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Planning Your Reception

No doubt you've hired great vendors who do this sort of stuff all the time, so things that may seem worrisome to you right now are most likely common concerns with easy solutions. We'll definitely work together to create a timeline that will flow perfectly based on the specific elements that you've chosen (first dance, cake cutting, etc) and you can count on us to expertly coordinate all details with everyone involved.

Your wedding reception will develop a life all its own and it's important to allow yourself to relax, absorb as much as you can, enjoy being with your family and friends, and let it all flow naturally. When creating your timeline, don't get hung up on the exact timing - the times should be considered as reference points. You'll want to remain somewhat flexible to allow for the natural flow of events.

Here's what it is and how it typically works: Nothing you read here has to be totally set in stone and we'll be happy to adjust our approach according to your wishes and needs. Be sure to visit the music links at the end of the suggestions to help you select your special songs.

On-Site Ceremony: Set a time for the actual ceremony and have your vendors in place doing their thing a half hour prior, as your guests will start arriving in stages. We will have some nice music playing as guests are arriving and being seated and will touch base with key people to make sure everyone has their cue.

Cocktail Hour: This is a time for your guests to socialize with each other and enjoy refreshments and hors d'oeuvres. Your photographer may use this time to take after-ceremony pictures of you and perhaps the bridal party. Many couples have chosen to forego or limit taking pictures during this time so that they can join in the cocktail hour. It's perfectly acceptable for your guests to see you and the bridal party prior to the introductions.

Introductions: This is typically done shortly after the cocktail hour once guests have been seated for dinner. Introductions go a long way in setting the tone for the rest of your reception, so really think about how you want it to come across. Some couples want to keep things somewhat simple and low key, perhaps opting to have only themselves introduced or even not at all. Other's want to create something a little more upbeat to include their parents and/or bridal party and yet others want to really raise the roof with a high energy approach. Think about the personalities and dynamic of all involved when deciding which approach is best for you.

First Dance: The trend has been to do the first dance right after the introductions. This is when you really have everyone's undivided attention and it does flow naturally after the introductions. You can opt to dance the whole song by yourself or invite the bridal party to join in. It's suggested that if you're doing the first dance after the introductions, that we don't invite other guests as by the time they actually make their way up to the dance floor, the song's almost over and we'll be asking them to return to their tables. Some couples decided they want to do a little dance set prior to dinner, although this is an infrequent request.

Welcoming: Traditionally done by the host or hostess as a way of welcoming and thanking all your guests for being there. They may want to acknowledge key people or share a short anecdote or formally welcome the joining

of two families. Some couples do the welcoming themselves. Others opt to forego this altogether.

Blessing: This is often done by the Officiate, but doesn't necessarily have to be. It can be a family member or a close friend. Whoever you choose, make sure you give them as much advanced notice as possible, so that they'll be prepared when called upon. Some couples opt to have a special cultural blessing i.e. blessing over the bread and wine (motzi). Other couples forego the blessing altogether.

Toasts: Traditionally done by the best man and maid/matron of honor, but others can be included as well. Be sure to pre-arrange with whoever is doing a toast so that they're not surprised when called upon. Some couples decide to open the microphone up to any guest who would like to step up and offer a toast. For maximum attentiveness, the toast would typically take place at the onset of the meal, but sometimes is done between courses or right before/after the cake cutting. A good source for coming up with the perfect toast can be found at InstantWeddingToasts.com.

Dinner Service: Typically consists of either a buffet, seated dinner service, or food stations and will really be a great time for you to relax and get off your feet a bit. Most likely, you'll be served first and you should really allow yourself this down time to enjoy your meal. You should definitely make it a point to eat so that you can keep your energy level up. After you have finished eating or perhaps in between courses, would be a good time to visit tables while others are being served and eating.

Visiting Tables: This is a great time for you to touch base with each or at least most of your guests, especially if you are not having a receiving line. Keep in mind just how long it will take to make the rounds. Do the math - if you have 10 tables and you spend a minute at each table, that'll take 10 minutes. 2 minutes at each table, that'll take 20 minutes, 3 minutes at each table = half an hour...you see where we're going here. It'll be easy to get caught up at one or two tables and run behind in time to get to everyone.

Getting The Party Started: You and your guests have just had a great meal and feeling like it's time to get things started. The thing is, not everyone will reach that level at exactly the same time. We will keep an eye on the room and will be able to sense when it's time to move on to the next item on the agenda. We don't want to rush your guests, but we don't want to have everyone sitting around becoming restless. We will arrange with you the precise moment to get things going.

Parents Dances: Typically includes a separate song for father/daughter and mother/son but more & more couples are choosing to use the same song for both. It is best done right after dinner as a way to draw the attention away from the dinner table to the dance floor. Most times we'll invite everyone to surround the floor to witness this very special moment, otherwise guests attention span tends to wander. This doesn't have to be a sappy song and should definitely have some meaning that fits you two closely. Another family member (brother, sister, etc) can be used as a suitable alternative to a parent.

Dance Set: Let the dancing begin! How we approach your particular group will really depend on our discussions, music requests, and dynamics of the guests and general vibe of the room. Typically, we'll want to start programming music that's catered a little bit more towards your older guests although there's a lot of great music out there that have multi-generational appeal that we're confident can get everyone young and old moving. As the evening progresses so too will the music providing a little bit of something for everyone. Keep in mind, you're going to be the center of attention and it would go a long way to getting your guests involved in dancing if you two are out there as well.

Cake Cutting: At the scheduled time and if you so choose, will invite everyone to gather around as you get ready to cut the cake. Most times the cake cutting takes place after the first dance set but sometimes is done right after the meal especially in the interest of preserving dance time. The caterer, coordinator, attendant or

photographer will guide you through the steps in slicing the cake and may even pose you for a bit for pictures. Most couples are pretty civil about feeding each other the cake - some of course smash it to it each other's faces. You may want to talk about this beforehand so not to catch anyone by unexpected and perhaps undesired surprise.

Bouquet Toss: If you decide that you want to toss the bouquet, we'll invite all the unmarried ladies to the dance floor to catch the specially appointed throw away bouquet. On the count of three, the bride tosses the bouquet behind her keeping in mind distance and obstacles (lights, low ceiling, etc.). Let us know the name of that person who caught the bouquet so that she can be invited back when it comes time to receive the garter if doing so.

Garter Removal: A chair is brought to the middle of the dance floor and the bride is seated in it. The groom then positions himself in front of her often getting down to one knee and slowly removes the pre-arranged garter that the bride will have put on her right leg. Choose a song that's fun for you or we can default to something very appropriate. We'll always use good taste and avoid any potentially embarrassing commentary or approach. Some couples opt not to do the garter removal but still choose to do the bouquet toss. Some forego both altogether.

Garter Toss: Single men are now invited to the dance floor grouped together and the groom standing with his back towards the group, tosses the garter behind him on the count of three. It's suggested that you do toss and not to try to flick like a rubber band the garter as often the elastic is not enough to spring it very far.

Garter Placement: Traditionally, whoever catches the bouquet and garter are invited back to the dance floor where the lady who caught the bouquet is seated. The bride and groom are invited to stand behind them as the gentleman who caught the garter positions himself in front of the lady and on cue, moves the garter up her right leg. This is just a gesture and is not meant to be permanent so he then slides the garter back down her leg and everyone applauds.

Last Dance: This typically would take place about 10 – 15 minutes prior to the end of the reception and most times is a slower song - but it doesn't have to be! We'll invite you two out to start things off and then invite everyone else to join in. Some couples who debated what song their first dance would be will opt to use the second first dance song possibility as their choice for the last dance. Some couples forego the special last dance altogether. After the last dance is done, we'll play a couple of great "end of the night" songs bringing the celebration to a nice close.

Anniversary Dance: (Optional) This dance is when all the married couples (including you two!) are invited to the dance floor. We will have an appropriate song playing (your choice or ours) and will announce something like "any couple married less than 1 year, please step to the side. Any couple married less than 2 years, 5 years, 10 years and such will then be asked to step aside. Through the process of elimination, we'll determine who the longest married couple is. Often, couples will give the longest married couple the bouquet (in lieu of throwing it) or a bottle of champagne or other small gift. Perfect picture taking opportunity!

Remember, we'll help you come up with a timeline that will flow naturally and will coordinate with your other vendors so that you can relax, dance and thoroughly enjoy being with your friends and family. Don't hesitate to contact us anytime for additional ideas and personal assistance.