



Say "I Do"

Ready to tie the knot, but need some inspiration? **Kate Springer** chats with three wedding insiders about recent trends, under-the-radar venues, and need-to-know tricks of the trade



SONYA YEUNG

Eight years ago, Sonya Yeung started Bliss Creations, which specializes in local and destination weddings. Since then, she's become a regional expert on all things weddings.

The List: How have Hong Kong weddings changed since you started?

SY: From day one, we've specialized in out-of-the-box weddings, and we've seen a growing demand for more individualized occasions. Because Hong Kong venues can be limiting, couples are moving away from the big banquet affairs and seeking intimate and creative celebrations. If they have to satisfy their parents, then an increasingly common compromise is to hold two distinct events with entirely different guest lists.

The List: What other trends have you noticed?

SY: More people are spreading out celebrations to entertain out-of-town visitors. We're often asked to organize three-day and four-day itineraries that offer holistic Hong Kong experiences. This might include a tram ride up to The Peak, a junk to Lamma or a traditional dim sum.

The List: Could you describe a particularly memorable wedding?

SY: We recently did a big two-day event for a couple on their family's Lantau property, which sits directly under the Tian Tan Buddha. It encapsulated a lot of things about the couple. They even designed custom plates and stationery with buddha motifs that the guests could take home.

The List: What are some unique venues in Hong Kong?

SY: We work a lot with 131 in Sai Kung; even under a canopy, it looks beautiful. We also really like the Crown Wine Cellar, which is an old bunker that's been turned into several underground wine-and-cigar clubhouses. Aqua is a great venue for more upbeat events and Hullet House has a lovely colonial feel.



The List: What style trends are you seeing?

SY: Last year was heritage and vintage chic. This year is very much shabby chic, which has a more rustic spin on it. That means more burlap, imperfect gold, natural woods, cracked vases, vintage metals, and flowers that are wild and eclectic; it has a beautiful rawness to it.

The List: How has Bliss Creations approached cross-cultural marriages?

SY: This has become quite common in Hong Kong and can be a lot of fun. We've done a lion dance crossed with a New Zealand Haka dance before. We've also melded together an Indian-Chinese-Western ceremony,



JOYCE YUNG

After living and working abroad for several years, native Hongkonger Joyce Yung returned five years ago and started Joyce Yung Productions, taking pre-wedding photos of couples, as well as providing on-the-day photography services.

The List: What are your favorite places to photograph couples?

Joyce Yung: It really depends on the couple; I try to find what's meaningful to them, and

which included cultural offerings, a tea ceremony and bridal pick-up games, followed by a tandoor dinner. It was a great way for guests to learn about the couple's cultures!

The List: Any other advice for brides-to-be?

SY: Start sleeping immediately; otherwise, you'll start running on fumes in no time.

Get Accustomed

Effie Mac from Plus One Events Planning explains the basics of Chinese weddings:

- The wedding date is chosen based on auspicious signs.
- Guests usually bring *lai see*—red envelopes filled with cash—instead of presents.

- Red and white colors are reserved for the bride, so don't sport these hues!
- If a plate or glass breaks during the banquet, don't be surprised when guests shout the Chinese equivalent of "Knock on Wood."
- Getting married the same month as a Chinese friend? Don't expect an invite: It's not personal—just bad luck!

then choose settings that fit. In particular, I love the contrasts of alleyways, as well as places such as Shek O, where the beach, village and rocks provide a natural backdrop.

The List: What photography trends are you seeing?

JY: More and more people are looking for natural-style snapshots. They want pictures that feel lifelike and less posed—which matches my style. Of course, some posing has to happen, but it tends to be more casual; I try to bring out personalities and tell the couple's story.

The List: What are some of the best venues for wedding photography?

JY: In general, outdoor weddings are ideal because of the natural light. Specifically, Jumbo and Top Deck are popular and quite iconic; Bass River Country Club is nice for small weddings; Maison 1882 in Tai Tam overlooks the water and has a lovely lawn.

The List: Any advice for couples?

JY: I think the main thing is just to relax and have a good time; if the couple

is stressed, it's hard to change that in a photo. Also, try to make time for portraits of the wedding party: It's hard to get everyone together once the party starts, and you'll want to have those photos down the road.

Budget-Cutting Tips

Evelyn Mills of Marriage Maestros, a luxury planning agency, shares three simple ways to slash costs:

- **Bargain Bubbles:** Instead of champagne, use upscale prosecco or cava.
- **Tech Tricks:** Send e-vites instead of printed stationery.
- **The Shortlist:** The fastest way to salvage your budget? Cut the number of guests.
- **Evelyn's Tip:** Splurge on a great photographer; no matter what, the photos will look great!