

From Bridal Planner to Bride

By Joshua Baethge

Rachel Burt, owner and lead wedding planner of As You Wish Wedding and Events, has coordinated countless weddings. In June, she finally got to experience the flip side when she married her fiancé, artist Abel Garcia.

"I really enjoy the process of planning a wedding and designing it," Burt said. "I knew that I wanted to do that for my own wedding."

As she does with her clients, Burt worked to create a celebration that reflected her personal style and her fiancé's. Still, despite being an expert on all things weddings, she struggled deciding on a dress.

"I was a little freaked out because I couldn't find something that I liked," Burt said.

Help came from an unexpected but widely known source. After trying on more than 100 different gowns, Burt wrote a letter to the TLC show *Say Yes to the Dress* last summer. In November, she jetted off to film in New York with her mother, maid of honor, and cousin. By that time, she had found her wedding gown, so the show helped her find a reception dress.

Potential trouble arose in the spring when she learned her episode would air June 3, just two weeks before her wedding date. Another bride previously sued the show for revealing her dress before the wedding. Burt had a different idea.

"I thought I could either be really upset, or I can just make a party out of it, which is what I do," she said.

Her watching party at The Joule is one of the many fond memories Burt has from the months leading up to her wedding. She often recalls special moments like spending time with her mom, choosing floral

arrangements, and watching her fiancé get emotional during an engagement session. She strives to create similar experiences for her clients.

"I want them to not only look back on the wedding day, but also think back on the planning process as a whole and how much fun it was," Burt said.

According to Burt, it's important for wedding planners to develop a relationship with their clients to better understand their likes and tastes. Burt starts by asking a series of questions. If a couple lives in the area, she may go to dinner or happy hour with them to get a better idea of who they are.

"I want to know what they like to do individually and what they like to do as a couple so that I can get us started in the process," Burt said.

The next step in the planning process is establishing a budget. Money issues can be one of the biggest sources of wedding stress. If an amount is agreed upon early, the rest of the planning process tends to be much more enjoyable.

"You have to be respectful of people's budgets," Burt said. "Then we can have a conversation on how to get the most bang for your buck."

After that, she said it's simply a matter of pulling everything together so that the couple has a day they will never forget. Burt said having been through the process herself allows her to empathize more with her clients.

"I felt like I could before, but it's a whole other thing once you've gone through it," she said.



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