



Photo Ryan Graham

Siann Backhouse has worked at leading venues in Gauteng, involved in more than 200 functions, for nearly ten years. After the birth of her daughter Dainah, she started Uptown Events, with particular focus on weddings. She believes that the most challenging aspect of the wedding day is the harmonious integration of the venue and suppliers. The perfect wedding is a team effort.

Friends

Written by Siann Backhouse—Uptown Events

What is life without friends? The reason you invite guests to attend your wedding is because they are special to you. In our busy lifestyle a wedding is a rare opportunity for friends and family to catch up with each other and the perfect occasion to create lasting memories around the most significant day of your lives.

I have discovered, however, that as all the focus is on the stunning bride, décor and dress, guests can sometimes be neglected. All the lovely wedding trappings lose their sparkle if your guests are not enjoying the day as much as you are. Unless your guests are a real priority there is no point in inviting them to your wedding. They will have come to celebrate the day with you and see you at your best as every bride is beautiful on that day.

Here are some essentials to ensure that you all have a wonderful time:



Some food and drink for thought

There is very little sadder than to hear your guests commenting about the wedding at a lovely venue when they are freezing in the garden whilst waiting for the bride and groom; this will be their lasting memory. Think for a moment as a guest. You have taken special care to arrive early, battled with the traffic and ended up sitting for hours on an uncomfortable pew and then the bride is late. This problem is easily solved by serving a refreshing welcome drink in the garden, weather permitting, where people can enjoy each other's company before moving to the chapel when all is ready. Similarly, if your photograph session is going to be long, regardless of how good it will be for photographs, allow your guests into the venue to be comfortable. Arrange for them to have something to eat and enable them to get to know one another before you make your entrance. It



is not complicated and your guests will be aware of the difference.

The bar

Cash bars have become common. Time and time again I have seen the atmosphere dulled by the guests' resentment at having to pay for their own drinks. May I suggest that even if you cannot afford an open bar you provide a limited bar. It is no good spending tens of thousands on favors for guests and spoiling it by having a cash bar.

The reality is that most of the gifts are put in their handbags and not seen again! If you are on a tight budget guests will understand but if you can afford supplying the drinks for your guests then it is a better option! Don't be deceived into thinking that putting wine on the tables 'cuts costs'—rather allow for the first couple of rounds and your wedding will be off to a great start.

Your menu

Nothing beats good food; ensure that you provide a menu that all your guests will enjoy. Remember that your guests will almost certainly miss lunch and will be

hungry by the time the wedding is underway. Snacks and canapés are an excellent idea. If you choose a plated menu a cheeseboard or midnight snack works wonders. Listen to the chef's advice and realize that your favourite is not necessarily something that everyone else will like. Take special dietary requirements into account and, where possible, cater for them specifically but don't choose your menu around them. All these thoughtful ideas indicate how important your guests are to you and they serve to make for a great function. Be careful to budget wisely. Often the food is compromised because one has over-spent on other items.

Speeches

Speeches are free and from the guests point of view they are what make a wedding memorable. Time and effort in this regard is obvious but sometimes neglected. Choose your speakers with care and limit the time of each speech.

Remember, your day passes in a flash. Enjoy it with your family and friends and try to take it all in. Make your wedding plans around your guests and try to mingle with each one; don't just fit them in.

