

Rita Wong events helps you create lasting memories

By ANITA
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The enthusiasm that Rita Wong brings to the table is contagious. With her broad smile and warm manner, it's no wonder that the wedding and event planner has seen her business grow over the last 10 years.

Her company, Rita Wong Events, is welcome at venues across the city including synagogues, hotels, supper clubs, the Marché Bonsecours and the Elmridge and Hillsdale golf clubs.

She distinguishes herself by being thorough and organized to a fault, and by sticking to what always works – simplicity and elegance with a twist.

"My goal is to be fresh and different, to stand out from the rest," Wong says. "I look to create something special for every element of the wedding that will ensure unique memories, not only for the bride and groom, but for each guest as well."

Wong, 36, especially enjoys working with the Jewish community, as she finds that its members are avid partygoers who are always looking to the newest trends and enjoy celebrating joyous occasions with family and friends. She has long worked with the Jewish community establishing strong ties with synagogue officials across the city.

Wong has a keen understanding of both Ashkenazi and Sephardi customs and how to incorporate these elements into the planning of a Jewish wedding.

Many of today's couples are not convinced that hiring a wedding planner is the way to go. They are quick to point out the added expense of paying for an event planner as well as questioning the necessity of having a co-ordinator to plan their wedding.

But in response, Wong is clear in defining her job as twofold: first, planning and organizing every detail from menu preparation to seating, photographers and florists; and second, ensuring that the bride and groom have access to the best suppliers for all their needs at the best prices.

"One of my main priorities is to save the couple as much money as possible," Wong says. "I have access to the top suppliers at the best prices that I pass on directly to my clients."

Her long list includes photographers, florists, caterers, printers, disc jockeys, bands, decor suppliers and more. "My suppliers rely on my repeat business," Wong says. "They want to do the best job possible for me for the best price, knowing that I will come back if my brides and grooms are pleased with my work."

This financial incentive is not the only reason a bride and groom may choose to use a wedding planner. The need to be able to sit back and truly enjoy their own wedding without worrying about the over-

whelming list of details that go into ensuring the big day goes off without a hitch is also important.

"I am the point person for any logistical and last-minute details on the wedding day. A simple thing such as ensuring the service dock is free for the various suppliers to co-ordinate their deliveries can become a nightmare and ruin the day for the bride and groom," Wong says. "I'm on site from the early morning until the last guest goes home, to handle any and all arrangements."

With a degree in psychology and a certificate in public relations, both from McGill University, Wong knows how to deal with the emotional intricacies associated with family dynamics when a wedding is being planned. To ensure that nerves on both sides are not frayed, she meets with the bride and groom and other members of the family on a regular basis to make sure that all their needs are met.

She suggests sitting down one year in advance to begin planning the wedding. She can, however, usually accommodate weddings with a shorter timeline. Once the plan is set in motion, Wong remains in communication with the bride and groom. As her creative juices flow, she will e-mail, text or call her clients. Each theme or unique touch becomes exclusive to the couple, and she carefully safeguards the ideas to ensure they are not used by others.

While many of today's couples still want a traditional wedding, Wong is seeing a shift toward a more relaxed party atmosphere. She has introduced the Cocktail Dinatoire, where the meal has shifted from a sit-down dinner to an evening-long cocktail-style party where appetizers, main course and desserts are served on platters passed around by experienced wait staff.

"Hosting a Cocktail Dinatoire gives a more fun, casual feel to the wedding reception," Wong says. "Guests mingle more easily and get to spend time with various groups of friends."

But Wong still assigns seating, with each guest placed at a table. "Everyone likes a home-base to put down their Pashmina, clutch, or store their party favours."

Décor remains key to setting the tone for the evening. Wong has distinguished herself as a master of creating ambience through lighting. As an alternative to draping reams of fabric or using trees, she works with colour-changer lights to create the mood, using soft pinks throughout dinner, then switching to a stronger, constantly changing palette for the rest of the party.

Wong keeps up with all the newest trends and tips and shares them with her clients through her website and daily updated blog, Twitter and Facebook. Contact Rita Wong at 514-816-7482 or visit her website, www.ritawongevents.com