events photographer. [lea@lsfweddings.com](mailto:lea@lsfweddings.com). Call or text at (845) 901-3782. [www.lsfweddings.com](http://www.lsfweddings.com)

Lea Sophie officially started her business in 2011 after graduating with an AAS in commercial art. She then continued studies in fine art in order to increase her conceptual understanding and thinking as an artist. Now she combines her creative process as an artist, along with a vast array of technical expertise and enthusiasm into each wedding that she photographs. Lea splits her time between NYC, the Hudson Valley, and the Berkshires. She loves to travel and greatly enjoys destination weddings. Lea also takes portraits, lifestyle, and intimate photographs that hint at boudoir, and are empowering and timeless. Lea has a background in graphic design, which allows her to create custom archival quality books that tell your story. In addition to being on top of wedding trends, she looks at other fields for inspiration as well as finding it in every day facets of life. “It is so gratifying when a nervous client is wowed by how great they look in their images. I love the life, energy and surprises that are at every wedding. When I’m going through the 2,000+ images from a wedding, I find myself smiling and filled with joy!” Given her ability to limit the number of weddings she photographs allows her to give each couple her full and undivided enthusiasm and attention. Call, email, or text Lea today to capture your precious moments.



## LaBonne's Market

Food market. 22 Academy Street, Salisbury, CT. (860) 435-2559. [www.labonnes.com](http://www.labonnes.com)

LaBonne's owner and CEO is Bob LaBonne Jr. His great-great-grandfather sold fresh meat and fish from a horse and wagon around the turn of the century. Today, LaBonne's has grown considerably and has stores in four locations including Salisbury. Over 50 years ago, in 1962, Bob LaBonne's grandfather, who had been a master meat cutter for 44 years, established the original concept. George LaBonne knew that one of the most important ingredients in providing customers with superior quality meats and fish was to extend an equally superior level of service designed to sustain the same high quality and remarkable freshness that he demanded from his resources and vendors. That tradition continues today. Bob takes great pride in helping those in need. Over the years when families have suffered some sort of tragedy, he has reached out and supplied them with food. In one case the mother and daughter of a family are now employed by LaBonne's. For over 35 years he has also given road crews food during storms. For over six generations, LaBonne's has been earning the trust of the community by providing food that is of the highest of quality and a store full of wonderful, smiling, and helpful people.



## INSURING YOUR WORLD

So, "you're going to the chapel and you're gonna get married...." well that's great news! I wish it were that easy and inexpensive, unfortunately it isn't and there are many items to consider from an insurance perspective. Things like combining each others auto policies for greater efficiencies in cost and coverage. Making sure that each partner's name is listed on all homeowners and umbrella policies to avoid coverage issues in the event of a claim. How about the cost of the wedding? According to Brides.com the average wedding is \$28,082! Are you protected should your wedding venue go out of business, the bridal shop closes early leaving the bride without a dress, lost wedding rings, or lastly, severe weather making it impossible to have the reception? These are real issues that must be considered and insured for, so make sure you obtain a wedding protector policy which can be purchased for as little as \$160/wedding! The last thing a couple wants is for one of the aforementioned issues to occur and spoil their big day, let alone investment. Remember people don't plan to fail, they fail to plan. Happy honeymooning to all.

Kirk Kneller  
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## Helpful advice from behind Lea's lens

- Showing your photographer, visually, what you expect or like is important. Since your images will be permanent keepsakes make sure to have an open line of communication with your photographer.
- Pinterest and other wedding photography blogs and magazines feature award winning images that often took time and effort to set up, and many feature top budget weddings.
- However, even with a smaller budget it is possible to create grand images which bring the feeling of the moment across, but do not try to exactly copy the 'big screen weddings.'
- Make a collection of inspiration images and go through them with your photographer. A good photographer should be able to tell you how the photo was made, if it involved a complicated lighting set up or certain techniques. This way your photographer can give you a time frame needed to make those photos.
- Keep in mind that your wedding is one of a kind, so remember to give your photographer room to be creative and to get the unique look that you have hired them for. Time is a key factor to having good images, your photographer should be an excellent resource for helping with your time line. By figuring out what your expectations are for your photography and communicating them, your photographer can advise you on the most suitable package offered.
- And most importantly, have fun. You and your guests will look amazing when you are enjoying yourselves. So when the time comes, forget about all the little stressors and remember why you are there in the first place – to marry your best friend and confidant.

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## Dollars & sense

Money management is one of the biggest challenges married couples face over time. The Bank of Millbrook encourages newlyweds to get their financial house in order from the outset.

"A marriage is a fresh start, so take a look at your finances and see if you can manage them more efficiently," said Stacey Langenthal, EVP, Bank of Millbrook. "By getting your financial house in order, you can set the stage for a stronger and more successful future."

Here are some tips:

- **Evaluate and pay down debt.** Make a plan to pay off existing debt, whether that's by chipping away at loans with the highest interest rates or eliminating smaller debt first.
- **Review your budget.** Determine your most demanding expenses and identify areas where you can cut back. Develop strategies for spending and saving and stick to them.
- **Check your credit report.** Every year, you are guaranteed one free credit report from each of the three bureaus. Check these free reports for any possible errors that could affect your credit score.
- **Sign up for e-statements and paperless billing.** This both reduces clutter on your house and impact on the environment.
- **Set up automatic bill pay for monthly expenses.** This reduces the headache of bill paying and ensures you never miss a payment.
- **Consolidate your accounts.** Managing several accounts can be a challenge. If you have open accounts that you rarely use, consider closing them. It's important to note that canceling certain types of accounts may involve a fee or affect your credit score.

Stacey M. Langenthal  
Executive Vice President  
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## Health and Beauty

### A NEW APPROACH

The Holidays are over and we now find ourselves working on those New Year's resolutions. This has always been the time when we address those extra few pounds or promise ourselves to improve our eating habits. However, it's also a great time to think about the health and appearance of our skin and hair.

### SKIN

A great way to start would be to address the drying effects of winter's long frigid temperatures on your skin. Our esthetician advises starting with a soothing and hydrating facial. There are several treatments to choose from:

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Amore Nail Spa  
518 592 1133  
amorenailspamillerton.com  
D's Salon & Spa  
518 965 9003  
Facebook: /dssalonandspa  
Hylton Hundt Salon  
518 789 9390  
hyltonhundtsalon.com  
Kelly & Co Hair Salon  
845 373 8490  
kellycompanyhair.com  
Lori Hoyt & Co Salon  
860 435 8086

Philmont Family Dentistry  
518 672 4077  
philmontfamilydentistry.com  
Pulse Cycling & Fitness  
845 677 4999  
pulsecyclingandfitness.com  
Robert Dweck, MD  
Counseling for the  
Body & Mind  
845 206 9466  
robertdweckmd.com  
robertdweckmd@gmail.com  
Sharon Hospital  
sharonhospital.com  
Sharon Optical  
860 364 0878  
sharonopticalct.com

## HOME HEATING, ETC.

Crown/Dutchess Oil & Propane  
518 789 3014  
dutchessoil.com  
Herrington Fuels  
518 325 6700  
herringtonfuels.com  
Lindell Fuels  
860 824 5444  
Taylor Oil  
800 553 2234  
gmtayloroil.com

## HOME SERVICES

Associated Lightning Rod  
518 789 4603  
alrci.com  
Eastern States Well Drillers  
518 325 4679  
easternstateswelldrillers.com  
Hussey Painting LLC  
860 435 8149  
husseypainting.com  
Madsen Overhead Doors  
518 392 3883  
madsenoverheaddoors.com  
Sheldon Masonry & Concrete  
860 387 9417  
W.B. Case, LLC  
860 364 2169

## INSURANCE & FINANCE

Bank of Millbrook  
845 677 5321  
bankofmillbrook.com  
Brad Peck  
518 329 3131  
lofgrenagency.com  
Lakeview Accounting Services  
860 824 8443

## LAWN, GARDEN, POOL

Race Mountain Tree Service  
413 229 2728  
racemttree.com  
Up Country Services  
860 364 0261  
upcountryservices.com

## LIFESTYLE & EVENTS

Alicia King Photography  
845 797 8654  
aliciakingphotography.com  
Catskill View Wedding & Events  
518 592 1135  
catskillviewweddings.com  
Hathaway Young  
860 596 0555  
hathawayyoung.com  
Limerock Catering  
860 435 5000  
limerockcatering.com  
LSF Weddings  
845 901 3782  
lsfweddings.com  
Marq Reynolds Photography  
860 597 2870  
themoviehouse.net

Thee Ellsworth Manor  
860 364 0391  
theeellsworthmanor.com

## LODGING

The Falls Village Inn  
860 824 0033  
thefallsvillageinn.com  
Sharon Country Inn  
860 364 0036  
sharoncountryinn.com

## REAL ESTATE

Bain Real Estate  
860 927 4646  
bainrealestate.com  
Elyse Harney Real Estate  
518 789 8800  
860 435 2200  
HarneyRE.com  
Paula Redmond Real Estate, Inc.  
845 677 0505  
paularedmond.com

## SPECIALTY SERVICES

Cantele Tent Rentals  
518 822 1347  
canteletentrentals.com  
Country Gardeners Florist  
518 789 6440  
countrygardenersflorist.com  
Geer Village  
860 824 8133  
geercare.org  
Ghent Wood Products  
518 672 7021  
ghentwoodproducts.com  
Kenny Funeral Homes  
860 364 5709  
kennyfuneralhomes.com  
Lily & Vine Floral Design  
860 489 0400  
lilyandvine.com  
Mahaiwe Tent & Party Rentals  
413 528 5945  
mahaiwetent.com  
Maria Christine's Bridal & Formal Wear  
860 489 4774  
Michael D. Lynch Law  
860 364 5505  
michaelylynchlaw.com  
Nickbee's Eco Store  
518 592 1177  
nickbees.com  
Roaring Oaks Florist  
860 364 5380  
roaringoaksflorist.com  
Stone & Tile Services  
860 824 5192  
stonepolishingct.com  
VKLarson Communications  
917 678 7689  
vklarsoncommunications.com

**STORES**  
Elizabeth's Jewelry  
518 789 4649  
elizabethsjewelry.com  
Hammertown  
hammertown.com  
Horse Leap  
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horseleap.com  
Pieces  
914 388 0105  
SomethingsGottaGive  
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# WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

## ARIES (March 21–April 19)

Since your coworkers are incapable of explaining matters, you must take matters into your own hands. But take pleasure in talking to friends and family.

## TAURUS (April 20–May 20)

Make sure you have access to all of the information that you have a right to. If you're able to keep your cool, you should honestly be nominated for Sainthood!

## GEMINI (May 21–June 20)

You may have failed yesterday at the task at hand, but the rules have changed today. Don't forget that others depend on your help.

## CANCER (June 21–July 22)

Your self body image has a huge impact on your psyche. Come to terms with the fact that people will not always understand your energy.

## LEO (July 23–Aug. 22)

Always look on the bright side of situations. Those around you provide you with the attention that they're capable of giving.

## VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sept. 22)

You've always been focused on your goals. Your name comes up a lot, just enjoy your moment in the sun and spotlight!

## LIBRA (Sept. 23–Oct. 22)

Your superior may have a suggestion that you are likely to disagree with. Take a deep breath.

## SCORPIO (Oct. 23–Nov. 21)

Now is the time to wipe the dust off an old idea that was ahead of its time. Try to make it a reality!

## SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22–Dec. 21)

A lot is happening around you, so you need to be aware so that you're prepared for the forward-motion to pull you with it.

## CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 19)

Examine the options and temptations in your life closely to conclude whether or not you really need them. Where do you want to go?

## AQUARIUS (Jan. 20–Feb. 18)

Everything has a time and a place, and now all you have to do is grab the opportunity before you. Remember to treat others as you wish for them to treat you.

## PISCES (Feb. 19–March 20)

The truth doesn't sparkle. The truth is just the truth, and remember: the truth always comes out! Be honest with yourself and with others.





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