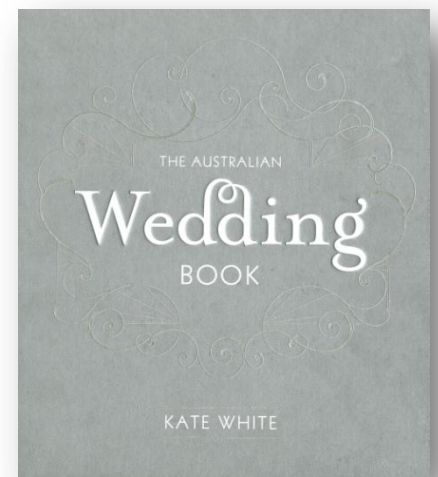


The Australian Wedding Book

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Extract



Introduction

Most weddings start with an idea – a particular dress or setting, for instance – and build from there. This book also started with an idea – though I didn't know it at the time. When I was young, my family lived in the country, but most school holidays we would visit my grandmother in Sydney. Whenever I heard wedding bells from nearby St Mark's, Darling Point, I would drop whatever I was doing to stand in the street, gawking at the bridal party as they left the church. It was the start of a fascination with weddings that led eventually to my career as a wedding consultant.

A few years ago, in my professional capacity, I was privileged to attend a spectacular Greek wedding. As the music swelled and the traditional plate-smashing began, I was struck by the wonderful variety of the marriages I had witnessed over the years. What factors, I wondered, differentiated a marvellous event from a less soulful celebration? Why do some weddings really swing and others slightly sag?

Australian weddings used to be simple. Most involved young couples, tight budgets (generally controlled by the bride's parents), and little choice in ceremony or setting. These days, not only have budgets grown, but there's a huge range of settings and services, and much more in the way of ethnic diversity and cross-cultural marriages. Brides and grooms are older. Many have lived together already and are paying some or all of the costs: naturally, they expect more of a say. (Incidentally, if you're on a tiny budget, don't despair. Such weddings are often exquisite because they tend to be highly individual and benefit from the good taste that comes with restraint.)

Times have changed, making old wedding rule-books obsolete. But today's brides still need support and guidance – probably more than ever because of those increased options. No wonder brides buy an average of six wedding magazines each.

All these thoughts went through my head as the Greek wedding, with its mix of age-old traditions and modern touches, joyously unfolded. And then it came to me: I could give brides the helping hand they needed. My years as a wedding professional have given me a wealth of information that, until now, I've shared only with clients. Why not share it with others.

Every wedding, from the simplest celebration to big-budget extravaganza, deserves to be perfect and personal. Getting married is such a brave, joyous and momentous step. It's the only opportunity most people have in their lives to stand up and declare to the world that 'At this time, in this place, I choose you'.

The rules surrounding weddings have altered and softened. There's no right or wrong way. The paramount rule today is for couples to 'own' their wedding. Your day needs to be a personal and potent celebration of you and your love. Traditions are lovely, but it's important to understand their meaning and significance, not just mindlessly re-enact them. I want this book to empower and inspire couples to take control, to make them realise they have choices and can create a wedding that is truly individual.

I want you to have *your* dream wedding, not someone else's.

I've met and helped many hundreds of brides in the lead-up to their wedding, and I know that, at the start, many are overwhelmed by the task facing them. And who can blame them? How many people have had the experience of organising a wedding? How many know how to go about devising a running schedule, choosing the right dress, flowers and celebrant, feeding dozens of people, and doing the hundred other things that a wedding involves? It's a lot of work – and a lot of fun.

With luck, you've received this book as an engagement present. Perfect timing! My advice is not to try to read it from cover to cover in one sitting. Instead, keep it within easy reach over the coming months, and open it whenever you want inspiration, guidance and support. Treat it as a reliable friend who will empower you to take confident and radiant charge of your wedding and be with you every step of the way until your honeymoon.

There's years of experience and lots of information in here, but you won't find every decision made, every 't' crossed and 'I do' dotted. You wouldn't want to. Every wedding is a personal expression of love that requires your input. Yes, let others share the strain, but always remember that this is your day and you'll need to be involved in every decision. Be willing to take advice from experts (especially those you're paying for their expertise), but don't become anyone's puppet. That applies especially to well-meaning relatives and friends with fixed views.

So, let's get back to that idea of yours. That vision of getting married on a beach, under your favourite tree or in a Tuscan palazzo. That heirloom veil you've always wanted to wear. Your favourite flowers. Hold on to that dream! Take control of your wedding: think of it as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to display your individuality, as well as your enduring commitment to the person you love.

With the help of this book, you can have the wedding you've always dreamt about.

Best wishes, and congratulations,

Kate White