

wedding THEMES

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A groom wearing Tony Marga cowboy boots and a bride carrying a bouquet tied with a leather strap rode into their ceremony in a red monster truck. Guests sat on bales of hay draped with horse blankets. The band Cousin Lovers performed at the reception, and the food was Southern-style barbecue. Sound familiar? This was the wedding of actress Sandra Bullock to biker Jesse James, as described by the media.

FRESH IDEA

LYNDSEY HAMILTON'S GATSBY THEME WEDDING

- ♥ **Colors:** Rich silvers and whites.
- ♥ **Location:** Waterfront Hamptons home.
- ♥ **Decor:** Tented with dramatic lighting.
- ♥ **Music:** A jazz quartet playing flapper tunes.
- ♥ **Bride's dress:** Straight, form-fitted.

Wedding themes like Ms. Bullock's down-home version are all the rage these days because they add a personal touch that makes a wedding unforgettable. The best themes seem effortless, but the premier wedding planners know how much work it takes to pull them off.

Colin Cowie has made his mark as an event planner by throwing legendary parties for A-list celebrities like Jerry Seinfeld and Jennifer Lopez. The Manhattan-based pop lifestyle consultant for the "Oprah Winfrey Show" starts planning a theme by learning a couple's tastes.

"I can start to understand ... their sense of style, what they want to spend, how many guests it is for and then you can cut the cost according to your cloth," he said.

That theme can then be incorporated into the invitations, flowers and anything that comes in contact with the guests. Colors are especially important, with modern shades

being the chic choice. "I have never seen so much bold color—bright, shocking pink and orange mixed with vibrant colors," Mr. Cowie said.

And a well-done wedding theme doesn't have to be expensive. "If you're working on a budget, just pick one flower or candle and use a lot of them; it doesn't have to cost a lot of money to make a big statement," he offered.

Mindy Weiss was the guiding hand behind the legendary nuptials between Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey, Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale, and Heidi Klum and Seal. Her work has earned her a reputation for unusual ideas and attention to detail.

Capturing the right balance in a theme can be tricky, cautioned the L.A.-based Ms. Weiss: "Too much of a theme can be tacky, and not enough of a theme doesn't translate either."

Wedding planner Lyndsey Hamilton loves the window into a couple's personality that themes offer guests. "Themes ... allow guests to get a more intimate look into the couple," Ms. Hamilton, who has offices in Manhattan and Connecticut, has appeared on "Whose Wedding is it Anyway?" on the Style and WE Networks.



A "love" theme by Mindy Weiss. Clockwise from top left: "love" welcome bags; an aisle runner painted with the word "love," and fans painted with "love."

To choose a theme, consider what is important to you both, said Ms. Hamilton. A beach-theme wedding she planned for a couple reflected the bride's fondness for her childhood summer home, which was also the location. It included a lobster and clam bake

for the rehearsal dinner, and driftwood, hurricane lights, large lanterns and burlap linens at the reception. The flowers were native to seaside locations.

Regardless of what theme you choose, the top wedding planners agree that the best themes are the

ones that reflect the personal tastes and experiences of couple.

RESOURCES

Wedding planners: Colin Cowie, www.colincowie.com, Lyndsey Hamilton, www.lyndseyhamiltonevents.com, Mindy Weiss, www.mindyweiss.com ♥