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FEBRUARY 11, 2009

To have and To Have Knot

You don't need us to tell you times are tough. Let UTW pare down your to-do list and highlight some go-to wedding sources

BY JESSICA RENDER

So, the country is in the slums, but you aren't. You are about to tie the knot and your relationship is the one security you aren't fretting about. Well, congratulations! We're excited for you. Now it's time to come down from cloud nine and begin preparations for the big day.

How long did it take to start making to-do lists after that special someone popped the question? Whether you are in the early stages of planning or you are working out the final details, we've put our heads (and hearts) together at Urban Tulsa Weekly and comprised a list of some locations in Tulsa to help you out.

Let's start with the ring. We think this tradition has to do with fidelity, eternity and, quite possibly, love. Folklore has it that the fourth finger on the left hand has a vein leading directly to the heart. It's not just a coincidence. Next, we've got ideas for places to get hitched. There are a number of elegant spots that are off the beaten path; so you don't have to sacrifice sophistication for creativity. And lastly, we've topped the feature off with some suggestions for an interesting reception.

The specializing of your special day starts right now...

Welcome to the Rock

1. Bruce G. Weber, 1700 Utica Square, Tulsa, OK 74114, 749-1700, www.brucegweber.com

Bruce G. Weber can give you everything you dreamed of - and more - but be prepared to pay for it, these designer rocks usually start around \$5,000. Store director Michelle Holdgrafer said this season is all about "timeless over trendy."

Let Bruce G. Weber's in-house artists bring back the classics just for you with a custom design, or select from the several designer lines you won't find anywhere else in town like Harry Kotlar, Judith Conway and Ritani. If you can afford it, they'll make it worth it.

2. Miss Jackson's, 1974 Utica Square, Tulsa, OK 74114, 747-8671, www.missjacksons.com

Oh does Miss Jackson know weddings...

She's been assisting brides since 1910. The Utica Square staple will provide you a more eclectic collection than most. With jewels coming in from all across the country and one-of-a-kind estate items, you're definitely sure to feast big eyes on the selection at Miss Jackson's.

3. Spexton, 823 E. 3rd Street, Tulsa, OK 74120, 706-4046, www.spexton.com

Spexton is a true original that can only be found right here in Tulsa. Co-owner Nate McPherson said the trend right now is alternative metals, and Spexton is the only place in town that offers handcrafted and custom-designed titanium and stainless steel rings. With a base price of \$100, a Spexton original runs \$300 on average. We highly recommend this place for men's wedding rings and for anyone looking to modernize their finger-hugger.

4. Eco-Friendly

It's a nice day for a ... green wedding. Everything else is going green, why not your ring? Many people these days are opting for recycled materials (steel), conflict-free diamonds (Did you see the movie Blood Diamond?) or even diamond alternatives (tattooing). Find a way to balance "ecologically responsible" and high fashion and check out portovert.com as a great spring board for all things "green" on your wedding day.

5. Moody's, Check www.moodysjewelry.com for store information.

Can't beat the reputation. A staple in Tulsa, Moody's has been offering quality and quantity to Tulsa brides and grooms-to-be since 1944. Rings start at \$399, and they also offer in-house designers for custom creations.

6. Family Heirloom

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Antiques are in. No doubt about it. Passing down a ring from one generation to the next is a time honored tradition and certainly not one to overlook in favor of the new (and expensive). Wearing an heirloom can be a treasured way to honor the past as you're about to embark on a new adventure. Besides, sentimental value never goes out of style. Isn't this also a great way to keep your mother-in-law happy?

7. Used, er... Previously Loved, Visit tulsapawnshops.com

Don't discount flea markets and pawn shops! While it may be a needle in a haystack (or should we say 'a diamond in the rough?'), you never know what you may come across. Flea markets can produce some rare vintage finds while pawn shops may be a great option for those pinching pennies.

Jim from Silver Dollar Jewelry & Pawn, 41st and Peoria, said they get quite a few people looking for wedding rings in their store; prices start around \$100 and go up from there. They also have a book you can look through, pick out a ring, and have them order one just for you!

Don't get hung up on the ring's whereabouts or wonder if it's cursed. Rinse, reuse and recycle! You're just spreading the love, no?

8. J. David, 613 N. Aspen Ave, Broken Arrow, OK 74102, 251-6300, www.jdavidjewelry.com

Based out of Broken Arrow, J. David Jewelry opened in 1995 and has been building its reputation ever since. Offering custom designed rings with a turnaround rate of less than four weeks, designer Frank Tremonti is on-hand to make sure it's exactly what you've been dreaming of, and - as their Web site says, "If it can be done, he can do it!"

9. Engraved Vows

It's what's on the inside that counts. Weddingvowrings.com offers the intricacy of engraving your wedding vows inside your wedding band. The basic service runs \$95 per ring, but you can also order the bands themselves straight from the site with prices starting in the \$300 range.

10. Whatever you can afford. Bottom line.

Location, Location, Location

1. The Park, www.cityoftulsa.org/Recreation/Parks/

One of Tulsa's beautiful parks would provide a serene and scenic locale for your special day. Woodward Park, with its stunning rose gardens, is always a popular choice (especially for wedding photos). With an adjacent beach and breakfast, it's also a very convenient one, and this freshly renovated 1920s inn will transport you back to another time with its old-fashioned feel. Also check out the Central Center in Centennial Park, Sixth and Peoria, with its beautiful backdrop of the downtown skyline.

2. Tulsa Mansions

Don't live in a mansion that's picture-perfect for a wedding ceremony? Borrow one of history's beautiful homes. One of Tulsa's gorgeous landmark mansions would be a storybook setting, fit for any princess bride (Westley not included). Harwelden, Dresser and McBirney Mansions are common hotspots; also check out Brady, White House and Belvedere.

3. Oklahoma Vineyards

No money to fly to Napa? No problem. Save it for the honeymoon. Oklahoma has some beautiful vineyards that will provide a touch of class and rustic elegance to your big day. Check out Tidal School Vineyards in Drumright (www.tidalschool.com) or Stone Bluff Cellars in Haskell (www.stonebluffcellars.com).

4. Cityplex, 2488 E. 81st St., Tulsa, OK 74137, 493-8888, www.cityplextowers.com

Yeah, "Didn't that used to be a hospital?" was our first thought, too. The building has worn many hats during the years but is now ready and waiting to host your wedding and reception. With the option of a ballroom floor in a high rise, or outside surrounded by fountains in a wide, open atrium, some options in South Tulsa do exist. Doesn't sound like such a bad offer, does it?

5. Findley's Resort and Chapel, 592-5253, www.findleyslakesideresort.com

Looking for a destination wedding feel without actually having to worry about the cost, travel and coordination that goes along with it? Who isn't? Let Findley's Resort and Chapel transport you - without all that hassle - with a gorgeous lakeside wedding.

6. Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame, 111 E. First Street, Tulsa, OK 74103, 281-8600, www.okjazz.org

Located in the historic Tulsa Union Depot, The Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame would be sure to provide a fun and casual atmosphere full of history and culture - definitely a memorable and unique location!

7. The Barn, 10900 S. Louisville Ave., Tulsa, OK 74137, 639-7010

This aptly named location is a charming, rustic and renovated 100-year-old building located at Vive Le Ranch. The Barn would certainly be a perfect spot for a quaint and intimate wedding and can be secured for \$750. Add an additional \$350 for cottage rental to provide a perfect dressing area (overnight stay included!) and you'll be set. The building sits on beautiful property overlooking a small pond, and - best of all - owner Carol McGraw donates the proceeds to charity. Call Lesley at 639-7010 for rentals.

8. Tulsa Historical Society, 2445 S. Peoria, Tulsa, OK 74114, 712-9484, www.tulsahtistory.org

The gorgeous grounds of the Tulsa Historical Society would be an ideal spot if you're looking to host an outdoor wedding. The public museum is a sophisticated choice with its gorgeous modern, art deco architecture. They also welcome weddings inside the landmark mansion for gatherings of about 200. Be sure to plan ahead, as you'll need to book six to eight months in advance if you want to secure your date!

No, seriously. Human lovers and animal lovers? We've got the perfect spot! The Tulsa Zoo offers exotic outdoor garden settings as well as beautiful indoor accommodations that are sure to bring out your inner party animal.

10. The Backyard

Can't afford a destination wedding? Formal church gatherings not your thing? Your own backyard could provide the perfect setting that just fits your style. It's the most affordable and one of the most personal options.

Immaculate Reception

1. Amusement Parks

Traditional? No. Fun? Absolutely! If you are trying to keep the guest count down and your wedding becomes a family-only affair, why not pack up the van and head out of town for a nontraditional but equally fun reception? Who needs a three-tiered fondant cake when you can have a picnic table covered in funnel cakes?

2. Themed Receptions

Think outside the box. How many brides do you think say to their friends, "Well, I just want my wedding to be one-of-a-kind, like nothing I've ever been to before." Our honest answer: the people make it that way. Our fluffed answer: a themed reception! Create an air of mystery and host your reception as a masquerade ball, a luau, an oriental event, or let your friends cut loose '80s prom style. Planning the details will be that much easier.

3. Potluck / BYO?

If you're short on funds, make it potluck. No, it's not cheap- it's fun! Your guests came to witness the unification of two hearts, not to pop free shrimp and cheese cubes in their mouths all night. Potlucks are all about coming together as one- appropriate symbolism for your new union, don't you think? This is especially great for smaller gatherings of just close friends and family, but be sure to plan food storage needs ahead of time.

4. Guest Book Alternatives

PeeWee was right on cue when he said, "Why don't you take a picture? It'll last longer!" Never thought you would take wedding advice from a guy like him? We didn't either. Have your guests sign a canvas or a photo matte that can be placed around your wedding photo and displayed in your home later. Or, have someone on hand to take Polaroid's of guests upon arrival and have each guest sign their photo with a message to the bride and groom. Plus, you might save money on a photographer when you put your guests behind the cameras.

5. The Oklahoma Aquarium, 300 Aquarium Drive, Jenks, OK 74037, 296-3474, www.okaquarium.org

You can get married at the zoo; why not with the fish? The Aquarium is a great treat for guests as they'll have something to do while waiting on the bride and groom. How does sipping champagne while gazing at the coral reef with schools of fish and other aquatic beauties swimming by sound? Located next to Riverwalk Crossing in Jenks, The Oklahoma Aquarium can accommodate groups as large as 750.

6. Gardens and Parks

Weather permitting; you can't really go wrong with a garden party. Low-key or elegant, formal or informal, one of Tulsa's many parks (see wedding location list) would be able to amply accommodate your needs. Or, perhaps, you have your own garden that would do the trick. Pitch a tent. Get out those white Christmas lights. Mood's set. Always classy.

7. Tulsa Air and Space Museum, 3624 N. 74th E. Ave, Tulsa, OK 74115, 834-9900, www.tulsaairandspacemuseum.com

Or, celebrate under the stars at the local planetarium. The Tulsa Air and Space Museum offers facility rental of both the museum and the planetarium and can accommodate up to 350 people. Services include catering, valet parking, themed table arrangements, decorations and entertainment. The sky's the limit!

8. Oklahoma Casinos

You got hitched and feel like you've hit the jackpot! Why run off to Vegas? Oklahoma's casinos offer reception halls fit for up to hundreds of guests and apt for sit down or buffet style events. They also offer several other distractions to keep your guests busy all afternoon or evening from live entertainment to a beautiful golf course or perhaps a friendly game of blackjack?

9. Local Music Venues

On any given weekend, music lovers can find at least a handful of venues featuring local bands and national acts. 2008 was a big year for Tulsa's performance halls. From the Flytrap to Cain's to Brady to the First Street Music Hall, these spots offer plenty of space for a reception. If you and your significant other want great sound and a raging dance party, a music venue might be the way to go

10. Music

While DJ's appear to be the norm, nothing can get a crowd going like a good live band. Notice the use of the word 'good'. Perhaps you can hire your favorite local act for your event? It's worth looking into, the energy live music brings can't be beat! Or, track down some speakers for rent and then plug in the iPod. Together, you and your hubby can build a playlist of all your favorite love songs and dance numbers.

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