

# Be Our Guest, Be Our Guest... Put Our Patience to the Test!

By Donnie Brown

As seen in his monthly column entitled, "Is it Just Me?"

There are so many things to deal with in planning your wedding. The flowers, the band, the food, the gown....the list goes on and on. What you probably never gave much thought to was right in front of you all along: the guests!

Why would the guests create a problem for you? After all, they are your friends and your family. They are the people you cherish the most. Well, I throw a caveat in there that encompasses only those you have met. Your parents will want to invite the bank teller, the people sitting next to them at the Cowboys Stadium and of course the contractor who built your house in 1980. This is a sacred moment in your life. Don't you want everyone in the free world looking on? And, why not? The more the merrier, right?

## Issue number 1: Guests Cost Money

Every guest you invite waters down your budget. Some things like the band, the gown, rental fees, etc. will not be impacted by the number of guests. Where you have to watch out is when it comes to food and beverage, chair rentals, lighting, linen, centerpieces, favors, and tabletop rentals. These items carry a per-person charge, and therefore takes money away from other items you might want. Take a calculator and divide the amount of your wedding budget by the estimated number of guests. If you end up with \$100, you have some serious concerns ahead of you. If you pay \$45 for an entree, \$12 for hors d'oeuvres and \$35 for the bar per person, then you are already at \$92 plus service charge, gratuity and tax. That alone takes you above the \$100 amount and you only have food and beverage. And, I should add that these are conservative figures. It is very easy to spend \$200 per person for food and bar alone. Before you start calling McDonalds to get an estimate, perhaps you should consider cutting your guest list and try to increase the per-person amount you have to spend. Otherwise it's Big Mac time, baby. And don't think you're going to have it easy and supersize those meals. You'll be lucky to get a chocolate shake out of the deal.

## Issue number 2: RSVP's

You know, traditionally you were supposed to only give your guests a deadline on the RSVP card of two weeks prior to the wedding. You can forget that. Somewhere along the line, along with teaching their kids about the birds and bees, parents stopped instilling basic polite behavior. There are two ways to know this is a fact. Ask the little gay kid hiding up in the tree during recess for one. The other is expecting your family and friends to send in their RSVP cards. You will learn right quick that they have better things to do than to take the fifteen seconds it will require to fill out the little card, slip it in the pre-addressed and stamped envelope you included for them, and drop it in the mailbox. I see this all the time. People just don't do it. You will be calling and harassing your guests for weeks and still won't

get all the cards back. And many of those you will get back will have 5 guests added in that you weren't expecting. What was hard to understand about the "and guest" notation on the address?

Another thing that's insane is how many people RSVP and then don't show up at all! That is not good. You have to pay for them because they said they'd be there. Jokingly I tell brides all the time to just invoice them. You can set up a fob on your iPhone and take credit cards to recoup the funds. Then, there are those who don't RSVP and then show up. Perhaps you'll have seats left over from those who didn't show - (Insert the sound of a woman screaming while pulling her hair out!) – It's just a lot of moving pieces to coordinate.

Even if you do everything right – and I mean everything – you will run into some issues. One of your bridesmaids will bail on you, or your guest count will stretch beyond the limitations of the reception venue, or something else. But, you can bet it will be guest-related. My suggestion: Hire a planner. Even if they don't know your guests or answer the guest's calls or emails, at least they can be there for you when your hair is on fire!

On a positive note, you are going to have a total blast at your wedding, so have fun! Just be prepared for some road bumps along the way.