

A decorative flourish consisting of symmetrical, swirling scrollwork elements that frame the word "INTRODUCTION".

INTRODUCTION

Your wedding. Close your eyes and envision it. What images come to mind? Do you see yourself walking down the red-carpeted aisle of a cathedral, light pouring in through stained glass windows, the scent of roses and candles filling the church? Are hundreds of guests waiting in joyful anticipation for your teary “I do”? Do you see their faces admiring you? Are many of the faces unfamiliar—your future mother-in-law’s yoga instructor, co-workers you don’t know well, people you probably wouldn’t invite for coffee?

Or are the guests people you love who have touched you and your partner’s life in special ways? Perhaps you see only seventy-five people, shining their warm smiles upon you. Maybe you see only fifty, twenty, or ten. Maybe only you and your beloved are there, exchanging vows and a sweet kiss. Everyone has her own idea of the “perfect” wedding. For some, nothing is more charming and magical than an intimate wedding.

INTIMATE IS ULTIMATE

From the moment my sweetheart, Darin, proposed to me one New Year's Eve, I knew that I didn't want a large wedding—the kind that I had been to so many times. The kind that is entirely predictable. The kind where busy brides and grooms don't have time for personal, hands-on thank-yous or one-on-one conversations with out-of-town guests.

Darin and I wanted a wedding that would suit our personalities, one that honored tradition but threw in some unique and unforgettable touches.

I soon discovered that finding information on planning an intimate wedding was not an easy task. The majority of wedding-related books were devoted to large-scale affairs, and even the Internet sites seemed to cater to couples planning big weddings. However, I connected online with dozens of other brides-to-be who, like me, thought intimate was ultimate. Many of them shared my frustration with the lack of information on this topic.

On an Internet wedding forum, a bride who was planning a wedding with fifty guests said, "I've searched high and low on the whole Internet! It seems all the planning advice is geared toward 'big weddings.'" Another bride, also at her wits end, wrote, "I believe there should be a resource out there for intimate weddings because there is really nothing out there that says having a small wedding is okay."

The number of responses to these frustrated brides showed that many couples out there lacked resources to assist them with plans for a small wedding.

Determined to change this, I set out on a mission. I spent months poring over books, magazines, and Internet sites and forums to glean as much information as I could on the topic. I interviewed wedding planners as well as couples who had tied the knot among a small group of friends and family. The more I learned, the more I realized that I could not only apply this knowledge to my own wedding but share it with others.

So after my wedding day—September 1, 2001—I began to write.

WHAT WILL YOU FIND HERE?

This book provides practical information about planning an intimate wedding. Married couples share their wedding stories. They discuss their choice to have an intimate wedding, they share advice for other couples planning a small wedding, and they let us in on anything they would have done differently. Throughout the book, I share many of my own wedding-related experiences and offer up some interesting wedding-related statistics and sidebars. Whether your small wedding will be at home or far away, whether you will

marry inside a church or on a beach or in a backyard, and whether this is your first marriage or not, this book can be an invaluable planning resource.

YOUR OWN CREATION

A wedding is a creation born out of a couple's love for one another. You have every right to make your wedding uniquely yours. If you like to set yourself apart from the crowd, you will enjoy the freedom a small wedding can give you to bend the rules and create some of your own traditions. If garters, clinking glasses, and a three-tier wedding cake aren't your style, they don't have to be part of your special day.

Without a doubt, it takes a certain amount of strength to face family and friends who might be opposed to your version of an ideal wedding. The less traditional you are, the more open you will be to potential opposition from not only friends and family but also the wedding industry. Sometimes you'll need support—you'll find just that within these pages. You will read about couples who took the "aisle less traveled," who dared to listen to their hearts and have the wedding they wanted. Look in these pages for encouragement to follow your desires and create a day that fulfills all of your unique wedding dreams.

LET'S TALK MONEY

If you plan to pay for your own wedding, you will appreciate the economy of a small wedding. In this book, married couples share with you some great ideas on how to cut wedding costs for both the ceremony and the reception. An entire chapter in the book is devoted to the nitty-gritty on how to stay within a wedding budget.

At the end of most chapters, a couple's wedding is highlighted. The featured couple offers not only details on what made their day special but also a full breakdown of their wedding budget, including what they paid for flowers, photography, food, etc.

INVOLVING YOUR LOVED ONES

Have you ever been to a wedding where you didn't know a soul? A wedding with an hour-long receiving line? A wedding so large that the bride and groom couldn't spend even a few seconds conversing with you? One of the best things about a small wedding is that it enables the bride and groom to visit with each and every guest. You can make everyone feel welcome and appreciated.

If you're the type that likes to get everyone involved, you'll appreciate a small wedding.

This book shows how other couples have summoned the talents of friends and family for wedding-related tasks. Most agree that having loved ones pitch in makes the day much more memorable to everyone!

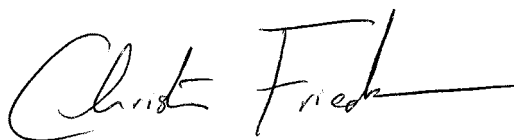
If ideas to personalize your intimate wedding are what you're looking for, you're in luck! You'll find a slew of tips on how to make both your ceremony and reception unique. Everything from writing your own vows to finding an alternative to the traditional wedding cake is discussed. You'll also find a plethora of ideas on where to have your wedding, and the chapters on theme weddings and destination weddings will spark your imagination. In the final chapter, you'll learn creative ways to preserve your wedding memories for years to come.

STORIES TO INSPIRE

Nearly three years of research and interviews led to the creation of this book. Since my mission began, I've become a wife, a mother, and now an author. Each role has brought new and exciting experiences to my life.

As the author of this book, I have enjoyed being able to connect with so many enthusiastic and creative couples. I loved learning about their unique weddings. I also derived great satisfaction from knowing that their stories, along with a ton of other great wedding-related information, would be passed along to other couples.

This truly is the book I was looking for—but couldn't find—when I was planning my intimate wedding. I sincerely believe you will find it helpful and inspiring.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina Fried". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

P.S. I've created a Web site to accompany this book. Please check it out at www.intimate-weddings.com. I'd love to hear from you. You can contact me at Christina@intimate-weddings.com.