



Photo: Patrick Fürter



# The Main Table



Many years ago, the main tables at wedding receptions were all very similar, usually seating a large number of guests. These days, the approach is far more creative in terms of ideas and practical in terms of family relationships. We asked some of our Preferred Suppliers to share their knowledge.

## **Erna Swart – Café Fleur/Cor de Rosa**

Personality has a huge influence on the main table. Some couples no longer wish to be the 'centre of attraction' and choose to be seated with their guests. This means that more people are making use of the two places set aside at each table to enable them to spend time and fully enjoy the company of friends and family. We give a great deal of attention not only to the look and feel of your wedding, but also to the distinct personality of your function. The main table needs to embrace all of these aspects.

As many couples only view the venue in the day time, lighting for the main table is often neglected. The serious venue will provide stage lighting so that there is



Photo: Anri Heyns



no need for distractions required by the videographer's lighting. It is also essential that the guests can see the expressions, especially during the speeches. This light must be dimmable to enhance the atmosphere at other times. This is essential if candles are used to make the atmosphere more intimate and give the couple some privacy during the quieter moments as the meal is eaten.

Be careful of fairy lights behind or on the main table as these can look very busy and can take away the focus of the flowers. Your photographs are also overpowered by the lights, so beware. By all means use them on pillars and arches that do not distract from the décor, but add to the ambience.

The décor on the main table should be the same as the guest tables with more or less the same theme. Flowers should be in low containers and the style should link with the guest tables. Elements like candelabra should be carried through to the main table linking the whole look and feel of the wedding. The draping of the venue will also influence the character of your main table, so this too is an aspect that will need to be considered.

It makes a big difference if your décor specialist knows the particular venue intimately as they have a better understanding as to how to decorate the venue to realise your dream.

#### **Mary-Ni Brits — Merav Events**

The head table at a wedding commands attention and must stand apart, with the wedding party visible to all guests. Traditionally, the groom should sit to your left, your maid of honour will sit next to the groom, and the best man will be seated next to you. The bridesmaids and groomsmen will be seated alternately around the rest





Photo: AJ Wildison



of the table. You may also wish to include your minister, your parents, the groom's parents, grandparents or god-parents, but I would advise against a main table of more than 12 guests as the table is simply too long, the ends of which are lost among the other tables.

You may want to consider a table of honour close to the bridal table for special friends, god-parents or relatives who were especially helpful and close when you were growing up. Personalising decorations at the head table is a thoughtful and meaningful way to acknowledge these people whilst decorating and personalising the table at the same time. Floral bouquets with small photos of your guests mounted on pretty sticks that can be interspersed with the flowers make a unique difference.

Many brides focus on the table décor, but forget about behind the main table. The bride and groom can have chairs that stand out from the rest. Perhaps large wicker chairs adorned with white flowers and bows can be used, or perhaps an elegant love seat. The options for decorating the main table are endless. Large fluted champagne glasses catch the light and speak of festivity.

Wallpaper borders are expressive and elegant additions to the main table. Many patterns and colours are available, in traditional or contemporary styles. You can place the border right down the centre of the table like a runner, or hang it around the edge. This will provide a lovely, soft, flowing effect. String or rope lighting placed on table edges or on the floor to outline the area and provide an eye-catching festive focus.

You may consider décor extending from the roof, just near or over the main table. Ideas such as Chinese lanterns or garlands come to mind. Also consider your main table with photographs in mind. Draping can create a beautiful backdrop for photos. A modern approach is to have a crystal curtain or freestanding crystal lamps.



Photo: Irene Quist

If you have chosen a wedding theme carry this motif over to the main table in a big way. If you are having a winter wedding, you could decorate the head table with a miniature sled complete with sparkly faux snow and a little snowman or you could drape beautiful winter scarves over the chairs of your special guests.

Remember that this is YOUR table, so reflect your personality here.

### John Liverdos — Flower Creations

Times and trends change and so do seating plans, so we encourage you to be bold in choosing a main table that really works for you. The main table is usually reserved for the bride and groom, the parents, and sometimes the best man and maid of honour, but sadly in today's society many parents are divorced and remarried and tradition must take second place.

Very popular these days is a two seater main table, and some of the reasons for this is that the bridal couple feel that the parents may like to sit with their friends and the retinue can sit with their partners rather than being separated. Also, the bride and groom feel that they are only at the table to eat and listen to speeches, in which case the parents are left sitting alone. This you will remember was the choice of David and Victoria Beckham.

Smaller functions of less than 30 guests may want to consider a single table with the bride and groom centrally placed with all their guests. This theme has numerous adaptations with guests sitting at a U-shaped table around the dance floor and cake which keeps the focus on the centre of the room.



Photo: Digisky



Photo: Adam Hilton

Location, location, location. Other factors which may influence your decision regarding a main table will be the venue itself. Position your main table in such a way that it holds centre stage. You want all your guests to be able to admire you from where they sit. You too, want to be able to see all your guests enjoying themselves.

When it comes to the budget many couples get carried away with their guest tables and find themselves with insufficient money to do their main table justice. Always plan your main table décor first and the rest will follow but at the same time, keep your main table distinct from the guest tables.

The style of arrangements and décor is often limited by practicality. You should avoid tall décor items or flower arrangements that would obstruct the view of the bride and groom seated at the main table. If you insist on using them, then position them in such a way that they do not obstruct anyone's view.

It is a good idea to plan all the décor for the wedding ceremony with the intention to move these to the reception. The flower arrangement on the altar can easily be moved to the main table during cocktails. The two floor-standing arrangements either side of the pulpit would look beautiful either side of your main table. This will bring your costs down and make sure that your theme and colour scheme is carried through from chapel to reception.

Whatever your decision, remember to have fun! This is the first meal you will share as husband and wife, so share it in style, surrounded by love, peace and hope.

