



Tying the Knot

February 2010

From the proposal to a successful marriage, this month CafeSplendor explores...Getting Married



February 2010

On the menu



Today's Specials When it comes to proposing, think carefully about the woman in your life and decide just how you want to show her that you want to spend the rest of your life with her. This month we are discovering the "Fine Art of Proposing".

In the Corner It's easy to believe that the entire population has surrendered to their hormones. And while it's true that premarital sex remains the norm in society today, there is a new trend making its way across the land.

Being There Like to have a wine tasting at your home. What wines do you serve? What kind of food? This month we are "Throwing a Wine Party"

Letters from London The bling-bling ring and fine fiancé are divine. But there's a lot of surprising crap that comes with them (and no one warns you about it). Before you spaz, turn to our sanity-saving manual. We're finding the truth about getting engaged.

Quote of the Month

It is true love is blind but marriage is definitely an eye opener!



Morsel of Humor

What did your wife mean when she said...? Find out using our "Wife Translator".

The Journey

A successful marriage depends on a husband and wife working together in unison. To unlock and experience the precious joys of a good marriage, one essential is "Wholesome Communication"

Eavesdropping on Table Six

With each word I read, I became a slave: a slave to this moment and soon a slave to her desire. A phrase echoed in my mind. How did I end up here? Find out in "Saving Marriage"

Cafe Stories Nobody was willing to admit the truth which had been staring them in the face for so many years. It was going to be "An Arranged Marriage".

Stanza and Meters

Saying I love you is more than a few words; it's a "Marriage Creed".

Ramblings from a Frustrated Graduate Student

"How do you build a successful business and maintain a quality family life?"

By the Cup Encrusted with crystallized mist, stillness replacing a deafening roar. Let's see "Niagara Falls" frozen

Book it with Amazon.com

I want every woman who truly wants a solid relationship... to forget everything she's been taught about men-so says Steve Harvey in "Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man"

Controversy Au Lait

You can have your cake. You can eat it. But can a bride steal over \$250K and get away with it.



Recipes from Chef Luis Amado

The Chef teaches how to make the perfect Lemon-Berry Wedding Cake. DIY made simple with an assemble video.

Hollywood Blend

Did you hear about the Morgans? They are in a tiny hick town in the middle of nowhere, trying not to kill each other...and us.

Cafe Style

Here's come the Bride...in the top three wedding dress trends of 2010.



Web site of the Month

TheKnot.com

A complete online resource for the bride.

From Wedding Dresses - Wedding Cakes - Wedding Planning - Unique Wedding Ideas - It's all at TheKnot.com



Are You Thinking of Getting Married?



Everyone I know these days is getting engaged or married. Although I know such a bonding is not on the horizon for me, I congratulate all of you on your personal success. But before you buy the ring, schedule the date, pick out your china patterns, let's review a few facts on marriage.

If we compare the global divorce phenomenon to an earthquake, the United States would be at the epicenter. In a recent year, more than one million marriages were terminated there—an average of two every minute. But you may well be aware that the United States is hardly alone in its marital misery.

ACCORDING to one study, the divorce rates in Canada, England and Wales, France, Greece, and the Netherlands have more than doubled since 1970.

I have every reason to believe that most couples enter wedlock because they love each other and want to spend the rest of their lives together. Sadly, however, the dream of a happy marriage often proves to be just that—a dream. Upon waking up to reality, many have said that they married too soon or married the wrong person or both.

Why do so many marriages fail? "The main reason is a lack of preparation," says the author of a book about courtship. She adds: "As I deal with couples in the throes of marital distress two feelings engulf me—compassion and anger. I feel compassion because they have not discovered their dreams for a mutually satisfying relationship. I feel anger because of their ignorance regarding the complexity of the task."

Indeed, many enter marriage with little or no idea of how to make it succeed. Yet, this is hardly surprising. One educator observed: "How many of our youth go through college studying about the behavior of rats and lizards, but fail to learn about the behavior of two people called husband and wife?"

Are you thinking about marriage—either about a possible future marriage or about that marriage you are in now? If so, you should be aware that a real-life relationship is far different from that depicted in movies, on television shows, and in romance novels. At the same time, the marriage of two mature people who are truly in love may be considered a blessing from God. How, then, can you be sure that you are prepared to meet the demands of marriage? What factors should you consider when you propose. Or if you are already married, how can you increase the likelihood of finding lasting happiness in your marriage? This month, CafeSplendor will explore these questions.

As always I hope you enjoy this issue. I look forward to receiving many emails, stating your comments.

Jennifer Barrington

Editor/Head Designer



The Fine Art of Proposing

By Kathy Stafford

There are few things in his life that are going to cause a man as much nervousness and anxiety as how and where to propose marriage to the woman that he loves. Naturally, the woman who receives the proposal is going to have a photographic memory about every little detail that took place, and the man might only remember that he was in the men's room, sick to his stomach and covered in a cold sweat.

When it comes to proposing, think carefully about the woman in your life and decide just how you want to show her that you want to spend the rest of your life with her – and that you know her well enough to propose in a manner that suits who she is. Recently, I saw an article on what had to have been the most unique marriage proposals in the world. A man rented an art gallery, created a fictitious artist and had a three-dimensional display that looked like a giant mobile hanging from the ceiling. However, when the various pieces were viewed through one special area in the gallery, it was a marriage proposal. The entire thing was the most intricately conceived idea that I've ever seen and you can bet that it's going to be tough to top that kind of proposal.

Luckily, you don't have to go to such extremes.

Many people like the idea of going to a romantic hideaway, and depending upon your girlfriend, that might be a perfect setting. It can be either a beach bungalow or a four-star hotel. What matters most is that you show that you've put some time and some care into making everything as special as possible.

Are both of you caught up in the hustle-and-bustle of a busy work schedule? Why not take her on a weekend retreat to somewhere isolated, where you'll be able to focus your attentions on each other. Choose some place that has no ringing telephones or irate employers or traffic jams.

Then again, it can be something as simple as a favorite restaurant. Take her to the first restaurant that you went on a date to. A gesture that is both romantic and also that shows that you know who she is can never go wrong. Keep in mind that if she's the kind of woman who gets embarrassed, she might not want something grand and impressive that is going to draw attention to herself.

Before you do anything spectacular, you want to make sure that as little can go wrong as possible. When it comes to things like wedding proposals, Murphy and his laws tend to show up in full force. Sometimes, doing the simple things can be just what your girlfriend wanted as opposed to something grand and impressive.

The most important thing to remember is that you really want your girlfriend to understand how important she is to you, and how lucky you are that she's in your life. When it comes to your proposal, make sure that you delve deep into your heart, deep into your emotions, and you bring forth all of the magic and all of the love that she's inspired in you.

One gentleman went to an online book distributor and created an entire paperback book for his future wife, entitled THE LOVE OF MY LIFE. It cost him about three hundred dollars to have the book printed, and he presented it to his girlfriend, along with a ring – thereby guaranteeing that he has given her a memory that she is going to treasure for the rest of her life.

You don't have to go to such lengths, of course. Perhaps you can write a love poem to your girlfriend, giving it to her along with the engagement ring. You might think that you're not much of a poet, but the truth is that if you write from your heart and you put it all out there, you are going to make an impression on your girlfriend that will last throughout the years.

About the Author

Kathy Stafford, Relationship Coach, "I show singles how to get married and couples how to STAY married" Do you want more from your relationship? Go to <http://www.dearkathy.com> for relationship articles, advice, and programs. Get Kathy's new book, "Relationship Remorse: Mistakes Women Make When Shopping for a Man." and learn the right way to find a loving and committed life-partner. Order the book at <http://www.relationshipremorse.com>

Copyright © 2007 Kathy Stafford / dearkathy.com. All rights reserved.





Throwing a Wine Party

People are always asking Vino Joe, "I'd like to have a wine tasting at my home. What wines do I serve? What kind of food? How much wine do I need? What kind of glasses should I use?" etc., etc. So this page will give you some pointers on throwing a sublime wine tasting in the comfort of your own home.

Choose a Theme

Simply having a wine tasting is not enough of a theme; there are too many wines to choose from. You wouldn't simply have a "food party", would you? Of course not, you'd throw a "Brazilian Barbecue", or a "Pasta Night", or a "Spam Sandwich Ideas" party. Same thing with wine. Choose a particular country or region, for example, like "Tuscan Wines" or "California Cabernets". Or if your guests aren't quite that advanced, at the very least you should have a "White Wine" or "Red Wine" party. This way, not only will your party have some semblance of organization, but you'll have some clue as to what kinds of foods to serve.

Who Brings the Wine?

There are two ways you can do a wine tasting; either YOU can buy all the wine, or all of your guests bring a bottle or two each. Being something of a skinflint, and not the heir to an oil tycoon's trust fund, Vino Joe holds tasting parties where the guests bring the wines. Again, adhering to a theme, establish a price range (say, \$10-15, for example), and have each person bring a bottle.

What Food to Serve?

Depends on the theme, of course, but for simplicity's sake, it's a good idea for the host to provide UNSALTED crackers (i.e., Carr's Water Crackers, as opposed to Saltines), an array of cheeses, and maybe a simple veggie plate. You don't need to go crazy with the food, unless it makes sense with your theme (i.e., a party of wines and foods from the Alsace). Keep the finger foods simple, not too spicy or salty, so that the main focus is on comparing the wines. At the same time, you'll want to pick certain foods and try them with several different wines, to see what goes with what. After all, that's the whole point of a wine tasting!

How Much Wine?

Depends on the party. If you're having a tasting party, figure on about one bottle per 10 people—this assuming you're going to only pour about an ounce or so per wine. When I state "tasting party", I'm thinking that everyone will have a small taste of each wine, contemplate it, and discuss with each other. On the other hand, if you're having a party where people will be DRINKING wine (i.e., a wedding shower, a birthday party, or any bash at the Vino Joe's place), figure that you will get 4 to 5 healthy glasses out of one bottle of wine. If your crowd is made up of light drinkers, you should get by thinking 2 to 3 glasses per person. If your friends are more like mine, go heavier—figure one bottle per person (and make sure EVERYONE has a SAFE ride home or is staying over). Hopefully, that will be too much — but you'd rather have too much than too little, right? Regardless of which guessing game you do, add an extra bottle or two to the equation, just in case.



10 Great Bottles for a Party

These super reliable wines have crowd-pleasing flavors and go well with a wide range of foods, from appetizers to main courses, making them ideal for bringing to a dinner (or other) party.

Whites

2006 Casa Julia Sauvignon Blanc (\$9)

This lively white, made by top Chilean winemaker Pablo Morandé, has bright lemon-lime notes and a tangy finish.

2006 Maculan Pino & Toi (\$12)

Based at the foot of the Italian Alps, the Maculan family has become known over three generations for impressive wines like this wildly floral blend of Tocai, Pinot Bianco and Pinot Grigio.

2007 Pine Ridge Chenin Blanc–Viognier (\$14)

Floral scents lead into ripe, round melon flavors in this luscious Napa Valley white.

2007 Bodegas Godeval Viña Godeval (\$19)

More than 2,000 years ago, Romans mined Spain's Valdeorras region for gold; today, the area is better known for citrusy whites like this one.



What To Talk About?

Follow the theme first. For example, if you're going to do a Chianti party, learn a little bit about Chianti, and talk about what you've learned. You can always check this site or email Vino Joe for some pointers on what subjects to discuss. As you taste through the wines, get everyone to talk about what they're smelling, tasting, and feeling. If you're the host, you may have to take charge and ask people specific questions; it'll be easy if you start people off with suggestive questions, like, "hey, Ray, this wine smells kind of like some citrus fruit mixed in with your old gym socks — what are you getting from it?". Continue with questions like, "what food would you pair this with?" Before you know it (and definitely after a few wines), everyone will be discussing all kinds of things they smell and taste in the wine. Or, everyone will get hammered and start complaining about their spouses/significant other. Either way, it should be a fun time.

Rating the Wines.

Half the fun of wine is that it is completely subjective. What better way to spice up a wine party than to have everyone judge the wines? This is the ultimate conversation starter, and everyone's chance to be a wine dictator. All you need is an opinion, a pencil, and the [Wine Tasting Score Sheet](#).

What About Glassware?

The true snobs will have expensive hand-blown, lead crystal glasses, one separate glass for each wine, each shaped specifically for that specific wine. Well, that's nice if you can afford to do it (and you have an industrial-size dishwasher), but for the most part, just use one or at most two glasses per person (perhaps one for whites and one for reds). The only specific I recommend is that you use clear, glass, large-mouthed wine glasses (leave those horrid blue goblets in the china closet). You can buy fairly decent, all-purpose wine glasses just about anywhere (department stores, supermarkets, or discount stores like Target, Wal-Mart, etc.) for about a buck or two each. If you have the dough, go ahead and spring for the lead-crystal types, but be careful putting them in the dishwasher, especially if they have long stems. You want to get glasses with bowls as large as possible so that you can get a real good swirl and get your honker inside for a whiff.

Water.

Water should be available for rinsing—both the glasses and the palate. Put out water glasses as well, and urge people to drink some between wine tastes. (A good rule of thumb for keeping hydrated—and avoiding hangovers—is one glass of water for each glass of wine.) Your guests will thank you in the morning.

Spitting ... Why Would Anyone Spit?

If you're going to be tasting a dozen wines or more, you may want to have a few dump buckets (beach pails or Champagne buckets will do) around the room and provide everyone with paper cups to spit their wine into. Professional tasters swish the wine in their mouth for a while, then spit it out. You get the same perception of the wine as if you swallow it, except you don't fall down after the 15th "taste". Your crowd may not be spitting, but if there are going to be a bunch of wines, it may be a safe idea to consider—especially for those who are driving.

So that's it, a simple guide for hosting a wine party. Have fun, and be sure to email vinojoe@wineweekly.com with the details of your bash!

Reprint of Wine Weekly article located at <http://www.wineweekly.com/wine-basics/how-to-throw-a-wine-party/>

Reds

2004 Librandi Cirò Rosso (\$10)

This pale, smoky red, with the flavor and scent of sweet dried cherries, is made from the Gaglioppo grape variety, native to the southern Italian region of Calabria.

2005 Columbia Crest Grand Estates

Columbia Valley Merlot (\$13)

This dark Merlot from Washington state is so luscious that it's hard to stop drinking it.

2006 Castle Rock Mendocino Pinot

Noir (\$12)

Consulting winemaker August Briggs makes some of the best-value California Pinots around, like this lightly herbal Mendocino bottling.

2005 Pascual Toso Cabernet

Sauvignon (\$12)

Argentine Cabernet this good—loaded with blackberry fruit and with enough tannin to give the wine structure—is hard to find, especially at such a low price.

2005 Ravenswood Vintners Blend

California Cabernet Sauvignon

(\$12)

Ravenswood's most affordable Cabernet bottling is juicy and round, with sweet black fruit framed by just the right amount of tannin.



Find any title

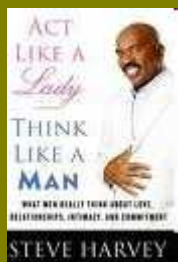
amazon.com

click here



Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man

A Review by Kam Williams



Act Like a Lady,
Think Like a Man
by Steve Harvey

After its release in
January 2009, his
book skyrocketed
to #1 on the New
York Times Best
Seller list.

"I want every woman who truly wants a solid relationship... to forget everything she's been taught about men-erase the myths, the heresy, everything your mother told you, everything your girlfriends told you, all the advice you've read in magazines and seen on television-and find out here, in these pages, who men really are... If you're tired of being played with, then I want you to use this book as a tool-to take each of the principles, rules, and tips in this no-nonsense guide and use them to anticipate a man's game plan. No matter how good you are to a man, no matter how good you are for him, until you understand what his makeup is, what drives him, what motivates him, and how he loves, you will be vulnerable to his deception and the games he plays. But with this book, you can get into a man's mindset and understand him better, so that you can put into play your plans, your dreams, and your desires, and best of all, you can figure out if he's planning to be with you or just playing with you." *Excerpted from the Introduction (pages 6-7)*

Stand-up comic/sitcom star/TV show host/stage performer/movie actor/radio DJ/producer Steve Harvey was already a true Renaissance Man before he recently added relationship advice guru to his bag of tricks. After its release in January of this year, his book, *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man: What Men Really Think about Love Relationships, Intimacy and Commitment* skyrocketed to #1 on the New York Times Best Seller list (see <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/19/books/bestseller/besthardadvice.html>).

Apparently, the secrets about men he reveals on the pages of this much-needed how-to-tome are resonating with frustrated females of every demographic. As a result, Steve is not only making the rounds of the top talk shows like Oprah and Ellen, but expanding his own entertainment empire as his eponymous, nationally-syndicated morning radio show enters new markets, most recently replacing Tom Joyner in Chicago.

Let's face it, Steve Harvey is a juggernaut who's on quite a roll. And this critic is not at all surprised by this development, given that I've immensely enjoyed his last two stand-up DVDs and have also found the brother to be both hilarious and insightful every time I've had the opportunity to interview him.

As for the content of *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man*, the title drops a big hint as to the sort of common sense advice inside. Still, every bit as important as the tough-love brand of relationship advice Steve has to share is his folksy, down-home tone which practically leaps off the pages in Technicolor, because he has convincingly translated his trademark charismatic anecdotal style to print despite the inherent limitations of the literary format.

But the big question remains: will the book deliver on its promise of helping you land Mr. Right? I'm not comfortable speculating about that, after all, I'm not a woman and thus not really a part of the target audience. That disclaimer aside, I'd say that he does have guys pegged, so his ideas at the very least are likely to prove valuable to impressionable young ladies who have been raised without a father figure in their lives, since Steve's basic function here is to shed light on the difference between what men say and how they behave. Traitor.

About the Reviewer

Kam Williams is a syndicated film and book critic who writes for 100+ publications. He is a member of the New York Film Critics Online, the African-American Film Critics Association, and the NAACP Image Awards Nominating Committee. Contact him through NewsBlaze. NewsBlaze, [Daily News reprint of review](#)

Buy this Book @

amazon.com

Act Like a Lady, Think Like a
Man: What Men Really Think
About Love, Relationships,
Intimacy, and Commitment



Niagara Falls

Touring Niagara's wine and falls country



A single black-and-white photo from my parents' winter honeymoon inspired the journey: Hundreds of thousands of gallons of water halted in free fall, lampposts encrusted with crystallized mist, stillness replacing a deafening roar. I wanted to see Niagara Falls frozen. So in the middle of a cold December, almost 40 years later, my co-pilot and I have crossed into Canada in search of ice—lots of it—in the surefooted all-wheel drive of a stately sedan, the 2003 Mercedes S500.

Niagara-on-the-lake to Jordan

Something is terribly wrong. Yesterday, we drove up from New York in a blizzard so severe that we had to stop for the night before reaching the border. Why, now that we've finally arrived in the Great White North, is the temperature rising?

The morning's meager crust of frost has melted and, with it, my hopes of seeing the falls suspended in mid plunge. My despair is confirmed when, as we drive past the first tee of the Niagara-on-the-lake Golf Club, a duffer tips his tartan cap at me. The S500, already sporting a salty coat, deserves a break, and we fuel her—and ourselves—with take-away tea and sausage rolls from

Taylor's Bakery on Queen Street.

Armed with an Ontario Winery Tours map, we say good-bye to Niagara-on-the-lake, which looks primped and primed for its postcard close-up. The village's spotless streets are lined with grand homes and dotted with quaint bed-and-breakfasts that host the culture vultures who flock here from April through November for the annual Shaw Festival. Briefly skirting the shores of lake Ontario on lakeshore Road, we pass a cluster of salmon fishermen braving December's frigid chop in their boats. I'm having a hard time believing we're in Canada's version of the Napa Valley. But the map tells me that we are, and so we continue on in search of the fruit of the vine.

Sinuous lakeshore Road is bordered by endless acres of naked vineyards and apple, peach, and pear orchards. Soon, white signs bearing little bunches of blue grapes begin to appear beside the road. Eyes on the horizon, we scour the rolling countryside for these telltale icons, which lead us along the seriously circuitous wine route. No problems navigating this one: In minutes we're on Niagara Stone Road, where we stop for a taste of merlot and a lesson in local geography from the vintner at the Hillebrand Estates.

It may not be the Napa Valley, he tells us, but this peninsula, sheltered from merciless cold fronts by lake Ontario to the north, lake Erie to the south, and the Niagara River to the east, is downright balmy by Canadian standards. It also sits on the forty-third parallel—in good company with Rioja, Burgundy, and Chianti. Believe it or not, the Niagara peninsula has a healthy wine industry, evidenced by the elbow-to-elbow crowds we'll see at several tasting rooms. Back at the wheel, we head south on Four Mile Creek Road to Highway 81, where the massive Château des Charmes winery hulks on the horizon.



For information on Château des Charmes Winter events [click here](#).

The countryside gives way to the city as we approach St. Catharines, where my usually stoic co-pilot begins moaning about a toothache. We park at several dentists' shingles, but, despite the afternoon hour, there's not a drill bit to be found. 'Dentists in St. Catharines don't work after one on Fridays,' explains a receptionist in the parking lot of the last office we visit. Pity, after all of the morning wine tasting, Canadian whiskey on the gums is not an option.

We abandon the hunt for a dentist and divert to the Welland Canal, a 26-mile series of locks that cuts through the heart of the city, enabling ore freighters to navigate the 326-foot difference in water levels between lakes Erie and Ontario. The sight of this engineering feat takes my co-pilot's mind off his tooth for a moment. The days are short this time of year, so we follow Highway 89 back toward the vineyards and antiques shops scattered along the western end of the peninsula. We pick up Highway 81 outside Jordan and take it to Grimsby and the Beamer's Point conservation area.



Throughout the day, more than one vintner has gestured toward a faint ridge on the horizon, praising its warming effect on the region. They call it the escarpment, and it's where we find Beamer's Point. As we climb the curving incline of Thirty Road, approaching the escarpment outside Beamsville, we're headed straight for the conservation area. Nearing the top of the escarpment, we make a quick left onto Ridge Road, follow it to the end, and then zigzag right at the small sign that shows the way to Beamer's Point. Here, updrafts of warm air give lazy eagles, falcons, and hawks a lift during their migrations. We hike to the observation area but must content ourselves with crows, which caw and glide overhead. Later, back in Jordan, we tuck into grilled Digby scallops and apple cream strudel before snuggling into layers of goose down at the Inn on the Twenty.

Jordan to Buffalo via Niagara-on-the-lake

I part the chintz curtains at daybreak, hoping that last night's icy freeze is intact. It is. Under snow-threatening clouds, we depart Jordan and hightail it back to Niagara-on-the-lake on the QEW (Queen Elizabeth Way). Sitting down to breakfast at the Oban Inn, I see four golfers heading out to the lakeside course, and any hopes I still harbor of seeing the falls frozen are dashed.

Driving out of town, we head south on the Niagara River Parkway, passing two massive cannons that mark the site of Fort George, a base for the British during the War of 1812. Sir Winston Churchill dubbed this route 'the prettiest Sunday afternoon drive in the world,' and, at this time of year anyway, its beauty is shockingly primordial.

Suddenly, the blue grape clusters reappear, and we slow for an ice wine sign at the region's famous Inniskillin Vineyards. Over a tasting of dessert wine in a barn designed by Frank Lloyd Wright (at least that's the story), our guide explains the laborious process that produces the Canadian version of Germany's eiswein: The grapes are handpicked at night (sunshine might defrost them) after three consecutive days of freezing have sufficiently heightened their sugar content. The result: a fruity bouquet and a finish as sweet as sorbet.

Our ice wine education complete, we continue south, climbing the Niagara River Parkway past a dramatic vista of the Niagara Gorge and its ice-glistened walls of layered sandstone, limestone, and shale. Far below, the great green Niagara rushes along its course.

Now on a straightaway, we speed past the towering, naked trees of Queenston Heights Park and the oversized Floral Clock (all sculpted evergreens this time of year), and pause briefly to watch the gulls soar at the edge of the gorge.

Minutes later, we stop again for winged creatures of a more dainty order at the Butterfly Conservatory. Inside its tropically warm and humid rooms filled with frangipani and day lilies, millions of exotic butterflies flutter about. Bejeweled in brilliant blues, yellows, greens, and oranges, the lepidoptera have the run of the house and freely alight on our heads, arms, and shoulders as we amble through. 'Do they ever escape?' we ask Angela, the teenage ticket taker.

Yeah, they like the gift shop.'

Back on the parkway, the Botanical Gardens and the roiling Whirlpool Basin offer an unadulterated glimpse of natural beauty before the inevitable commercialism of the falls: signs for helicopter rides and the antique Spanish Aero Car that crosses the gorge on a cable; the gaudy neon of hotels and the Niagara Casino. In the nineteenth century, the falls were home to countless taverns and souvenir stalls, so making a buck off a natural wonder is certainly nothing new.

As we near the cascades, the mist kicks the S500's automatic wipers into action. Across the gorge, we see the mighty chutes of the American side, which are but a prelude to the expansive grandeur of Canada's Horseshoe Falls, not frozen today but raging.

It was in December 1683 that the French missionary Father Hennepin stumbled on the falls in his quest for the Mississippi. They say he was so overcome by their awesomeness that he ripped the portable altar off his back and fell to his knees. We park at the Canadian Falls—an impossibility during any other season, and join the other pilgrims snapping pictures of the cataracts. These foamy torrents have inspired much strange behavior over the centuries: In 1901, 63-year-old schoolteacher Annie Taylor plunged over the brink in a barrel, and in 1851, the world-famous tightrope walker Charles Blondin did his high-wire act over them, pausing midway to prepare two tasty omelettes on the stove he ported.

The falls are hypnotic and hard to leave, but on we go, past the barge that has been snagged for 85 years in the whirlpool rapids. The sight of it makes me wish, as I did when I visited as a girl, that it would finally break free so I could see it go hurtling over.

Canada's cataracts are just a memory as the parkway leads us south along the Niagara River, here as undisturbed as a pond and lined with million-dollar homes and snowmobile trails. From Fort Erie, where the Niagara empties into lake Erie, we can see Buffalo across the river, at the other end of the Peace Bridge. 'Welcome to the United States' a sign greets us, as does the first sight of snow in days.

The next time I journey to the Niagara peninsula during winter, I'm bringing my clubs.

**Sir Winston Churchill
dubbed this route 'the
prettiest Sunday
afternoon drive in the
world!'**



An Arranged Marriage

A Short Story by Dev Kumar Vasudevan



It took time for Mr. Sadarangani to register the message. His son Vishal was telling him that his girl friend Veena was pregnant. Mr. Sadarangani thought he would have a heart attack. "Hey Ram, what is this world coming to?" he asked his wife Gita, "I couldn't imagine Vishal and Veena would betray our trust so." The kids had grown up in the same building in Bandra. They had been classmates at the same school and the same college. Vishal was working now and Veena was doing her MBA. Both sets of parents knew that they were very friendly. Deep down in their hearts they also knew that they were madly in love with each other.

But nobody was willing to admit the truth which had been staring them in the face for so many years. The level of denial was so high that when both had turned sixteen Mr. and Mrs. Sadarangani had even tried to make Veena tie a rakhi on Vishal's hand on rakshabandhan day. But they had not insisted when they saw the contempt with which both youngsters dismissed the suggestion. Veena's parents Mr. and Mrs. Menon were also told about Veena's pregnancy. All hell broke loose in the Menon household too.

Mr. and Mrs. Menon were quiet clear that they didn't want a Sindhi son-in-law. And the Sadaranganis were clear that they didn't want a Malayali daughter-in-law. Even if she was as fair complexioned as Veena was. As a matter of fact the friendship between both couples was built on a foundation of intolerance. Mr. and Mrs. Menon were born and brought up in Kerala and they wanted Veena to marry a good Menon boy. This development was a shock for them. They felt that they should have acknowledged the relationship when they saw it clearly many years ago. But the parents of both were praying for it to be a passing infatuation. Since the situation had gone out of hand the parents got together over a cup of coffee. Mrs. Menon made her famous filter coffee and Mrs. Sadarangani brought the *papads*.

The parents were clear on one thing. The youngsters had let them down. They had not expected such a thing from them. They had brought them up with all the right cultural values and beliefs. They had never been allowed to become westernised. They were allowed to read as many books as they wanted, see movies and listen to music. But they were never allowed to go on dates or spend exorbitant amounts on clothes and cosmetics. Both parents tried to get the young couple agree to an early marriage. But they were adamant that they would marry only after Veena completed her semester in college. The parents were shocked. "What will people say, *yende devammel!*" wailed Mrs. Menon. "Oh shut up mama!" snapped Veena, irritated with her mother's habit of wailing in Malayalam. Vishal also told his mother brusquely not to start getting hysterical in Sindhi.

After prolonged discussions it was decided that the young couple must get married the next Sunday. With only five days left to go they decided to invite a few close relatives. The other families living in the same building could become guests from both sides. The marriage went off very well. Mrs. Sadarangani coached Veena on the intricacies of becoming a Sindhi wife. The marriage rituals went off smoothly. After the marriage ceremony, which was attended by a small group of relatives and friends, there was a lunch hosted by the bride's father. The same evening a reception was hosted by the groom's father. Everything went off very well. Everyone was impressed by the thoroughness with which the ceremony was conducted.

A few days after the marriage Mrs. Sadarangani noted that Veena's tummy wasn't growing. Her suspicions became stronger when she realised after a week that Veena's tummy was still just the same. When she asked Veena about it she just smiled. Finally out of sheer desperation, she dragged Veena to a doctor who confirmed that Veena wasn't pregnant. Both sets of parents had another meeting over a cup of tea in the drawing room of the Menons' house. Both the youngsters were summoned. They stood in front of their parents in semi-attention. They were subjected to another dose of scolding and were asked to explain their behaviour.

"Simple," said Vishal, "we had good reason to do this." Both the fathers pounced upon him and asked him to tell them the reason. Vishal looked at Veena. Their eyes met. They smiled at each other nervously and held hands. Veena addressed all the parents, "We had figured out that if we sought permission for marriage all of you would have said no. We calculated that if we were to give you the shocking news of my pregnancy then you would insist that we get married. And that is exactly what happened. Instead of a love marriage we had an arranged marriage. And all of us are happy. Are we not?"

The parents did not know what to say. They realised that the kids had made fools of them. There was a pregnant silence and then Mr. Menon burst out laughing. His laughter was infectious. He was followed by Mrs. Sadarangani and then Mrs. Menon. The kids also burst out laughing. Finally, a reluctant Mr. Sadarangani who was still recovering from the shock of having lost almost a crore of rupees as dowry in Vishal's marriage, also joined in. A few months later Veena told her mother-in-law that she was pregnant. Everybody believed her this time.

About the Author

Dev Kumar Vasudevan is a skilled writer and blogger, who enjoys malapropisms. You can read his blog at : <http://dkvblog.sulekha.com/default.htm>



Here comes the Bride ...

Top Three Wedding Dress Trends for 2010

Current wedding fashion trends feel really diverse – you can have a wedding gown style based on pretty much any era of fashion and still be extremely fashionable.

So what's in store for this year and next? What wedding dress styles are hot, or going to become hot? Some leading wedding gown designers were asked that same question, and the following are what they predicted.

1. Sexy Slinky Silhouettes

If you've got a fab figure (or fantastic suction underwear!), now is the time to do a victory dance – sexy, figure-hugging wedding dress silhouettes will be hot for the next couple of seasons. Left to right: [Maggie Sottero](#), [Justin Alexander](#), [Jesus Peiro](#)



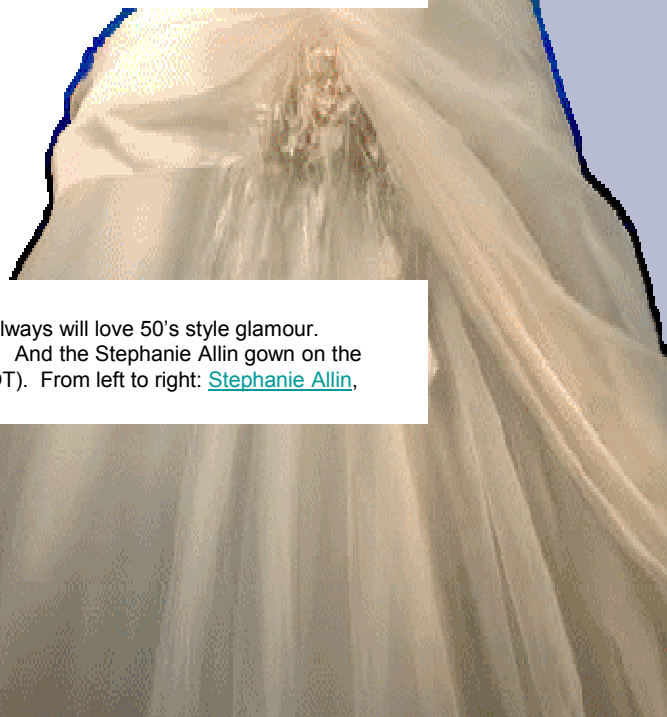
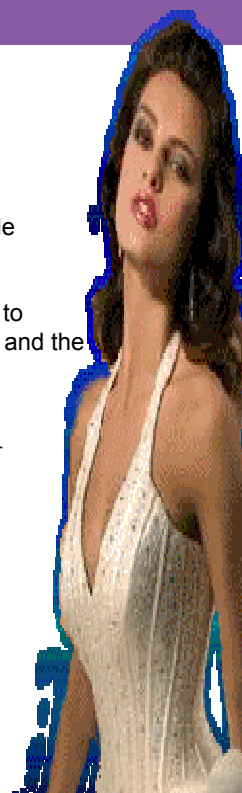
2. Ballgown Styles

For those who loved the wildly ridiculous yet fabulous gowns in *Gone with the Wind* (*blush*), and for many of us who want to disguise our thighs, ballgown style wedding gowns are back. Fabulous! Ballgown wedding dresses have many rather wonderful upsides, including squishing you into the shape you desire, giving you fabulous cleavage, and being impossible to remove on your own. From left to right: [Sottero & Midgley](#), [Maureen Myring Kesterton](#), [Ian Stuart](#)



3. Fifties style wedding gowns

This is the one I'm really very pleased about – I always have and probably always will love 50's style glamour. There's something about the whole belted waist idea that makes me happy. And the Stephanie Allin gown on the left is probably my current favourite gown of any I've seen (...and I see a LOT). From left to right: [Stephanie Allin](#), [Sarah Danielle](#), [Suzanne Ermann](#)





Bride Steals \$750,000 to Fund 'Dream Wedding'



You can have your cake. You can eat it. But when you embezzle nearly three-quarters of a million dollars to pay for it, you can also expect to spend some time in jail.

The truth of the matter, though, is that if Joanne Kent, an English bride, hadn't made one tiny little error, she would have gotten away with embezzling \$750,528, and all of her friends would have spent the rest of their lives wondering how she paid for the complimentary cliff-top hotel (not

rooms -- *the entire hotel*), fireworks displays and free Armani bracelets that made her wedding completely over the top.

According to the UK's Daily Mail, the 26-year-old mother of two transferred close to \$750K, then quit her job in 2007 and used that money to fund her extravagant wedding to husband David at the [Hotel Victoria](#) in [Newquay](#), Cornwall.

Kent not only spent \$80K on the wedding, but also bought a Mazda for \$61K and an Audi A4. The hotel bill alone cost \$60K.

Of course, now they all know how she did it -- she stole almost \$750,000 from work by depositing it into her bank account under the guise of payments to

other firms. She finally slipped up by making a large "payment" to a U.S. firm (actually her bank account) in pounds sterling instead of dollars.

Kent was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison, a sentence which was reduced to two years on account of her two small children, one of whom is only 8 weeks old and has hip problems. There will be a separate hearing later this month to determine if the money can and will be paid back, so it looks like her bridesmaids better enjoy those bracelets while they last.

We must remember however as Joanne Kent pays for her theft, God has forgiven her. [Jeremiah 31:34](#). Repenting she will turn away from badness, as the judge orders probation. In Ephesians 5:28, it states, "Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need." Let us therefore pray she finds forgiveness with her family and a new job.



Give Me Just
One Night with
JOHN LEGEND



THURSDAY,
FEB. 25, 2010
at Detroit's
Max M. Fisher
Music Center

Presented by

B.L.A.C.



Saving Marriage

By Frederick Steed Hardwick III

My face became hot with embarrassment as I read the passage. Nervously, I sipped hot tea and leaned back into the comfort of the bed. My wife, Kathleen, stared at me intently as she envisioned the erotic scene. With each word I read, I became a slave: a slave to this moment and soon a slave to her desire. A phrase echoed in my mind. How did I end up here?

It had been two years ago when we started reading to each other. Our marriage had reached a serious point and we were contemplating divorce. I am not sure exactly how it happens, but somehow, some way - even the best of marriages eventually have problems. Well, at least that is what I told myself, as I sat in an outer office, waiting for a marriage counselor.



Like most men my reluctance to visit a marriage counselor was obvious. But the idea of ending an eight-year marriage, with two beautiful children, for irreconcilable differences, motivated me. I was grasping at any solution to keep my family together. Our problems, I thought, were caused by wife's unhappiness with her career.

After six sessions and considerable time and expense, I was identified as the obstruction in the development of our happy family. My communication skills, or rather my lack of communication skills had undermined my wife's sense of intimacy and self-esteem. In the last three years, I had failed to convey or demonstrate my love for her. I had been consumed by work, paid the bills, balanced the checkbook and provided for my children, but never told them how much I loved them.

During our marriage, Kathleen had slowly changed. She had become the woman I wanted her to be. My interests were now her interests. No longer did she play tennis but spent every other weekend learning golf. She exchanged romance novels and poetry for *The Wall Street Journal* and the *New Yorker*. A promising writer now spent her days working part-time as an administrative assistant and shuttling our children to activities.



I would be lying to you, if I said I noticed the change. I had assumed that Kathleen's choices were motivated by an interest in golf, *The Wall Street Journal* and our children. I had no idea that I had molded her into an image so contrary to her wishes and desires. The therapist's solution was for Kathleen to reclaim her interests. She was to enjoy, experience and relish all the activities she missed. My job, though seemingly unimportant, was to encourage and share her experiences. One activity changed our lives!

My wife used to read a great deal of romance novels, both modern and classical literature. The therapist suggested that she not only read these novels but that Kathleen and I shared the experience by reading them to each other-out loud. At first, I resisted this idea. I had a fear of public speaking due to an embarrassing childhood occurrence, where Mexican food turned on me. So, the idea of reading to my wife met with some intense groans. But as I mentioned I was grasping at any solution, no matter how painful or ridiculous, I was going to try.

Our first novel was *Saving Grace* by Julie Garwood. It was an excellent choice. This novel dealt with issues that mirrored my marriage. The main male character, MacBain, found it difficult to express his love for his wife. Openly he protected her, provided for her, silently he loved and cherished her. MacBain was I, assuming my reticence between these pages. For the first time, through the character, my wife peered into my soul, and could see me, a glimpse of me more apparent and tangible than I could ever articulate. Using Garwood's dialogue, words that I wanted to express and Kathleen longed to hear, was now uttered.



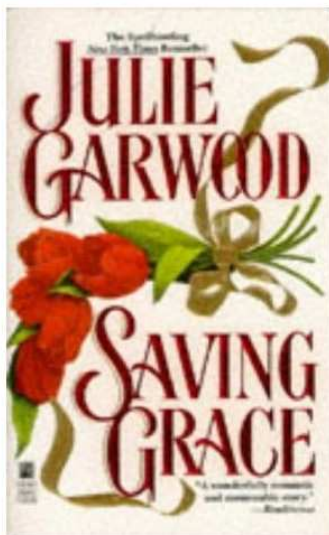
And Kathleen also was here. Similarly, MacBain's over protecting love restricted his wife, Johanna, the heroine. Like Johanna, my wife was rebelling against a limiting image. She desired a full life. And whether I approved or not, Kathleen was going to have it. It did not take me long to concede this fact. After searching myself, I admitted that this strong, dynamic woman was the woman I ultimately wanted and loved. The heroine Johanna and her husband MacBain were aids, encouraging me to address my own selfishness and fears.

It would be wrong to allow you to assume that reading a simple novel solved all our problems. We endured some hard struggles and spent many nights in heated arguments. However, the novel did provide a focus and direction for most of our discussions. Issues of fear, self-fulfillment and a spouse's responsibilities in a marriage were packaged in a tolerable and enjoyable format. The added elements of passion romance and the occasional sex were also helpful, by teaching me how to seduce my wife again.

It has been two years since our first shared reading. We have read books and novels, mostly modern romances but some classical literature and even poetry. We have worked hard for our new happiness and our inevitable changes. Kathleen is now an editor of a local paper, while I spend weekends doing errands and shuffling our children to activities. On late nights, Kathleen and I read and enjoy tea by a fire or soft lights, within a rose and vanilla scented room. During these special private hours, we examine our ideas, concerns and dreams. Although we may disagree, I am never disappointed by the insights we share. And I am always happy that we ended up here.

About the Author

Frederick Steed Hardwick III, is a regular contributor of Cafesplendor.com, an online magazine honoring the café genre. As a passionate writer, he provides insight on relationships from a man's perspective.



Buy this and other great books
at Amazon.com



Did You Hear About the Morgans?

by [Eric D. Snider](#)

The makers of [Did You Hear About the Morgans?](#) probably would not consider this much of an endorsement, but here it is: It's not THAT bad. There isn't too much in the plot that's aggressively stupid, it produces a few chuckles here and there, and the cast is likable. It's not worth recommending, mind you, unless you're at the theater and you've seen everything else and a screening of this starts in 10 minutes -- and even then you should consider re-watching something else -- but it doesn't sink to the level of badness that you'd expect, given the premise. It's a mere mediocrity, snatched from the jaws of awfulness.



This is the third film written and directed by [Marc Lawrence](#), and the others, [Two Weeks Notice](#) and [Music and Lyrics](#), also starred [Hugh Grant](#). That seems like an odd partnership, but hey, whatever works. This time, Grant plays Paul Morgan, a New York lawyer who has recently separated from his real-estate broker wife, Meryl ([Sarah Jessica Parker](#)), due to his infidelity. Paul is deeply sorry for the one-time mistake and wants to reconcile, but Meryl is still hurt.

Then, wouldn't you know it, just as Paul is making some progress in getting Meryl to forgive him, they both witness a murder and most go into the witness protection program. Isn't that always the way? At first they stay in New York, with round-the-clock protection by law-enforcement officers, but it turns out the hitman ([Michael Kelly](#)) is more capable and savvy than the U.S. marshals, so the Morgans will have to change their names and leave the state altogether.

Their destination is Ray, Wyo., a tiny hick town in the middle of nowhere, the type of place chosen for maximum irony by screenwriters when two city-slickers need to hide. The town has posters warning citizens how to react if they encounter bears! There's a Costco-like store that the Morgans have never even HEARD of, much less been to, on account of never having left New York City! Meryl is a vegetarian, but all they eat in Wyoming is meat! I reckon these folks are in for a lot of surprises and shenanigans and hijinks and what-have-you!

Clay Wheeler ([Sam Elliott](#)), the local sheriff, and his rifle-toting wife, Emma ([Mary Steenburgen](#)), are the Morgans' hosts. The Wheelers are hospitable, amused by the Morgans' ignorance of small-town things and a little perturbed by their constant bickering. Luckily, there's a good chance that the experience of roughing it in Wyoming for a week will help the Morgans rekindle their romance (spoiler alert!). Meanwhile, their respective assistants ([Elisabeth Moss](#) and Jesse Liebman) are back in Manhattan covering for their bosses' absence, while the hitman tries to find out where they've disappeared to, et cetera.

Grant is charming and self-effacing, as usual, as Paul, the glib partner in the marriage, the one with a sense of humor. I wasn't keeping track, but I think every time I laughed it was at something he said. Meryl isn't too different from Parker's *Sex and the City* character, though she's more uptight and doesn't talk quite as much about clothes. Sam Elliott and Mary Steenburgen, both fine character actors, are a welcome breath of fresh air as the Wheelers. For some reason [Wilford Brimley](#) is in town, too, probably to compete against Elliott for Biggest, Scariest Mustache.

The obvious, fish-out-of-water, "Why can't I find a Starbucks??" jokes aren't laid on too thick, but Lawrence doesn't do much to establish any of the locals (other than the Wheelers) as interesting characters, either. He seems intent on being neither realistic nor over-the-top ridiculous, settling for a bland, inoffensive middle ground where the Morgans gradually bond with the townsfolk. As is generally the case, we get a heapin' helpin' of condescending messages about how small towns are pure and wise and city folks could learn a lot from them if they'd just put down their dang cell phones and lattes and listen. You know who makes movies with that kind of message? People who have never lived in a small town. I'm just sayin'.

It's odd that so much time is spent dissecting the Morgans' marital problems, considering this is a light comedy and those are weighty issues. The relationship-focused scenes tend not to be humorous, but they're not deep or insightful, either. They are obligatory: The real reason the movie has deposited the Morgans in Hickville is so they can fix their marriage, so they might as well get on with it. But that's not what we came here to see, is it? We came for rural escapades and pleasant tomfoolery. When the movie sticks to that stuff, it's not too bad.

Reprint of article *Did you hear about the Morgans?* from [cinematical.com](http://www.cinematical.com) View original article at <http://www.cinematical.com/2009/12/18/review-did-you-hear-about-the-morgans/>



The New Virgins - Waiting to Have Sex



If you've ever watched TV, read a magazine or surfed the Net — and who hasn't? — it's easy to believe that the entire population has surrendered to their hormones. And while it's true that premarital sex remains the norm in society today, there is a new trend making its way across the land.

It's the New Virginité, and it's not just for teens anymore. It began in the 1990s, as young people began to ask the question: "Why Wait?" Some decided to abstain from sex for religious reasons, others to avoid the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Still others realized they weren't ready for the intense intimacy of a sexual relationship.

Those same teenagers are adults now, and many of them are still waiting. And they've been joined in their quest for purity by a growing mass of adults who were once sexually active, but no more. It's a phenomenon known as "secondary virginity," and its practitioners have experienced sexual relationships and found them wanting. They're looking for love and respect — the kind that lasts a lifetime — and they're willing to wait for it, even if it means losing out on a potential mate who doesn't share their convictions.

These "born-again virgins" can't change the past, but they're committed to creating a better future. Contrary to pop-culture wisdom, those who do choose to save sex for marriage are not doomed to a second-class sex life. Rather, they typically report higher levels of sexual satisfaction and marital contentment. Moreover, early sexual experience has been linked to marital dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and greater incidence of divorce. Indeed, why not wait?

by Jeff Hooten

What the Bible Teaches About Abstinence

Hebrews 13:4

Let marriage be honorable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

Corinthians 6:18

Flee from fornication. Every other sin that a man may commit is outside his body, but he that practices fornication is sinning against his own body.

Colossians 3:5

Deaden, therefore, YOUR body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

For this is what God wills, the sanctifying of YOU, that YOU abstain from fornication; that each one of YOU should know how to get possession of his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in covetous sexual appetite such as also those nations have which do not know God;

To read more about [click here](#).



Sex Creates a Permanent Bond

More than just for procreation and pleasure, sex is designed to unite two human beings and create a "one flesh" bond between them that is to last for life. Simply put: sex takes two and makes them one. Once a couple is joined in this way, they are bonded together so intimately and strongly that to separate them causes unnatural ripping and tearing. Many of you who have had a sexual relationship with someone you are no longer with know the pain of this separation. As much as our culture tries to make sex an everyday and "casual" experience, the reality is that the powerful uniting force created by sexual intimacy always takes a piece of the couple with it when they "break up." In fact, "break up" they do—emotionally, physically, spiritually.

"I wish I had waited."

So there are good reasons to save sex for marriage other than just the risks involved physically. These have to do with your feelings and memories, with your heart and mind. Because sex is a powerful act that creates a strong and intimate bond between two people that was never intended to be broken, when it is separated from commitment and faithfulness serious damage results. The intimate bond of unity created by sex is so strong that to break it always tears the heart.

Sex Outside of Marriage Damages Relationships

"Since I first gave in and had sex with my boyfriend it suddenly began to take over our relationship. Whenever we got together we were physical with each other. All we do is have sex now. We don't even talk anymore." (16 year-old female)

Studies show that sex outside of marriage actually damages the relationship, not improves it. Like a fire that has been kindled in your living room instead of the fireplace, sex becomes a good gift gone bad because it bonds two people who haven't completely committed themselves to be faithful to each other like one does in marriage. As the fire will soon burn your house down, sex outside of marriage will soon destroy your relationship.

Consider the following testimony of a male reflecting on his relationships in college:

Sex has killed my best relationships.

For example, I had a college sweetheart, the girl of my dreams. With her, there was never a dull moment. We totally "clicked." We waited for awhile, then, through my initiation, we started having sex.

Sex soon became the focus of our relationship. I stopped wanting to get to know her on any other level. And so, instead of growing closer together, we actually started drifting apart.

That's what I mean by "sex killed my best relationships." People can relate on many different levels—emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually. But when my girlfriend and I started relating mostly physically, it short-circuited the other parts of our relationship. As a result, the relationship as a whole started to go south. We might still be together today if we (I) had waited.

I've seen this happen with countless relationships . . . And I think there's a reason for this . . . Sex before marriage ruins the other parts of the relationship.

For me, two things happened once I had sex with a girl . . . 1) I lost respect for the girl (even though I didn't want to); and 2) she began to mistrust me (even though she didn't want to).

I don't know why this happened, I just know that it did. Maybe it's just built into "the system." But one thing's for sure: I'm not alone. I've seen it happen over and over again. I know many people having marital problems because they engaged in premarital sex. They go into the marriage with lack of respect and lack of trust, two absolute necessities for the health of any marriage. . . . It's very sad, and more common than you might think. But nobody talks about this kind of thing in public. And the movie and TV portrayals of couples having sex before marriage never present it either. It's like no one wants to acknowledge that it's happening, even though it is.

But this is not just the subjective feelings or opinions of one whose college relationship failed. There is scientific research currently being conducted that is revealing data in support of this idea. Dr. Eric James Keroack, deputy assistant secretary for Health and Human Services, has found through research that teenage sexual activity blunts the brain's ability to develop emotional relationships. Comparing sex to drug use, he said the hormone produced by the brain after orgasm, oxytocin, will eventually diminish a person's ability to form emotional attachments. Keroack said premarital sex can lead to overproduction of oxytocin. [His] 2001 paper for Abstinence Medical Council . . . concluded: "People who have misused their sexual faculty and become bonded to multiple persons will diminish the power of oxytocin to maintain a permanent bond with an individual. . . . Just as in heroin addiction . . . the person involved will experience 'sex withdrawal' and will need to move on to a . . . new sex playmate." Abstaining from sexual activity now is an investment of trust and respect in your most important and intimate future relationship—the one with your husband or wife.

Reprint in part of articles at: <http://www.troubledwith.com> and http://www.choicesaz.org/sexual_health/reasons_to_wait/



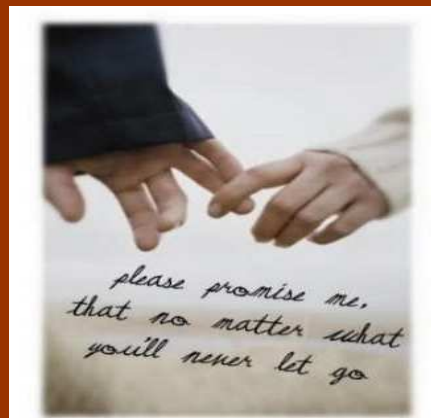
Wholesome Communication

In 1778, Robert Barron patented a double-acting, lever-tumbler lock that remains the basis of the modern key lock. His design called for the use of a single key capable of raising the lock's two tumblers together.

SIMILARLY, a successful marriage depends on a husband and wife working together in unison. To unlock and experience the precious joys of a good marriage, one essential is wholesome communication.

What Wholesome Communication Involves

What does wholesome communication involve? One dictionary defines communication as "the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs." Communication therefore involves a sharing of sentiments and ideas. And wholesome communication entails things that are upbuilding, refreshing, virtuous, praiseworthy, and consoling.—Ephesians 4:29-32; Philippians 4:8.



Wholesome communication is made possible by confidence, trust, and mutual understanding. These qualities result when marriage is viewed as a lifelong relationship and there is genuine commitment to make it work.

Wholesome communication is made possible by confidence, trust, and mutual understanding. These qualities result when marriage is viewed as a lifelong relationship and there is genuine commitment to make it work. Commenting on such a relationship, 18th-century essayist Joseph Addison wrote: "Two persons who have chosen each other out of all the species, with the design to be each other's mutual comfort and entertainment, have, in that action, bound themselves to be good-humored, affable, discreet, forgiving, patient, and joyful, with respect to each other's frailties and perfections, to the end of their lives." How happy such a union is! And these jewel-like qualities can adorn your marriage, for they can be yours through wholesome communication.

Obstacles to Wholesome Communication

Most couples approach marriage with optimism, even euphoria. For many, however, the euphoria soon evaporates, and the optimism fades. Assuredness may be replaced by a bitter mixture of frustration, anger, hostility, even strong dislike. The marriage then becomes a situation of mere endurance "till death do us part." To improve or sustain the wholesome communication necessary for a good marriage, then, certain obstacles must be overcome.

A real obstacle to wholesome communication can be fear of how a marriage mate would react to certain information or expressed desire. For instance, fear of rejection may arise after one learns that a serious personal disability is developing. How does one explain to a mate that an upcoming procedure will drastically alter one's appearance or ability to function? In such cases, honest communication and thoughtful planning for the future are needed as never before. Verbal assurances of continuing love, along with frequent acts of tenderness, would communicate a personal interest that would help to promote a truly satisfying marriage. In marriage this proverb should find its richest expression: "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress."—Proverbs 17:17.

Resentment is another obstacle to wholesome communication. It has fittingly been said that a happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers. To fit that description, a married couple would make every effort to follow the apostle Paul's practical advice: "Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state." (Ephesians 4:26) Applying this counsel instead of nursing anger or resentment certainly calls for humble communication. Partners in a good marriage do not persistently succumb to anger, quarreling, and holding a grudge. (Proverbs 30:33) They seek to imitate God, who does not harbor resentment. (Jeremiah 3:12) Indeed, they forgive each other from the heart.—Matthew 18:35.

A definite obstacle to any kind of communication is the silent treatment. This may involve glum expressions, heavy sighs, robot-like actions, and a one-sided embargo on speech. A marriage mate who acts in this way is communicating some form of displeasure. But vocalizing personal feelings in a frank and winning manner does much more to improve a marriage than does remaining silent and sullen.



How to Promote Wholesome Communication

How important it is to take time for loving, wholesome communication! Some spend so much time in front of the TV watching other people's lives that they have little time for their own. Hence, turning off the television set is often a necessary step toward wholesome communication.

Turning off the TV allows more time for communication

Just as there is a right time to speak, however, there is a time to keep quiet. The wise man said: "For everything there is an appointed time, . . . a time to keep quiet and a time to speak." Indeed, there are also proper words to say. "A word at its right time is O how good!" notes a proverb. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7; Proverbs 15:23) So determine when it is the best time to make your point or to express your heart's concern. Ask yourself: 'Is my mate tired or in a relaxed and refreshed frame of mind? Is the subject that I wish to broach potentially explosive? What did my spouse object to in my choice of words when we last spoke about this matter?'

It is good to remember that people react best when they can see how cooperating or complying with a request would benefit *them*. If some stress has developed between mates, one of them might be inclined to say, "Something has been bothering me, and we are going to get it straightened out right now!" Of course, exact wording would depend on the circumstances, but it may be better to say something like this, "Dear, I have been thinking about the matter we discussed earlier and how things might be worked out." Which approach would your mate be more likely to appreciate?

Yes, *how* something is said is very important. The apostle Paul wrote: "Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt." (Colossians 4:6) Endeavor to be gracious in your tone of voice and choice of words. Bear in mind that "pleasant sayings are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and a healing to the bones."—Proverbs 16:24.

For some couples, working together on projects at home can provide a fine atmosphere for communication. Such cooperation can promote a sense of sharing while affording time for wholesome conversation. For other marriage mates, a quiet time alone together without trying to do some work is better and is more conducive to wholesome communication.

Much can often be learned by taking note of how compatible marriage mates communicate with each other. What has made them that way? Most likely, their harmony and the ease with which they communicate have resulted from personal effort, patience, and loving consideration. They themselves apparently had a lot to learn, for good marriages do not happen automatically. How important it is, then, to consider your partner's viewpoint, to appreciate his or her needs, and to defuse potentially stressful situations with a discreet word. (Proverbs 16:23) If you are married, then, work at being pleasant to live with and easy to apologize to. That will go a long way in making your marriage a good one.

Jehovah God wants people to enjoy happy, lasting marriages. (Genesis 2:18, 21) But the key lies in the hands of those united in wedlock. It takes two loving people who really work together to unlock the door to a successful marriage by mastering the art of wholesome communication.



Want to learn how to have a successful Marriage and Family. Get a copy of *The Secret of Family Happiness*

This book covers virtually every aspect of family life. Points the reader to the finest source of guidance for solving family problems, achieving marital happiness, and rearing children successfully—God's Word.

Send a email to [Cafe Splendor](mailto:CafeSplendor@netscape.net) today.



The Truth About

Getting Engaged



(7 truths your mother missed!)

You have wedding bells chiming in your head and a pre-bridal buzz pumping through your veins. Once you are engaged, life is perfect. Right? Well, kinda. Of course you get giddy recounting how he popped the question and wagging your rock at everyone. But wait, maybe you don't always feel so fabulous. Maybe doubts and freak-outs are crashing your party, to the point where you're thinking, *Damn ... I'm not feeling like the world's most deliriously happy fiancée anymore.*

Okay, don't panic. It's normal and even necessary to experience premarital mini-dramas, so the biggest mistake you could make at this point is not riding them out. All it takes is a little patience, savvy, and forethought to sail through to "I do." Here's how to navigate around these before-the-wedding bliss busters — from your friends becoming jealous of the newly engaged you to arguing with your fiancé about money. This way you're more prepared (and excited) for your big day and thereafter.

SCARY TRUTH 1

You Start Noticing (and Cringing at) His Little Quirks

When you're simply dating, you don't pay much mind to his weird little idiosyncrasies, like his penchant for telling The World's Longest Story to your whip-smart friends, only to end with, "Uh, I forgot why I was telling that story." But when you're *this close* to marrying the man, his minor flaws suddenly grow into major personality defects because you realize they'll be with you for life. "My fiancé sits up straight when he burps so he can get much better tone and volume," says Mary,* 29. "It never bothered me before, but now I imagine him doing that in front of our kids and I think, *He's my soul mate?*"

**Names have been changed.*

But just because you notice those gross or annoying habits — maybe even for the first time — doesn't necessarily mean they'll grate on you until you die. "It's normal to take stock of the little things when you're talking about living with someone forever," says Li Robbins, author of *Going Bridal: How to Get Married Without Losing Your Mind*. In essence, you're giving him a closer inspection, sort of like when you buy a car. You scrutinize dents and everything under the hood before you sign on the dotted line. And sure, you'll find flaws if you look hard enough, but that doesn't mean he's not a keeper. "Once the

wedding hoopla is over, you won't even remember most of the petty issues that seemed impossible to live with," says Robbins. And the rest? Remember you're in love with this guy for the real reasons, not because he polishes the toilet seat or sets the table perfectly (otherwise, you'd be marrying Thom from *Queer Eye*).

SCARY TRUTH 2

Your Friends Get Flaky ... or B*****

The very people who brought you Kleenex and bonbons when you were at your worst hour may seem to turn on you in the afterglow of your engagement, griping about the bridesmaid dresses or forgetting to call you on girls' night out. "Like it or not, your getting engaged is an emotional experience for your friends too," says Sara Bliss, author of *The Thoroughly Modern Married Girl*. "They're reflecting on where they are in their lives. They might be jealous because they're still single or because they've been dating longer than you, or even angry if they feel like they're losing a friend. And quite frankly, some of them are going to be a pain in your ass."

By the same token, understand that even your best girlfriends will tire of hearing you go on and on about cake tastings and dress fittings. Make a point of asking about their jobs, families, and love interests. And though your schedule may be jammed, keep a few "friend rituals" in place, like weekly drink dates or window-shopping together. But if some pals clearly aren't supportive of you (you know, the suddenly toxic ones who talk about the skyrocketing divorce rates or how overpriced wedding dresses are), it's okay to let 'em go, along with the sidekicks who were fun to guy-hunt with but can't accept the bonded you. "Getting engaged is the perfect excuse to weed out superficial friends," says Bliss. "You outgrow certain people, and that's okay."

SCARY TRUTH 3

You Turn into the Nag You Swore You'd Never Be

You silently vowed you'd never evolve into one of those high-strung fiancées. Yet, chances are, you'll find yourself screeching at him at some point because he forgot to call the photographer or griping "I'll do it myself — *as usual*" whenever he flakes on planning. "You have

Letters from London



to realize that he didn't grow up dreaming about his wedding the way you did," says Robbins, "and he might be staying out of the way because he's afraid of screwing up. Don't confuse his laid-back attitude about your wedding with his feelings for the marriage."

You also have to factor in the outside angst that's making you turn on your fiancé. Suddenly, everyone's making wedding demands on *you* ("I *need* a vegetarian entrée!"; "Can I bring along my six cousins?"), not him. So find clever ways to mobilize him into action, suggests Bliss. Entrust him with all the honeymoon details. Give him a guy-friendly to-do list of jobs, like checking out bands, going to the caterer tasting, setting up transportation, and laser-tagging cool gadgets for your registry.

SCARY TRUTH 4

You (Possibly) Feel Tempted to Cheat

Men aren't the only ones who panic at the thought of sleeping with the same person forever — women can get equally anxious. And it's not because your sex life together is *eh*. It's that once you're engaged, other men become the forbidden fruit. You start thinking about all the varieties you've never had or can't ever sample again, like the ex who rocked you in bed like nobody's business or the flirty bartender who slips you his number. Along with those thoughts may come mental loopholes like, "It's not so bad if I fool around, because I'm not actually married yet." Take Karen, 26, for example. "My bachelorette party was one of the first official drunken girls' nights out I'd had since the engagement. I was looking around thinking, *I could hook up with so many guys here*. Later, I felt so guilty for even *imagining* it."

When you're a bride-to-be, it may seem like a betrayal to be attracted to someone else. But really, it's just part of the program. "You don't lobotomize your libido when you get engaged," says Dale Atkins, PhD, a psychologist in New York City and the advice columnist for WeddingChannel.com. "Wondering if you'll get bored or checking out the UPS guy's butt doesn't mean that you'll be unfaithful or you're not made for each other. It shows you're still a sexual being with desires, and believe me, your fiancé is okay with that." Because for all the lusty daydreams you may have, it's still just in your head, not your heart.

SCARY TRUTH 5

Little Signs "We're Not Meant to Be" Start Cropping Up

Once you're engaged, insignificant situations have a way of snowballing into major issues. The blender from him that was a testament to your margarita-making skills now seems like a domestic shackle. Your lust life tapers off for a week, and instead of thinking it's from wedding stress, you're convinced it's a forecast of boring marital sex. Habits of his that were charming and hopeful before you got engaged — such as dreamily mentioning that he'd like to open a cigar bar someday or hatching yet another wacky get-rich-quick plan — are just scary now.

"Little things take on huge meaning because your expectations have changed without your realizing it," says Atkins. Getting engaged is really the starting point for building your life together, and you start envisioning the long-term, from what kind of couple you'll be to what your life together will be like.

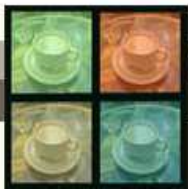
And while it's healthy to wonder about the future, don't overanalyze. "Reading too much into his behavior and lumping those so-called red flags together is what makes them seem so overwhelming, so take each little sign for what it really is," says Atkins. (Sometimes a blender *is* just a blender.) And when it comes to dealing with his out-of-left-field whims, eventually you'll learn what's legit and when he's fantasizing after a crappy day in his cubicle. You'll also feel more secure that you'll make those big decisions as a couple when the time is right.

SCARY TRUTH 6

Cash Becomes a Tricky Topic

When you're planning a wedding, you'll be faced with making major money decisions together that will reveal things you never knew about each other. You're a budget freak, and he's never balanced a checkbook. You want a big, fat wedding, but he'd rather have a big, fat house. "Everyone thinks that sex is so hard to talk about, but discussing money is more personal in a lot of ways," says Jonathan Rich, PhD, author of *The Couple's Guide to Love and Money*. But you have to talk Benjamins now.

The three things you need to discuss are how much the wedding will cost, who is contributing (between the two of you and both sets of parents), and how much each is putting in, says Rich. Getting those numbers in black and white will spare you the awkward, possibly ugly confrontation later, but expect to have a few disagreements. "Like most guys, he may have no clue about wedding costs, or he may have other plans for your cash," says Rich. "This is an opportunity to find out his views on money, what kind of lifestyle he envisions, and how the two of you can create a financially and emotionally stable life together."



SCARY TRUTH 7

Both of You Begin to Change

Of course marriage gives you a new outlook on life, but changes really start when you get the ring. You go from being spontaneous, self-sufficient Me to a more cautious, settled, future-oriented We overnight. It's easy to get spooked by the subtle shift in your personality, but it's really a rite of passage. "You're in the process of letting go a part of your identity as a single woman, and it's perfectly natural to be a little sad or upset when you recognize those changes," says Atkins. But the truth is, the new, almost-married you is still ... you. You're simply evolving, the same way you did at every major turn of events in your life, from losing your virginity to going to college to starting your first job. The only difference is, when you're engaged, you're not alone in the transition. "I know my fiancé is giving up some of his bachelor freedom too," says Tyler, 28. "We talk about how weird it is, but because we're both experiencing it, I don't feel like I'm losing anything. We're slowly morphing into a true couple."

Talk again soon...

Love,

Colleen



The Wife Translator

from AhaJokes

The wife says: You want
The wife means: You want

The wife says: We need
The wife means: I want

The wife says: It's your decision
The wife means: The correct decision should be obvious

The wife says: Do what you want
The wife means: You'll pay for this later

The wife says: We need to talk
The wife means: I need to complain

The wife says: Sure... go ahead
The wife means: I don't want you to

The wife says: I'm not upset
The wife means: Of course I'm upset you moron

The wife says: You're ... so manly
The wife means: You need a shave and sweat a lot

The wife says: Be romantic, turn out the lights
The wife means: I have flabby thighs.

The wife says: This kitchen is so inconvenient
The wife means: I want a new house.

The wife says: I want new curtains.
The wife means: Also carpeting, furniture, and wallpaper!

The wife says: I need wedding shoes.
The wife means: The other forty pairs are the wrong shade of white.



The wife says: Hang the picture there
The wife means: No, I mean hang it there!

The wife says: I heard a noise
The wife means: I noticed you were almost asleep.

The wife says: Do you love me?
The wife means: I'm going to ask for something expensive.

The wife says: How much do you love me?
The wife means: I did something today you're not going to like.

The wife says: I'll be ready in a minute.
The wife means: Kick off your shoes and take an hour nap.

The wife says: Am I fat?
The wife means: Tell me I'm beautiful.

The wife says: You have to learn to communicate.
The wife means: Just agree with me.

The wife says: Are you listening to me?
The wife means: [Too late, your doomed.]

The wife says: Yes
The wife means: No
The wife says: No
The wife means: No

The wife says: Maybe
The wife means: No

The wife says: I'm sorry
The wife means: You'll be sorry

The wife says: Do you like this recipe?
The wife means: You better get used to it

The wife says: All we're going to buy is a soap dish
The wife means: I'm coming back with enough to fill this place.

The wife says: Was that the baby?
The wife means: Get out of bed and walk him

The wife says: I'm not yelling!
The wife means: Yes I am! I think this is important!

In answer to the question "What's wrong?"

The wife says: The same old thing.
The wife means: Nothing.

The wife says: Nothing.
The wife means: Everything.

The wife says: Nothing, really.
The wife means: It's just that you're an idiot.

The wife says: I don't want to talk about it.
The wife means: I'm still building up steam.



Get The Balance Right

One of the questions I get most regularly from associates throughout our company is "how do I build a successful business and maintain a quality family life?" I don't believe there is one perfect answer to that question because people's

circumstances and attitudes on this subject can vary substantially. I do think, however, there are some common sense things which my wife, Cindy, and I have done over the years to give us simultaneously a great family and business life.

First, you have to decide which is your top priority: your family or your business. That sounds like a simple question, but many people haven't totally committed to a quality marriage and family life. Once you determine your family is your absolute priority then you will always build the business around your family life and not your family around your business life. After making that decision, it is a matter of communication between spouses, and structuring and planning your time.

For years Cindy and I worked side by side in the office. Prior to the school years, we had our children there with us. As we worked on different things we would hand them back and forth to each other. When the kids were at the office during the day, we had a play area for them and they had a thousand aunts and uncles on the team who helped us with them. Even though I was in the field on weeknights and Saturdays, Cindy was very diligent in keeping me in the loop about every aspect of our children's lives.

Regularly she would tell me when I needed to take some time with any of our three children. I was always willing to move appointments around or otherwise clear some time

to keep our family happy and well. Anyone who tells you that you can't build a big business and have a great family life is wrong. It won't always be easy but what worthwhile thing is?

Someone once told me that some things in life are critical and other things are important. The business is important, but your family's welfare is critical. I love and enjoy the insurance and financial services business, but nowhere near as much as our faith or our family. It's easy to get caught up in the competition, the desire for recognition, making money, and think that is really important, but nothing contributes more to personal happiness than a great family life. A powerful and true story I heard at a church conference was of a father-son fishing trip. The father was a busy and successful businessman and cleared a day to be with his young son. Several days later, his wife read their individual journal accounts. The father's entry said words to this effect: "I went on a fishing trip with my son, waste of a perfectly good day." The son's entry went like this: "I went fishing with my Dad today, probably the best day of my life."

Our time here on Earth is short and our time with our children is even shorter. With all the stress and fast pace of life today, it is vital to keep in mind how much quality time means to our loved ones. You have to schedule it and do whatever it takes to make it happen. It will often mean far more to them than you realize.

One word of warning about striving for perfect balance, you'll never quite get there. Don't put so much pressure on yourself. Just keep working on it from day to day. Learn from your mistakes and experiences and just remember to keep your family first. With that priority as your true North you can weather the storms and crazy times that come when you commit to build an excellent life. Work hard and make it happen!

About the Author

Rich Thawley is an Executive Vice Chairman and member of World Financial Group Chairman's Council. He has three children and lives in Lodi, Calif., with his wife, Cindy, and youngest son, Brett. (I don't think he'd want to share this with the free world). This article first appeared in Opportunity, the <http://www.wfgnewsroom.com/> company magazine, vol. 3/issue 4/Quarter 4 2008.



Chef Luis'

Lemon-Berry Wedding Cake

Many of the cake's components can be made a head, and once the tiers are filled and decorated, they can be refrigerated up to two days or frozen up to two weeks before the wedding. The rich, lemony cake has a dense texture like that of a pound cake.

Ingredients:

For cake

13 large eggs
5 1/2 cups sugar
2 2/3 cups vegetable oil
2 2/3 cups part-skim ricotta cheese (about 21 ounces)
1/4 cup orange juice
1/4 cup grated lemon peel (from about 8 lemons)
3 tablespoons orange liqueur
2 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
8 3/4 cups all purpose flour
2 tablespoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt

For lemon filling

5 large eggs
1 1/4 cups unsalted butter, room temperature
1 1/4 cups sugar
3/4 cup fresh lemon juice (from about 5 lemons)
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
3 cups chilled whipping cream
6 tablespoons sugar

For lemon syrup

1 1/2 cups water
3/4 cup fresh lemon juice
3/4 cup sugar

For preliminary assembly

1 8-inch-diameter cardboard cake round
3 1/2 cups fresh raspberries, about three 6-ounce baskets
3 1/2 cups fresh small blackberries or boysenberries, about three 6-ounce baskets
1 12-inch-diameter cardboard cake round

For frosting

11 large egg yolks
3 1/4 cups plus 7 tablespoons sugar
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons milk (do not use low-fat or nonfat)
1 1/2 tablespoons grated lemon peel
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
3 pounds unsalted butter, cut into large pieces, room temperature
3/4 cup water
7 large egg whites

For final assembly and decoration

3 12-inch-long, 1/4-inch-diameter wooden dowels
1 3-foot long peach and/or cream colored ribbons
2 4-foot-long peach and/or cream-colored ribbons
Assorted nonpoisonous flowers (such as roses, freesias, and tulips)



Make cake:

Position rack in center of oven and preheat to 350°F. Butter bottom of 12-inch-diameter cheesecake pan(not springform) with 3-inch-high sides and removable bottom. Line bottom of pans with parchment paper.

Beat eggs, sugar, and oil in large bowl of heavy-duty mixer and medium-low speed 5 minutes. Increase speed to medium and beat until mixture is very thick and falls in heavy ribbon when beater is lifted, about 5 minutes. Whisk cheese, orange juice, lemon peel, liqueur, lemon juice, and vanilla

in medium bowl until well blended. Add cheese mixture to egg mixture; beat at low speed until just blended. Transfer to extra-large bowl (at least 6-quart capacity). Sift flour, baking powder, and salt into large bowl. Sift dry ingredients over batter in 5 additions, whisking to blend after each addition. Transfer about 11 cups batter to 12-inch prepared pan and about 5 cups batter to 8-inch prepared pan (batter should be of equal depth in both pans).

Bake cakes until golden brown in firm (tops may crack) and tester inserted into center comes out clean, rotating pans occasionally for even baking and covering loosely with foil if browning too quickly; about 1 hour 30 minutes. Transfer to racks; cool completely.

Make lemon filling:

Whisk eggs to blend in medium bowl. Combine butter, 1 1/4 cups sugar, lemon juice, and peel in heavy medium saucepan. Stir over medium heat until butter melts, sugar dissolves and mixture comes to a boil. Gradually whisk lemon mixture into eggs. Return to same pan. Stir over medium heat until curd thickens and just begins to bubble, about 3 minutes. Strain curd into large bowl. Chill until cold and thick, stirring occasionally, about 4 hours.

Beat cream and 6 tablespoons sugar in medium bowl until firm peaks form. Fold into curd in 4 additions. Chill filling until very cold, about 2 hours.

Make lemon syrup:

Stir all ingredients in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat; bring to boil. Chill syrup until cold, about 1 hour. (Cakes, filling, and syrup can be made 1 day ahead. Cover cakes; store at room temperature. Cover filling and syrup; keep refrigerated.

Make preliminary assembly:

Cut around sides of cakes to loosen. Push up pan bottoms, releasing cakes from pan. If necessary, cut between parchment and pan bottoms to loosen cakes. Invert cakes onto surface. Peel off parchment. Wash and dry pans and reassemble.

Using long serrated knife, cut off doomed top of 8-inch cake to level. Cut cake horizontally into 3 equal layers. Place bottom cake layer, cut side up, on 8-inch cardboard. Place cake on cardboard back into pan. Brush bottom layer with 1/4 cup lemon syrup. Spread with 1 1/2 cups lemon filling. Sprinkle with 1 1/2 cups raspberries. Place top cake layer atop raspberries; press cake lightly to compact. Brush with 1/4 cup syrup. (Assembled cake may be higher than pan sides.) Cover tightly with plastic wrap.

Using long serrated knife, cut off doomed top of 12-inch cake to level. Cut cake horizontally into 3 equal layers. Place bottom layer, cut side up, on 12-inch cardboard. Place cake on cardboard back into pan. Brush with 1/2 cup lemon syrup. Spread with 3 cups lemon filling. Sprinkle with 2 cups raspberries. Using 10- or 11-inch diameter tart pan as aid, slide top layer onto raspberries. Press cake lightly to compact. Brush with 1/2 cup syrup. (Assembled cake may be higher than pan sides.) Cover tightly with plastic wrap. Refrigerate both cakes overnight.

Make frosting:

Whisk yolks and 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar in large bowl to blend. Bring milk and lemon peel just to boil in heavy large saucepan. Gradually whisk hot milk into yolk mixture. Return to same saucepan. Stir custard over medium heat until thick, about 3 minutes (do not allow custard to boil). Strain custard into extra-large (6-quart) metal bowl; add vanilla extract. Using handheld electric mixer, beat custard until custard lightens and custard cools to room temperature, about 15 minutes. Gradually add butter; beat until well blended, scraping down sides of bowl often. (If buttercream appears curdled at any time, place bowl directly over heat for several seconds. Remove from heat and beat well; repeat warming and beating as necessary to achieve smooth texture). Set buttercream aside at room temperature.

Stir 2 1/4 cups sugar and 3/4 cup water in heavy medium saucepan over medium heat until sugar dissolves. Attach clip-on candy thermometer to side of pan. Increase heat and boil syrup without stirring until thermometer registers 240°F, occasionally brushing down sugar crystals from sides of pan with wet pastry brush, about 7 minutes.

Meanwhile, beat egg whites in large bowl of heavy-duty mixer until stiff but not dry. Gradually add 5 tablespoons sugar and beat until firm glossy peaks form. Gradually beat hot sugar syrup into egg whites. Continue to beat 2 minutes longer. Place bowl of meringue into larger bowl filled with ice and water. Using handheld electric mixer with clean beaters, continue to beat until meringue cools to room temperature, about 10 minutes. Gradually add meringue to buttercream, beating until well blended.

Cut around all sides of 8-inch cake. Push up pan bottom, releasing cake from pan. Remove pan bottom, leaving cake on cardboard base. If desired, place cake on revolving cake stand. Using offset spatula, spread thin layer of frosting (about 2 1/3 cups) over top and sides of cake to anchor crumbs. Refrigerate cakes on their cardboard bases until frosting is firm, about 1 hour.

Spread enough frosting (about 1 1/2 cups) over top and sides of 8-inch cake to coat. Spread enough frosting (about 3 cups) over tops and sides of 12-inch cake to coat. Dip large offset spatula into very hot water to warm blade; wipe dry. Run spatula over sides and tops of cakes, warming spatula repeatedly as necessary, until frosting is smooth. Using pastry bag fitted with small plain round tip, pipe border of small frosting dots around top edge of each cake. Refrigerate both cakes uncovered on their cardboard bases until frosting hardens, about 4 hours. (Once frosting is hardened, cakes can be wrapped in plastic and refrigerated up to two days or double-wrapped with plastic and frozen up to two weeks. Before continuing with recipe, thaw wrapped frozen cakes overnight in refrigerator.)

Final assembly and decoration:

Insert 1 dowel straight down into center of 12-inch cake to cardboard base. Mark dowel about 1/4 inch above top of frosting. Remove dowel and cut with serrated knife at marked point. Cut 2 more dowels to same length. Press 3 cut dowels into cake, positioning about 3 1/2 inches inward from cake on platter. Using large metal spatula as aid, place 8-inch cake on its cardboard atop dowels in 12-inch cake, centering carefully.

Wrap 3-foot long ribbons around base of 8-inch cake; cut to fit with slight overlap. Press ribbons gently into frosting to adhere. Wrap 4-foot long ribbons around base of 12 inch cake; cut to fit with slight overlap. Press ribbons gently into frosting to adhere.

To serve:

Transfer 8-inch cake to work surface; cut cake into 16 slices. Remove dowels from 12-inch cake. Starting 2 inches inward from edge and inserting knife straight down, cut 8-inch-diameter circle in center of cake. Cut outer portion of cake into 16 slices. Cut middle portion of cake into 8 slices. Cut inner 4-inch portion of cake into 4 wedges. Serve cake.

To prevent discoloration of the filling, use a saucepan with a nonreactive interior, such as enamel or stainless steel. (The lemon juice acid will adversely affect the filling if it's made in an unlined iron or aluminum saucepan.)

yield: Serves 44

For a detailed video instruction on assembling the wedding cake [click here](#).

[Click here to visit Chef Luis Amado's personal website for other recipes and information about his awards.](#)



The Marriage Creed

I nspire warmth

L isten to each other

O pen your heart

V alue your union

E xpress your trust

Y ield to good sense

O verlook mistakes

U nderstand the differences

contact us - Cafe Splendor



We Welcome Your Comments

We would like to thank you for the time you have shared with us.

As a new e-zine your thoughts and ideas are valuable and appreciated. Please help us serve you better by commenting on our site.

Write to us at Cafesplendor@netscape.net

Thank you once again.

J. Barrington

Executive Editor

