

CHICAGO BRIDE

The First Five Things You Should and Should Not Do When You Get Engaged
By Sandy Malone

Thou Shall:

- 1) Tell your parents and immediately families first. Even if you're not close to one of them, bite the bullet and make the phone call. Emails and text message are not the way to handle this sort of announcement. Pick up the telephone. Rumor has it you can still use them for actual conversations!
- 2) Assuming you've been the lucky recipient of a pretty ring, you **MUST** buy a ring holder for both your dresser and for your kitchen, immediately. You can always upgrade later when you receive a Waterford one as an engagement gift from a thoughtful aunt. But right away, get in the habit of putting your rings on the holder **EVERY TIME** you take them off. In the kitchen, you need to put them someplace safe when you deal with slimy chicken or mixing dough – you have no idea how many wedding rings have accidentally been ground up in garbage disposals. And as for the bedroom, I really do have a friend whose Rottweiler ate her big diamond engagement ring off the bedside table the week of the wedding. It was recovered. I'll spare you the story but they still have the framed X-ray.
- 3) Start working on your guest list immediately. If you and your fiancé are imagining an intimate affair away from home, make sure your parents are clear on your intentions. Give each side a number they may invite and put a cap on it there. You can't start planning a wedding anywhere without a clue of how much space and money you're going to need.
- 4) Think carefully about who you want to include in your wedding party. If you're marrying a high school or college sweetheart and you have a lot of friends in common, try to avoid putting exes in your wedding party to avoid drama. They may have no problem interacting in normal life, but the combination of alcohol and emotions at weddings often results in disaster.
- 5) Figure out your **REAL** budget before you start telling everybody your plans and sending out save-the-date cards. There's nothing more embarrassing than having to change plans after you've announced because you didn't do your homework on whether you have the budget to actually host the wedding of your dreams.

Thou Shalt Not:

- 1) Announce your engagement on social media with a giant selfie of your engagement ring. It's tacky, and it will cause you instant drama with all the people who want to know your wedding plans and if they're invited to the big occasion. Do not discuss your wedding plans in detail on Facebook unless you're trying to hurt people's feelings. You can't afford to invite all of your "friends" and some people take that stuff really seriously. Don't rub your wedding plans in the nose of somebody who isn't invited, but wishes they were.
- 2) Get overly excited and invite all of your besties to be bridesmaids the minute you get engaged. Large wedding parties are expensive – just think of the flowers – and you need to do your homework before you commit. You can't un-invite somebody once you've asked them to be in your wedding party unless they do something egregious. Wait til you and your fiancé have had time to discuss it and figure out how your families may play into it too before you start naming your wedding party.
- 3) Take a huge group of friends with you wedding gown or bridesmaid dress shopping. You only need your mom, your sisters (if you have them) and one friend. Two friends if you don't have any sisters because you have to be able to out-number and out-vote your mom, if necessary. Too many opinions from the peanut gallery will only drag out the process and confuse you. It's your wedding day and you will be the one to ultimately choose what everyone wears. If you invite them all along to choose bridesmaids' dresses, you're implying they get a vote. They don't.
- 4) Try to control your fiancé's bachelor party plans unless you're afraid it's going to be dangerous. Vegas or Mexico, it doesn't matter. If he loves you, you have nothing to worry about. If he misbehaves, you shouldn't be marrying him. There's a lot of married life to live ahead of you and the relationship needs a foundation of trust.
- 5) Put off registering for wedding gifts. If you register early, you will receive items from your registry for your engagement party and bridal showers. This is a courtesy to your guests who WANT to give you things that you like or need. If you don't register, you will receive lots of presents that you'll have to write really nice thank you notes for, and then re-gift to somebody you don't really like. Don't put off writing thank you notes either – those should go in the mail within seven days of receiving the gift so nobody has to wonder if you actually got it.

Happy Wedding Planning!

Sandy Malone is the owner of Weddings in Vieques, LLC, a full-service destination wedding planning company based on Vieques Island, seven miles off the coast of Puerto Rico. She and her team (including her husband Bill, a retired SWAT team commander) have planned and executed more than 400 weddings in the Spanish Virgin Islands. Sandy began her career in political journalism and has a background in public relations and public affairs in Washington, DC, with years of experience planning large and small weddings, press conferences, and corporate and political events. She has orchestrated countless events on Vieques Island, beginning with her own wedding back in 2004.

Since 2007, the professional staff of Weddings in Vieques has executed large and small weddings of all styles, including elopements, vow renewals and fabulously posh events at multi-million dollar waterfront villas. Sandy also plans family reunions, destination baby showers, corporate retreats and a variety of other events for clients from all over the United States and Canada. Sandy is also the owner of Weddings in Culebra (wedding planning on Vieques' little sister island), Flowers in Vieques (a full service floral and décor firm), and Boutique in Vieques (a clothing and home décor shop).

