



Tips From the Experts:

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Congratulations, you're engaged and now the real fun starts! Planning a wedding can be one of the most fun things you'll ever do but the feeling of excitement can quickly be overshadowed by the overwhelming feeling of wedding planning stress. My name is Allison DeCesere, and I am the Co-Founder of MyBridalDream.com. I have worked at two local function facilities as well as helped numerous friends and family members plan their weddings. I even planned my own just over a year ago. I have spent countless hours researching vendors and came to the realization there was something big missing when it came to wedding planning. There is no easy way to find vendors. Sure you can find lots of generic lists but you still have to research each one to see if they meet your needs. So, along with my partner, Tia Lori Bergeron, we created MyBridalDream.com. We allow brides (and grooms) to search for their wedding vendors by industry specific search criteria. This allows you to narrow down your vendor choices quickly. You can even get additional information about some of the vendor's right on the site and our internal communication system allows you to send them an anonymous message immediately, saving you time.

The right vendors can make or break your wedding; so where do you start? I always tell brides to pick what is most important to them. For some brides the most important thing is to get married on a particular day or even a holiday. For other brides, there is a facility that they just have to have their reception in. Still for others, their house of worship is a must. Once you know where your priority is, secure them first. This will be the basis for everything else.

In choosing the right vendor, keep a couple of things in mind:

1. **Recommendations are key.** Any vendor's website will have great reviews. But getting a recommendation from a friend or a completely unrelated party is even better. So, ask around. Most women love to talk about their weddings and if they had great vendors, will want to talk about them specifically. At MyBridalDream.com, brides can add reviews of the vendors they used after their wedding so you can see, first hand, what brides think.
2. **Insurance.** Some facilities require vendors to have insurance. Be sure you get the facts before you start hiring anyone. Don't ever sign anything where you are responsible for your vendors insurance. Even if they tell you they have it, they could miss a payment or not have enough coverage, you do not want this to be your problem should something go wrong. Make sure that the insurance is handled directly between the facility and your vendor.
3. **Bigger isn't always better.** If you attend bridal expos or look on local planning websites with generic lists, you will most likely see the same vendors over and over again.

Do not be fooled. They are not always the best or most economical, they are just the ones with the biggest marketing budget. Advertising is expensive but in NH alone, there are more than 10,000 vendors and you certainly don't see that many at expos so don't necessarily fall for the first one you see. Take your time and do your research. Some of the best, most creative wedding vendors I know work right from their homes.

4. **Visit them at their place of business.** Taking a good look at a vendor at work is a great way to tell if they meet your needs. If you are interested in a particular facility, ask to take a look right before a wedding begins so you can see what they are really like and how their staff behaves. For photographers, request a look at all of the photos they took of their most recent wedding. Even a bad photographer has a couple of great photos, seeing the whole collection will give you a sense of what they can do. Music can quickly make or break your wedding, ask to peek in on one of their performances so you can get a sense of them in action. Caterers should be happy to offer you a tasting so you know exactly what you'd be serving.
5. **Make sure you have a contract with each of your vendors.** The wording should clearly say what they will do and what you will do. I would be leery of anyone who wants all of their money up front. A down payment is not an unusual request; however, you should not pay for everything until you have received ALL of your services or products.
6. **Be cautious of online purchases.** There are many websites that sell wedding gowns and bridesmaid's dresses at deep discounts and in some cases this is a great idea. You can find the same dresses in local boutiques but get them much cheaper online. This is not always the case though. If you choose the wrong website, you may be very sad to see that the dress that shows up is not nearly as nice as what you saw at the store. Same goes for flowers, you can save a lot of money by getting loose flowers or arrangements online but the quality might not be there. Be sure to do your research. There are plenty of reputable sites just be sure you look into them before dropping your hard earned money.

In the end, wedding planning takes time, patience and research but it can be a lot of fun. MyBridalDream.com was created to take that first big step into finding vendors who match your needs but even at my site, I suggest brides and grooms alike research their vendors thoroughly in order to ensure all their bridal dreams come true.



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