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introduction

I've produced my share of weddings throughout my twenty years as a chef and caterer in Hollywood. Some weddings were spectacular celebrity events, with yachts, helicopters, and twelve-tiered wedding cakes, while others were small, intimate ceremonies on a public beach with receptions of fresh lemonade and popcorn. I enjoyed every one of them — well, almost every one. What I hated to see were people who spent a great deal of their time, emotions, and money, and yet they still weren't happy on their wedding day. Families, money, expectations, and fantasies sometimes clashed horribly around the wedding couple, truly spoiling a day that can be one of the happiest in your lifetime.

Through the years, I've been able to help couples and families struggling with wedding issues avoid unhappy wedding experiences by asking them simple questions. With their honest answers, we all worked together to execute their big day. I love for weddings to be painless, flawless, and most importantly, for everyone to enjoy the special event — especially the bride and groom.

In fact, I believe that by making the bride and groom confident, secure, and in control, they set the tone together for a successful wedding and, ultimately, a successful partnership and marriage.

In *Do It for Less! Weddings*, I want to help you organize and experience a beautiful wedding that doesn't break either family's bank account or leave you in debt for the first ten years of marriage. Do you realize that the national average cost for a wedding in America today is \$27,000? That's enough money to use as a down payment on a house, car, and boat! This number is frightening to me, and it should be to you as well.

Now, don't misunderstand, if you have tons of money and want trained, white doves cooing Barry Manilow hits for your recessional, it can be arranged. *Anything* can be arranged. But if you'd like to have the wedding of your dreams and still have money for a fabulous honeymoon, keep reading.

Let's take a look at where wedding dollars go. These percentages vary from couple to couple, but they serve as a good starting point for looking at your own wedding.

- 4 percent: stationery
- 10 percent: wedding attire
- 10 percent: flowers
- 10 percent: photography
- 10 percent: music/entertainment
- 50 percent: reception
- 6 percent: miscellaneous

Do it for Less! Weddings is for people who like to think outside of the box and do their own thing. We'll work together to trim your wedding costs and still give you the event of your dreams.

- Denise