



Tradition, without the fuss. That's what local brides are asking for these days, say the experts who cater to them.

Call it the Meghan Markle effect. When she walked down the aisle last year to marry Prince Harry, her Givenchy gown was regal, yet modern — a simple neckline falling just off her shoulders, sleeves cropped at bracelet length, no obvious embroidery or other adornment. The bouquet she carried was created by a chic London florist, but also included several flowers

that Harry had handpicked from the couple's garden the day before. Perhaps her biggest nod to royal convention was the elaborately embroidered 16-foot veil trailing behind her (a look that's also catching on locally, bucking the keep-things-casual trend).

"We've had a lot of brides come in wanting a very clean, classic, traditional look," says Andrea Greene, manager of The Wedding Studio in Greenwood. Markle, she says, was definitely an influence.



Rebecca Shehorn Photography



Stacy Able Photography

“Simple” and “traditional” are also buzzwords at Sweet Escape Cake Co., where more couples are opting for a classic three-tier cake, with sheet cakes for cutting in the kitchen to feed larger crowds as necessary, says Scott McCorkle, operations manager of the southside Indianapolis bakery.

Here’s what else is new, say wedding pros:

Gowns

The typical bride in this area is a fairly classic one, says Greene. “She’s not super over the top; she just wants to feel pretty.”

For many women, that means a strapless dress, the last thing they start out looking for. “So many brides come in saying they do not want strapless and then leave in a strapless gown,” says Greene.

That’s because shoppers have had experiences with ready-to-wear strapless tops or dresses with little to no structure, so the gowns are uncomfortable or constantly threaten to fall down. Or because most of us have seen a bride in a strapless dress that didn’t totally work. But, says Greene, designers have made major improvements to the style over the last 10 years, and now it’s ultra-flattering. “It’s just the trend that’s not going anywhere,” she says.

On the other end of the spectrum, long sleeves are “super in” right now, says Greene, especially when sheer and trimmed with a bit of lace. Also hot:

anything detachable, like a long skirt that unhooks to reveal a shorter one for the reception, or a sweater whose sleeves can come off, giving you two looks in one. The trendy neckline is a plunging one, which isn’t as scary as it sounds, promises Greene. “A lot of people get really nervous about it, but it’s just elongating,” she says. “A longer plunge will draw the eye down and make you look taller.”

One trend that works with any kind of neckline: the statement earring, which has largely replaced the statement necklace.

As for the finishing touches? Veils are ranging from the long side (think waltz-length, which hits the back of your calves, or cathedral-length, like Markle’s) to totally nonexistent. “A lot of my brides are not wearing veils,” says Ashleigh Fisher, event coordinator at The Garment Factory in Franklin and a wedding planning veteran. Instead, they might opt for flowers, ornate headpieces, or nothing at all.

Flowers

Bouquets, boutonnieres, centerpieces and other floral elements are increasingly of the garden variety, in a good way — meant to evoke blooms plucked fresh from the backyard. Even for the most formal of events, “most brides are wanting kind of loose, wild, organic bouquets,” says Dawn VanBlarcum, who owns P&D Flower Farm with her husband, Phil. Nothing is too carefully crafted; instead, the modern bouquet cascades down past a bride’s hands, in every direction, looking picture-perfect from every angle. “It doesn’t really have a front or a back; however they want to hold it, it looks good,” says VanBlarcum.

Greenery plays a much bigger role now, with eucalyptus an especially popular choice at both P&D Flower Farm and Steve’s Flowers and Gifts, which has locations in Greenwood and southside Indianapolis. Like VanBlarcum, owner Steve Huth has noticed brides asking for more greenery as well as more color instead of traditional all-white arrangements, with blush-pink-and-burgundy an enduringly popular combination. “It definitely leans toward a garden look,” says Huth.

Big, bountiful blooms packed with petals — think roses, yes, but also peonies, ranunculus, anemones and hydrangeas — are on the rise, agree both florists. For the

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next few months, at least, VanBlarcum especially likes dahlias. “If a bride asks for a specific flower, we try to give them that,” she says. “But we focus more on color and quality. You can’t get peonies in August. Dahlias are late-summer, early fall.”

Smaller touches are also making a bigger splash. For the modern boutonniere, “you no longer have just a rose, like the typical ‘bachelorette rose,’” says VanBlarcum. “It’s more a grouping of several types of greenery and several small blooms or buds. Rather than one big thing, you might have seven small things.” The traditional corsage is increasingly giving way to the “cuff” style, like a bracelet made of flowers.

Cakes

The big trend here is a rise in groom’s cakes, says McCorkle of Sweet Escape Cake Co. Whether for the rehearsal dinner or wedding day, these cakes are increasingly tailored to the guy’s interests, from his sports teams of choice to hobbies like hunting or dirt-biking.

For both groom’s cakes and wedding cakes, “we’ve also seen many more se-



lections of non-traditional flavors,” says McCorkle. “Almond, chocolate and white are being replaced by raspberry, lemon and quite a few carrot cakes.” Fondant rules. Once more of a niche offering, it

now far surpasses orders for buttercream at Sweet Escape.

Wedding-Day Rituals

That moment when a bride approaches the altar and the groom sees her in her full wedding regalia for the first time? Over-rated, many couples have decided, opting for a staged “first look” instead.

This is a chance for the bride and groom to see each other for the first time before the ceremony. “It’s usually the groom standing somewhere picturesque, and the bride comes up behind him, giving a little tap on the shoulder,” says Fisher. “There are two photographers: a shooter for the bride’s reaction and a shooter for the groom’s reaction.”

The idea is to rid the mood of wedding-day jitters and give the couple some special time together. Plus, they can knock out a lot of portrait-shooting that would otherwise have happened after the ceremony, allowing them to get to the reception faster and spend more time with guests.

“The last few years, it was kind of half and half, with a lot of people still waiting to see the bride at the ceremony,” says Fisher. “I’m seeing that first looks are definitely becoming the norm.”



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