Modern WEDDINGS

| And how to choose your theme |

You've decided to dispense with tradition, but with so many options out there, making a choice can be tricky. Here, three experts reveal how to create a contemporary day to remember – and not a meringue in sight…

Weddings have come a long way from meringue dresses, peach ribbons, inappropriate speeches, ball and chain jokes and the infamous conga line. When planning a modern wedding, the main rule is there are no rules. "You can still take traditional roles, but put a twist on them," says Susie Young, founder of award-winning wedding planners Knot & Pop (knotandpop.com). "There are so many aspects that can be re-written if couples are given the confidence and ideas."

Traditions you might want to consider ditching or adapting include top tables, speeches, what to wear, who gives the bride away, cake or no cake and where to sit. "The days of having one main 'top' table where the bride, groom and their respective families sit to face their guests are becoming a thing of the past," society wedding planner Bruce Russell (bybrucerussell.com) tells us. "It is increasingly seen as too formal and superior." And when it comes to outfits, "The bride could wear a tailored jumpsuit from Whistles, rather than a white dress," suggests Susie, adding, "You could also choose a best woman or man instead of maids."

"With formulaic weddings in luxury hotels, there is only a certain amount you can do to make them different," notes Sophie Stuart, head of creative at exclusive event planners Lillingston (lillingston.com). "Brides are much more knowledgeable now. They look at their social media platforms and to Pinterest," she adds.

An increased departure from the traditional wedding format is exciting, but has created its own set of problems, now that there's so much choice. So we asked Knot & Pop's Susie to run through six of her most memorable weddings, along with tips from Sophie and Bruce to help make your big day a showstopper.

HOW TO MAKE SURE IT ALL GOES TO PLAN

Bruce Russell, wedding planner

Use the venue as a guide

"The venue is where the magic happens, so if it's a prestigious place, why not imbue some of its history into the event? Recreate a menu that dates back to a significant historical event or use the architecture to inspire the design of invitations. If the venue is a castle, for example, think about dressing staff in period clothes, or find a sword to cut the first slice of wedding cake."

Let little details have a big impact

"Rather than focusing on the obvious, why not look at something like a masquerade theme. Send a mask as the invitation, which guests can then bring to wear at the event, then add a dash of masquerade mystery to the entertainment – consider booking an act that people can hear but not see and perhaps, in lieu of a traditional 'first dance', offer guests 'dance cards', which can be filled and used as place or seating cards, too."

Dress to impress

"Imagine a destination wedding where the couple both love football – it does happen! Consider designing personalised jerseys for guests to wear at a welcome dinner. A monochrome black and white colour scheme for the table would be another subtle homage to the sport."

It's all about you

"The most important thing for partners to remember when they're planning their big day is that this should be a representation of themselves. Keep it personal and when it comes to themes, avoid making any drastic choices that are out of keeping with how you are as a couple – people will notice."