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A close-up photograph of a bride's hands holding a large, vibrant bouquet of pink and white roses. The bride is wearing a white wedding dress with intricate lace detailing and a long, sheer veil. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. The overall mood is romantic and elegant.

M

ake it so

You want your wedding to be as unique as your love. Here are some ways to personalize it.

Amy Kirkland says that when brides order invitations from her, she often hears them say they don't want anything remotely wedding-ish.

"It's, 'I want modern, I want color, I don't want it to look like a typical wedding invitation,'" says Kirkland, owner of AJK Papery, a Learwood design firm that custom-

Story by Maureen Sullivan
Photos by Freeland Photography

invitations. What Kirkland sees in invitations—a veering away from anything considered “typical wedding”—is indicative of a trend that covers most aspects of wedding planning these days: Brides don’t want anything wedding-ish because they want their ceremony and reception to be completely unlike any other that’s ever taken (or will take) place. Originality is key; personalization is paramount.

With the quest for having a wedding that expresses the couple’s personality at the forefront of most every bride’s mind, KC Weddings set out to find the best ways to personalize your day. What follows are the top ways to make your wedding truly your own, unlike any other.

Garry Through a Thread

If “motif” is a word you haven’t heard since your high school English class, get familiar with the term. Experts say the best way to really personalize your wedding is to take such a unifying thread—a symbol like a leaf, flower or even a monogram—and use it in every aspect of your wedding.



Clockwise, from opposite page: Cheerful pink popped up everywhere at the wedding of Megan and Tyler Huslig, including in the bouquet by Andrea Grist, with roses in shades of the palest cameo pink to deep fuchsia. The flower girl’s pink satin sash matched the gerbera daisy she carried. Rose blossoms and petals surrounded the eight-tiered cake by Caren’s Cakes. A wide swath of shell-pink ribbon wrapped a clutch of blooms tied to the guests’ chairs.

"You want something that carries throughout, whether it's a monogram or a design element (like a snowflake) or even a color," says Mandy Phalen, owner of Event Studio wedding and event planning in Leawood and Dallas. "As long as it's carried throughout, that's a really great way to make it more your wedding."

Color is a natural unifier since it can be used to tie together so many elements of a wedding.

That's what bride Meghan Huslig, who used hues of pink throughout her recent wedding at the Hawthorne House in Parkville, found. "It's been my favorite color ever since I was a little girl, so I knew I wanted it to be my wedding color," she says—a good choice for personalizing because the color was so representative of her. Meghan's bridesmaid dresses were in the rich, almost fuchsia hue, as were

her bouquet and centerpieces. And the color was cleverly picked up in the smallest of places, including the boutonnieres, the flower girl's sash and decorative flowers for the ceremony seating—so that there was no mistaking the motif of the wedding.

Your printed materials—everything from the invitations to the menu cards and napkins—are also great places to incorporate your motif.

"Invitations seem to be coming along more and more and more as far as making it your own," says Kindra Browne, owner of Simple Elegance wedding planning in Olathe. "A lot are handmade because brides can't find anything they like, and they want guests to get them and say, 'I've never seen anything like that.'"

Save-the-date cards are an especially flexible way to personalize your event. You can do magnets or slimline cards (ones with a photo that can be saved and framed) in addition to the

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traditional card. And they're as important as they are fun. "Brides want the very first thing the guests receive to set the scene for their wedding," Browne says. "The save-the-date market is booming because those can be extremely unique."

Continued on page 196

Light It Up

Don't stop at printed materials when using your motif. "Lighting is very inexpensive, and it adds a different flair to your ceremony," says Phalen. "You can cast your monogram or embellishment on the dance floor with a gobo light," a type of light commonly used to create a pattern.

And lighting isn't limited to projecting motifs. Phalen worked with one couple who had taken an engagement picture that was "very sleek and sexy," and she projected it on a wall at the ceremony. "That was the feel of their wedding. It's about thinking outside of the box on some of these things," she says, noting that using a framed version of the same picture on the guest book table would not have had nearly the same effect.

Memorable Mementos

Favors are a natural way to put a personal stamp on your wedding. Browne recalls a cou-



ple who had met at the Duck Derby on Brush Creek. They cleverly filled a clear bathtub with rubber ducks as favors. Phalen once worked with a couple where the groom was from San Francisco and the bride from Kansas City. In their hotel gift basket, there were two bottles: one of wine to represent California, another of

KC Masterpiece to represent Kansas City.

As an extension of such welcome packages, tours or special events centered around Kansas City happenings are also gaining popularity as part of a wedding weekend. "With downtown Kansas City and things that are happening, I'm going to be doing more of that," says Browne, who has planned weddings for couples that included events centered around the Plaza Art Fair or a First Friday. At one wedding with a sizable break between the ceremony and reception, Browne scheduled a tour of Kansas City's fountains. "Anytime you can enrich the guests' experience, especially when they're traveling, that really reflects on the couple," she says.

Name That Table

If using a motif, lighting or customized favors seems obvious, consider an unsung hero of the unique wedding: table numbers. Once confined to tall silver stands guiding guests to their seats, today's tables don't even need to be numbered—naming them instead can give you a much more individual touch.



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One couple of Browne's who were honeymooning in Italy used the names of the cities they would visit on their trip for their tables. Each table marker had a city name on one side, a map of Italy on the other with all the couple's destination cities pinpointed. Another one of Browne's brides loved flowers, so each reception

table was named for a flower she liked with a centerpiece to match—the hydrangea table, the gerber daisy table and so on.

As with any aspect of a wedding, the creativity in table numbers or names isn't relegated to the actual numbers or names. Phalen had one bride who, instead of using those tall stands for the table numbers, bought inexpensive picture frames and decorated the edges with pieces of wood because it went with the fall feel of her wedding. Browne worked with a couple who got engaged in Paris who put their table numbers on little Eiffel Tower replicas. "Guests knew he proposed in Paris, so it made sense," Browne says. "It's extremely simple, but it's also really sweet."



You Are What You Drink

Brides have been using signature cocktails for a while, so merely having a special drink won't necessarily set your wedding apart. Having a unique beverage that has some personal meaning to you and your groom will.

"One of the things is to communicate that you're doing something like that—otherwise no one will get it," says Phalen, who cites as an example a couple who had green apple martinis because green was one of their wedding colors and named them "Palmertinis" because the groom's last name was Palmer. The idea is that

it's not merely having a signature drink anymore that works, but one with some meaning.

The Latest and Greatest

If you have customized and individualized every last detail but still feel that your wedding might need a little something extra, consider some of the latest trends. "One of the big things right now is photo booths," Phalen says, who did a wedding in Dallas last year with one and has three slated for this year in Kansas City using them. Just like those in which you used to make funny faces for a strip of pictures with your best friend, today's photo booths for weddings allow guests to pose and print out pictures to take home. As an added bonus, there's usually an attendant supplied with the booth, and the bride and groom get a CD with all the pictures taken in the booth at their wedding.

Also becoming more popular is a cocktail hour before the ceremony, says Browne, who has done a few weddings with this concept and has more scheduled. One couple used an "all white" theme for this happy hour, serving just white wine, champagne, cheeses and fruits—not a bad idea to avoid staining the bridal gown.

Fairy Tale ... And Fairly Told

It's tempting to have no tradition whatsoever in your wedding these days, but experts caution against eliminating everything wedding-ish entirely. "This is your wedding we're talking about," Phalen says. "I don't ever want the bride to look back in 10 years and think it was too out there."

Still, if you must have the wedding that is unlike any other in every aspect, be sure to clue your guests in on any unique touches that may not have an obvious meaning. "People spend so much time to make things different," Phalen says. "One of the biggest things is to communicate that you're doing something like that—otherwise no one will get it." ♦

Maureen Sullivan is a freelance writer living in Kansas City.