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The Planner

“You can create a sustainable bar. Opt for local or biodynamic wine, and organic spirits.”

By Lauren Waterman Published Summer 2010

Danielle Venokur Greenberg of dvGreen

You specialize in socially and environmentally responsible events. How does one go about planning a “green” wedding?

Start by choosing a venue that’s accessible for as many of your guests as possible. A loft space on 30th Street may not be LEED-certified, but if it cuts down on transportation, it’s going to be way more sustainable than a farm upstate. If people can take the subway to your party, that’s ideal ... although not everyone is going to want to do that in a fancy dress. I’ve had couples arrive by rickshaw, which is cute. It’s not practical to transport the entire wedding party that way, but it’s sort of a nod to the whole idea.



(Photo: Hannah Whitaker)

How can a couple ensure that their food and flowers are ecofriendly?

Seasonal is often sustainable, for both. The most sustainable menu is going to be one that doesn’t have any meat, but that’s a non-starter for a lot of people. Work with a caterer, like the Cleaver Co. or Sage Events, that composts in the kitchen and has relationships with responsible farmers and ranchers. You need a team of people who are on board with your mission.

And that’s where you come in.

These resources can be difficult to access. I do the vetting and take care of the

minutiae. I manage RSVPs; I can buy your carbon offsets [she calculates the overall effect of your wedding's greenhouse-gas emissions, then funds a carbon-reduction project to make up for them]. I will save you money. I'm also happy to work à la carte. If a couple doesn't have the funds for a full-time planner, they can hire me for a week. We sit down, I get a sense of their vibe, and I'll put together what I call a "greening document"—a list of recommended vendors and resources.

How do you charge?

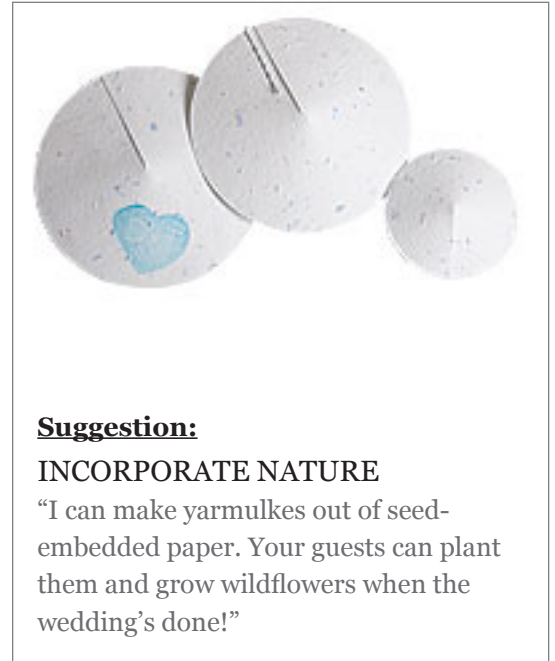
If I'm working as a full-service planner, I base it on the budget. I used to charge a flat fee, but in the end, I always wanted to shoot myself. But it's not always, say, 20 percent—if you're planning a \$200,000 wedding, I'm not going to ask for \$40,000. If you know what you want, I can tell you what it's going to cost.

Do you eschew paper invitations?

No. I'm a big fan of the printed-and-mailed invitation. It may be contrary to the sustainability goal, but this is a wedding, and it's important to have something tactile that sets the tone. If you want to save paper, have people e-mail their RSVPs, or do an Internet-only save-the-date. I didn't get into this line of work because I wanted to do only low-budget, granola-style events. My goal was to not preach to the choir.

You're a newlywed, right?

Yes. I got married last summer, after being engaged for two years. I actually started planning the wedding right away, trying to make it happen within a couple of months, but I started to lose my mind. It certainly helped me to have perspective when I'm dealing with brides for work. I used to think, *Wow, I love this girl, but she's kind of crazy.* Now, I get it completely.



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