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My Eco-Chic Wedding

According to Modern Bride magazine, 19 percent of all marriage proposals happen over the holidays. If you were one of those lucky couples congratulations! As a newlywed myself the excitement and headache of planning the perfect wedding is still fresh in my mind. I encourage you to incorporate some of my Eco-Chic and cost saving ideas into your big day.

The Setting

I was married this past September in a town the size of Menomonie, about 45 minutes north of Madison. Our venue was an old Catholic church turned event center. We were married upstairs and danced the night away downstairs with 150 guests in attendance of our nature inspired day.



The borrowed podium we enhanced using fallen limbs from the May 1st, 2013 snow storm along with some old paint. Two mallard decoys below finished the look.



Ryan and I enjoying some alone time at the marsh before I danced down the aisle. Picture taken at the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Refuge in Horicon, WI.

My Eco-Chic Wedding

I designed and printed my invitations at a local printer. I maximized each sheet of paper and printed on both sides to keep paper waste to a minimal. I chose paper with a high recycled content and made my envelopes out of used paper

grocery bags. RSVPs were postcards, thus eliminating an extra envelope.

We did not send out "Save the Date" notes or hand out programs during the ceremony. I personally couldn't justify something that would get looked at for only a few minutes. Instead we verbally told family and friends to save the date and sent invites out early. I had planned on making one large program out of scrap wood, but I ran out of time. Instead I thanked everyone personally and introduced my wedding party and officiant before dinner.

My venue didn't recycle. So, before signing the contract I asked if I could bring my own recycling bins for them to use. I borrowed two event recycling bins from Dunn County Solid Waste, and placed them near the bar. During a typical func-

tion the bars' garbage gets emptied three to four times. During my wedding it only needed to be emptied once, converting the owners into true believers of recycling! They were so impressed that they purchased the exact bins to continue recycling.

We 'splurged' and spent a little extra money on real china and cups instead of disposables. The caterer would only provide paper napkins, which I wouldn't allow. Thanks to the help of co-workers, family members and thrift shops, I borrowed and purchased cloth napkins. They were all different colors, but I didn't mind as they added a pop of color to each table.

Story continued on page 2.



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MY Eco-Chic Wedding, continued

I borrowed part of my center piece from a friends' wedding. I placed the borrowed wood in the middle of tables and placed pressed leaves (from the previous fall) on top and underneath. On top of that I placed a homemade lantern, made from a tin can, then sprinkled acorns around the lantern. Clear glass food jars, decorated with acorns, and old duck decoys were set in window sills. Inside the jars I placed cattails and flowers purchased from the Farmer's Market.



One of the center pieces, placed at the head table, from the Farmer's Market!

My attendants wore black dresses they already owned which paired well the bouquets we made using flowers from the Farmer's Market. My finance and I gave practical gifts to each of our attendants; gift cards and for the ladies I threw in a pair of flip flops made from recycled yoga mats. I paid more for my dress than I originally wanted, however it was made locally and it fit like a glove. My dress will be hemmed to knee length so I can wear it again.

All in all, we saved money by using Mother Nature's decorations, borrowing decorations, and buying from thrift stores. We reduced waste by having reusable items, borrowing decorations, supplying recycling bins, and composting what we could. We kept it simple and planned ahead to make sure we didn't need to spend more than what we had to. These days the average cost of a wedding is said to be \$15,000 - \$20,000! We did our entire wedding for less than \$7,000 and we stayed true to my "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" roots.



Something Used

On the right is a Wood Duck box made out of barn boards from my father-in-law's barn. Instead of having a guest book we did Wedding Edition GuestLibs (MadLibs) that guests placed inside once filled out.

The tree stump or card box on the far right was found in the woods near my parents camper. My dad finished hollowing out the log, cut a slit on top, varnished/sealed the entire stump and lastly attached a thin removable board underneath. Both items are now decorations that I treasure!

Leaves and seed pods were added to the table to add Fall color and were composted afterwards.



The flowers, to the left, were purchased at the Farmer's Market the morning of my wedding. I placed them inside clear food jars that I decorated with old twine and acorns. I added some river rocks to the bottom and placed tea candles inside.

My center piece is on the far left. I borrowed the wooden discs from a friend's wedding and placed pressed leaves both underneath and on top. I collected and pressed the leaves the Fall before my wedding during peak color. On top of the wood is a lantern made from a tin can and acorns were sprinkled around the lantern. After the wedding I composted the leaves and nuts, recycled the cans and burned the wooden discs.



Grocery Bag Envelopes

Step 1

Gather the supplies: You will need scissors, used paper grocery bags, pencil, a used unfolded envelope to trace, and glue (not shown)



Step 2

Unfold the bottom of the bag as shown. Be careful not to rip too much of the bag when dismantling the bottom.



Step 3

Trace the used envelope onto the grocery bag. You can usually get 4, sometimes 5 traces on a bag depending upon size of pattern. This means you'll get 8 to 10 envelopes as you'll get 2 envelopes per pattern drawn.



Step 4

Cut along the lines.



Step 5

Fold the sides, print side in, to create an envelope.



Step 6

Glue the 3 flaps together. I used craft glue because it holds better than normal glue.

Step 7

Decorate as desired with stamps, markers, paint, etc.



Step 8

Place a letter inside, address, stamp, and then glue the last flap to finish.

Favors

Look beyond mass-produced plastic favors destined for the trash. For a natural alternative, potted plants or seed packets are a way to send guests home with a memory from your wedding that will grow for years to come. Another option is to forgo favors and make a donation in honor of your guests. Put a card at the table telling guests that in lieu of favors, a donation has been made to a charity that's near to the hearts of the newlyweds. (Second Opinion January/February 2014 Issue)

Ryan and I decided to forgo favors all together. Instead we rented a photo booth and encouraged our guests to get silly and enjoy it.

Friends of ours decided against favors as well. Instead they supplied a slightly more expensive local brew for guests to drink.



Right: Me, my aunt Cindy and my 99 year old Oma

Left: The Dent Siblings: Jessica, Amanda and Ricky



Tin Can Lanterns

Step 1

Gather supplies: hammer, two different sized nails, tape, a clean tin can, tracing paper, and (not shown) sand or soil, water and spray paint.



Step 2

Remove label and glue by using finger nail polish, WD40, or acetone.



Step 3

Fill the can with sand/soil. Next fill the can with water and freeze. It takes about 2 days for the mixture to become solid enough to work with. Side note: mix the water with the soil so the soil becomes uniformly wet. Using sand/soil will prevent the bottom of the can from bowing out once frozen.

Step 4



Trace or draw an item to the tracing paper; this can be done on the can if you're brave enough to do so.

Step 5

Tape pattern around the can. Make sure the pattern stays on the can, the tape doesn't stick well to the frozen surface.

Step 6

Poke/punch holes in the can using a nail and hammer. I started with the outside or main lines. Make these lines closer together and larger. I also used a towel to keep the can in place and to catch the dirty ice mixture that fell out when I punch holes near the top.



Continue to poke holes until the shape is completely done. Make holes further apart when drawing secondary lines. Poke an extra hole or two in the bottom of the lantern to allow water to drain out if using outside.



Step 7

Remove paper and recycle. If you'd like a pattern on both sides then repeat steps 4 & 5 before letting the frozen mixture thaw. Make sure to clean and fully dry the can once soil and water are removed.

Caution the inside of the can now has very sharp jagged edges, be careful when cleaning.



Step 8

Paint the inside of the can a light color. I used white. This aids in reflecting the light out of the can.



Step 9

Spray paint the outside of the can any color you wish. It usually took me 2 coats to fully cover. The paint doesn't normally go through the holes but if you're not careful paint can get sprayed on the inside of the can (hence the picture on the right). You can always leave the can unpainted, however paint prevents the can from rusting if used outside.

Step 10

Let dry. Place a candle inside and enjoy!

