

Eye Street

Set wedding date with great care

Consult wedding planner to avoid possible conflicts

BY MAUREEN BUSCHER-DANG
Contributing writer

Planning the date for a wedding, family reunion or fundraising event is one of the most critical decisions you will make. The coming year contains lots of opportunities for date-related successes, as well as failures.

Even a British royal couple had to wrestle with the 2011 calendar before finally settling on Friday, April 29, for their wedding at Westminster Abbey. Prince William and his fiancée, Kate Middleton, sought to avoid dates that conflicted with national events. The prince pushed for a date early in the year because he vowed to be married by the time he was 28. (He turns 29 on June 21.) Adding frosting to their wedding cake, so to speak, the date they selected is the feast day of St. Catherine of Siena, whose name Middleton shares.

Besides checking out local events with such groups as the Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce and Kern County Board of Trade, Kern County couples and others scheduling gatherings in 2011 can browse the Internet for advice on good and bad dates. Experienced planners and vendors for such services as food catering and flowers also have their eyes on the calendar and can steer wedding couples and others in the right direction.

"Couples are smart to ask professionals for help in making important decisions, such as picking the date," said Ann McCright, organizer of Sunday's Ultimate Bridal Event at the Bakersfield Convention Center. "A false start, a bad decision can result in expensive changes and fewer choices, not to mention a disappointed bride."

McCright noted predictably "hot dates" in 2011 will include Friday, April 29, the date of the royal wedding. But a play on numbers also puts Saturday, Sept. 10 (9-10-11) and Friday, Nov. 11 (11-11-11) at the top of the "easy-to-remember" date list.

"Once the royal family announced the April wedding date, the calls started," said Lisa Leopard, special events manager at Maloy O'Neill Vineyards in Paso Robles, who will be at the local event Sunday. "We've already had several inquiries for Sept. 10 and Nov. 11 too. I expect we will be booked for all of those dates very soon."

Some couples will use astrology to set their dates. For example, if the bride or groom is an Aries, the prediction is that on Sept. 28, "you'll not only be the stars of your own day, you'll also have beautifully written vows."

Some cultures, notably Chinese and Hindu, designate "auspicious wedding dates," dates that will bring good fortune and luck. Check specific cultural



Prince William and Kate Middleton appear at a November photo call to mark their engagement.

charts for guidance.

As we round the corner into the new year, I became intrigued by the good and bad choices that loomed ahead.

"Popular dates will always book fast, so it's important to stay on top of it and book your venue first if you really want a special date," advised Colleen Bauer, wedding coordinator and owner of Fairy Godmother. Once the venue is secured, Bauer suggests quickly booking vendors like the photographer, DJ, videographer and wedding coordinator, professionals who typically handle only one wedding per day.

Most event planners will advise couples to avoid holiday dates, when people you invite would rather be someplace else. For 2011, these include Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Jan. 17), President's Day (Feb. 21), Memorial Day (May 30), Independence Day (July 4), Labor Day (Sept. 5), Columbus Day (Oct. 10), Thanksgiving (Nov. 24), Christmas (Dec. 25) and New Year's (Jan. 1). When holidays create three-day weekends, couples are advised against booking the entire weekend.

Other holidays that may snag your event include Mother's Day (May 8), Father's Day (June 19) and Halloween (Oct. 31).

There's some debate over scheduling a wedding or event on Valentine's Day (Feb. 14). Although it is one of the most popular holidays for couples to tie the knot, it is also one of the most expensive because of the high demand.

Various religious and cultural holidays, including Palm Sunday (April 17), Easter Sunday (April 24), Chinese New Year (Feb. 3), Passover (April 20), Ramadan (month-long, beginning Aug. 1), Yom Kippur (Oct. 8), Hanukkah (Dec. 21-28) and Kwanzaa (Dec. 26-Jan. 1) may interfere with attendance.

Heads up on scheduling your wedding on April 1, unless it's OK that someday someone may claim it was a joke.

You may want to avoid the dates of big sporting events, such as the Super Bowl (Feb. 6), the World Series (mid- to late October), the World Cup (June 11

Ultimate Bridal Event

Local couples can get expert advice on topics ranging from setting their wedding date to cutting the cost of receptions and honeymoons at the Ultimate Bridal Event, co-sponsored by *The Californian*, on Sunday at the Bakersfield Convention Center. Under one roof, couples will find more than 100 experts, including photographers, florists, wedding planners and caterers, who can work with any budget. Doors to the event will open at noon, with displays and shows scheduled until 4 p.m.

Go to ultimatebridalevent.com to register online for the event and prizes. Tickets are \$10 general admission, \$8 bride, and \$15 bride and groom. Tickets also will be sold at the door on Sunday.

The highlight of the event will be a show featuring the latest in wedding fashions for each member of the bridal party. Accessories, hairstyles and make-up and flowers also will be on display.

Attendees will register for a wide variety of prizes, with the grand prize being the \$10,000 wedding trunk, packed with gifts from more than 100 wedding vendors. Every bride at Sunday's event will receive a bag, with the first 200 brides to walk through the door receiving a "special" gift bag. Vendors' booths also feature giveaways.

to July 11) and the Final Four (April 2 and April 4). If they show up at your event, sports fans will likely have their eyes on a television or radio buds stuck in their ears.

Then there is a batch of "inconvenient" dates. These dates may include your mother's birthday, or the date your grandfather died. Some also would shy away from scheduling a wedding or event on Pearl Harbor Day (Dec. 7) and Sept. 11.

Planners warn against scheduling events on time-change weekends, when guests often show up an hour early or late. Daylight-saving time goes into effect on March 13 and Standard Time resumes on Nov. 6. Superstitious people may want to avoid Friday, May 13.

Without considering astrological signs and culturally designated "auspicious days," I plotted dates to avoid in 2011 and determined the most "open" month is July. Excluding the July 4 weekend, the month looks pretty free of conflicts. Of course, July is one of the hottest months in Bakersfield and you would pretty much fry if you wanted an outdoor wedding. August also is pretty open, unless you observe Ramadan and then you are back to July.

But when it comes down to setting your wedding date, really only two people need to be satisfied — the bride and groom. After that, just do your best to accommodate the people you invite.

— Maureen Buscher-Dang is a Bakersfield public relations consultant who, on one recent rainy day, started obsessing over her 2011 calendar. Some religious holiday observations she noted in this article actually begin on the eve of the date listed.

Bloopers just part of the wedding plan

BY HILLARY HAENES
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No matter how long we spend planning our special fairytale wedding, there are some things beyond our control. That's when it pays to have a little extra help.

Local wedding coordinators Colleen Bauer of Fairy Godmother and Therese Dozier of My Sorted Affair have experienced a few matrimonial malfunctions in their time but helped the blushing brides and their loved ones laugh off the blunders.

If the day doesn't quite go as planned, one thing to consider is that these impromptu situations personalize your wedding day. You can look back on the memories and laugh; plus it makes for a great story to share.

With that idea in mind, here are a few wedding day bloopers to make you smile.

One wedding that stands out to Bauer was the large outdoor affair with a guest list of 275 at the Kern County Museum. The weather forecast called for a 7 percent chance of rain — which in Bakersfield most often means it's not going to rain. But this time it did.

Throughout the ceremony, Bauer watched as the black clouds kept moving in and eyed the DJ and the equipment. Just as the ceremony came to an end, the rain started.

"It not only rained down, but it blew sideways. It poured right after the ceremony," Bauer said.

Being the "fairy godmother" she is known as, Bauer got the museum's manager to allow the party inside a building to have the reception. As soon as the building was unlocked, everyone began helping haul the tables and equipment inside. Bauer got every man to help move centerpieces, knives and forks and the work was probably done within a half-hour.

"When there's a tragedy, everyone comes together. All vendors were protectors — we fixed it. When you meet with vendors, ask how they saved a wedding," Bauer said.

The best part about that particular blooper was that it didn't upset the bride because she realized there was nothing to be done about the rain.

Other wedding blunders Bauer shared included a wedding where the bride forgot to put on her garter. The DJ started pumping up the music and the bride looked to Bauer and whispered that she forgot to put it on, so Bauer had to run and get it.

"The goal is to never acknowledge bloopers happen; they are funny things that happen behind the scenes," Bauer said.

After the wedding is over and she meets with the brides one last time, she gives them the option of letting them know what bloopers occurred.

"Weddings can be crazy and chaotic and hopefully the bride will take any problem that arises with a sense of humor and a great attitude. For one wedding, the bride had a beautiful, intricate dress with 50 tiny buttons down her back. One of the bridesmaids even got a cramp in her fingers trying to button her up. The bride yelled for more reinforcements and at one point, three people were working on buttoning her up," Dozier said. "Although she could have been a bridezilla, she made this tedious ordeal into a race for the three of them."

At another wedding, Dozier was sending everyone down the aisle and everything was going according to plan until the flower girl froze at the beginning of the aisle. She looked back at Dozier and asked what to do. Dozier ended up walking the flower girl down the aisle, holding her hand as she helped scatter petals on the ground.