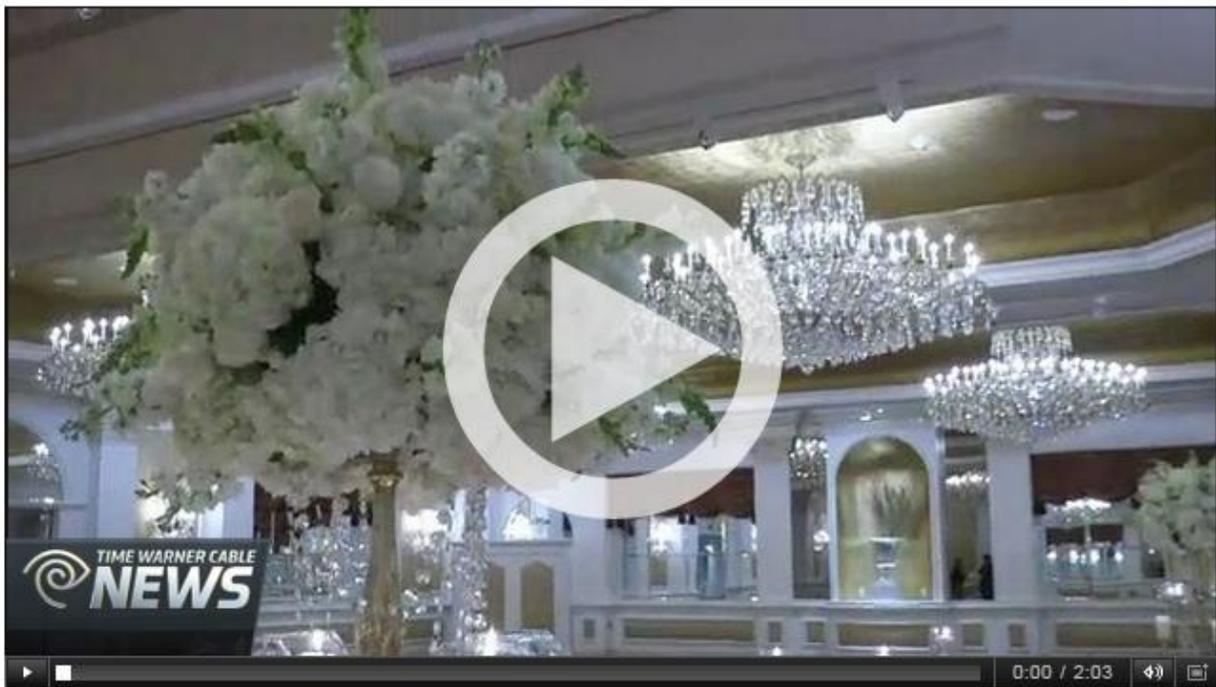




The Business of Marriage: Cutting the Wedding Venue Costs

By Tara Lynn Wagner
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In the first part of her Business of Marriage series, NY1's Tara Lynn Wagner explored budgeting and how couples can make sure they stick to a budget. In this installment, Tara Lynn looks at ways to trim down the biggest budget buster: the venue.

The reception will account for the bulk of your wedding budget. Venue costs, cocktail hour, catering - anything you can do to carve into those costs will help your bottom line. To begin, if you want to have it all, consider having it all in one place, like a hotel that has an event space right on premises.

"By having everything in one venue - from your rehearsal dinner, to your reception, to farewell brunch, guest accommodations - you can eliminate the costs for limousines, shuttle buses," says Jamessina Hille of The Garden City Hotel.

Another big saver: steer clear of Saturday night.

"A Saturday is always going to take a premium price. So look forward to a Friday or a Sunday," says Hille.

Once you have saved the date, try to save on the plate. Among some simple strategies, Jessica Silvester of New York Magazine suggests going silverware-free.

"So in other words, all foods that you can eat with your hands - so it's burgers, it's chicken fingers. You don't need to have the formal plated meal that everyone has thought about in the past," she says.

Buffets are also better for your budget, but if you are set on a plated dinner, The Garden City Hotel catering manager Janine Krafchin says pare down the menu.

"If you're offering the three entrees, we have to over-prepare. We have to be ready if all 200 people order the filet mignon or that one entrée," she says.

She suggests sticking with two choices or serving your guests a duet plate where everyone is served the same two items. That same "less is more rule" can also be applied to cocktail hour.

"It's not necessary to have 12 different stations of a million different items, where if you had some really wonderful passed hors d'oeuvres and a few quality stations, you're guests are going to be happy," says Krafchin.

Speaking of cocktail hour, another way to limit costs is to limit what is offered at the open bar.

"A lot of weddings will just do beers and wines. Champagne, true champagne, is going to be very expensive. Go for a more of a sparkling wine. It's less expensive, but it's tasty - it does the job," says Coupons.com savings expert Jeanette Pavini.

Finally do a little research before you do your legwork, and only visit venues you can realistically afford.

"There is a venue of your dreams within every budget, but you do need to be conscious of what the overall budget is before you start that process," says Krafchin.