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Together

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Special focus on
eco-friendly weddings

Couple says 'I do' to green weddings

By Justin Bull

Environmentalism factors into every part of life for Nik Kaestner and Kristy Wang, from using public transportation, to minimizing waste, to Kaestner's employment as a green business consultant.

"Everything we do we have to think about the environmental aspect. We do that on an everyday basis," Wang said.

So naturally, the Palo Alto natives wanted their wedding day to reflect their avid concern for the environment. They were turned off by the consumerism of traditional weddings, and instead wanted to emphasize the coming together of friends and family while creating as little waste as possible.

"We wanted it to be about the reception and the party and getting together and enjoying each other's company," Kaestner said.

So the couple planned to have a not-so-typical "green" wedding at Hakone Gardens, a Japanese garden in Saratoga, on May 27 of last year.

Cutting down on travel expenses and emissions was one of their top priorities. The couple decided to host the wedding at a location close to their guests, rather than close to their home on the East Coast.

And for all the travel emissions it took guests to get there, the couple donated the equivalent energy costs to Atmosclear, a

■ INFORMATION

For more information on how to plan an environmentally friendly wedding ceremony, Nik Kaestner recommends these sites and services to get started:

- www.organicweddings.com
- www.evrental.com, an environmental rental car company
- *Portovert Magazine*, a magazine for "eco-savvy couples"
- "The Green Corner" section of www.byreonly.com, a site run by Kaestner's mother (see story, this page)

company that invests in energy to offset greenhouse-gas emissions.

"We saved as much energy as people used getting to our wedding," Kaestner said.

For dinner, they invested in all local and mostly organic foods, including organic drinks, duck, and fish on the Monterey Bay Aquarium's "good list."

The wedding was an exercise in minimizing consumption. Invitations were printed on recycled paper, save-the-date cards were sent electronically, photos were digital, runners were handmade by Wang's mother, and any leftover food was composted.

"We had people take home all our decorations, so really there was nothing to throw away," Kaestner said.



Nik Kaestner and Kristy Wang during their wedding ceremony at Hakone Gardens in Saratoga, on May 27, 2006.

NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

In addition, the bride and bridesmaids' dresses were purchased with the intention that they would be worn again.

"Out of the seven people we bought bridesmaids dresses for, four of them have already re-worn their dresses," Wang said.

Kaestner credits the Bay Area's large market of "green" products for making the

process run so smoothly. In some ways, finding the resources for an environmentally friendly wedding was an easier task than it would have been for a more traditional one, Wang said.

"It helped us narrow things down and

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Wedding traditions with a twist

FROM RED GOWNS TO POMEGRANATE MARTINIS, NEW TRENDS EMPHASIZE INDIVIDUALITY

By Katharine Lu and Sue Dremann

New twists to familiar classics are redefining what it means to have a white wedding. Fruity martinis, tapas instead of a wedding banquet and bolero-jacket gowns are among the wedding trends for 2007, according to bridal professionals.

From pink spotlights to red gowns, brides and grooms are bucking the trends and flaunting their individuality.

"Ours was the first generation to plan our own wedding, so a lot of tradition is no longer required. You don't always have your mom telling you how to plan your wedding anymore, so it gives couples — especially brides — more freedom to have whatever wedding they want," said Amy McNeil, a 10-year wedding industry professional and a manager at Half Moon Bay Golf Links, an exhibitor at January's Modern Bride bridal fair in San Francisco.

This year's trends are building on some of last year's, with short jackets and boleros gaining in popularity,

according to Johanna Kaestner, a Palo Alto wedding consultant and author of "By Recommendation Only," a wedding-resources guide.

Kaestner, who began her business in 1988 and maintains a Web site, www.byrecommendationonly.com — byreconly.com for short — said ambience, including fine dining experiences with sit-down dinners, paired food and wine, and dessert or sushi-bar experiences where guests can converse, are popular event-design experiences. Pink spotlights to enhance colors and textures and elaborately designed menu cards are also popular.

For gowns, color is in, according to Nicole Lenzen of Tigresse, a San Francisco bridal fair exhibitor. Lenzen designed a red halter top and a white ball-gown skirt for a woman who wanted a red dress to match her garnet ring.

Bridesmaids are also choosing their own dresses, including the color if the bride permits. Many bridesmaids are opting for tea-length dresses that end at the calf. The

shorter length makes walking down the aisle easier, and the dress is versatile for wearing on other occasions, she added.

Kaestner said strapless and long, elegant gowns that accentuate the bride's silhouette are also in.

Multi-ethnic weddings are driving an interest in mixing old and new customs, including globally inspired cuisine, Kaestner said.

City weddings are in, as are destination weddings at the coast or in international locations, she added.

Gone are the staged wedding photos. Inspired by celebrity trends, couples want their wedding memories to reflect affluence and casual grace in a candid, photojournalistic style, Kaestner said.

And technology is in. Couples don't want to hide their wedding joy behind the covers of a wedding album only. Live broadcasts of the ceremony via the Internet, shot in high definition and recorded in surround sound, are making their way to a wider audience and as keepsakes on DVD and iPod, she said. ■

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go from there," she said. "I think we spent less time on our wedding than the average person."

Additionally, the couple decided not to have a wedding registry in hopes of further reducing waste.

"There were some people who couldn't help but get us something, but they were well aware of our desire to minimize consumption," Kaestner said.

The overall guest reaction to the ceremony was positive, Wang said. "Most people knew that it was something that was important to us," she said. "Other people learned something from the choices we made."

Kaestner agreed. "A lot of people were glad that we had introduced them to some new ideas," he said. He added that his sister-in-law plans to be married later this year and intends to apply some of his ideas to her own wedding.

Kaestner is currently working with Palo Alto schools with the goal of creating healthier classrooms and reducing energy and utility costs. Both Kaestner and Wang attended school in Palo Alto, at Gunn and Palo Alto High School respectively, and they still cherish memories of their wedding last spring.

"In many ways it was just a little unconventional, but it still fit in the box of what people envision in a wedding," Wang said. ■

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with Rabbi Mychal Copeland
- 2:15 pm Tips & Pitfalls that Make or
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- 3:15 pm Finding your Perfect Fit...in a Rabbi,
with Dawn Kepler

