

Wedding Concepts

Cape Winelands weddings have the wow factor

It seems that a wedding in the Cape Winelands may well be the ultimate statement for those seeking style-laden nuptial celebrations. And now, more than ever, wedding locations and venues are upping their bespoke offerings to meet the demands of their savvy clientele.



If society columns are anything to go by, bespoke, big-expense weddings are bigger than ever. Locally, the Western Cape's status as one of the world's leading wedding destinations continues to grow and industry leaders Wedding Concepts are at the forefront of this industry statistic.

For many people weddings are status and social events in one. And in the industry, Wedding Concepts is the name to know. Managing Director Christina Holt and her team have created hundreds of

unique celebrations across the spectrum of pristine beach locations, chic urban establishments and idyllic countryside retreats. But, says Christina, the Cape Winelands still comes out tops. 'Our clients love the region's rich cultural heritage, its magnificent natural beauty and the glorious weather, as well as the great value-for-money honeymoon, gourmet dining, leisure and travel offerings that await them there,' she explains.

Limiting their commitments to fifty carefully selected weddings a year,

Wedding Concepts and its sister company Travel Concepts are responsible for over 4 000 guests winging their way to the Cape annually. 'Our international clients are looking for an absolutely unique experience for themselves and their guests, and they like the fact that we deal with every single aspect, literally from concept to creation.'

Christina maintains that finding the right venue is key, since the venue will dictate the overall wedding design in terms of style, guest numbers and flow



THIS PAGE Say 'I do' in full colour, with Wedding Concepts' expert team and their exclusive Winelands venue partners. OPPOSITE Exchange vows in style in front of the gracious Hawksmoor House.



FROM LEFT With Wedding Concepts, top-notch food and entertainment are a given. BOTTOM Pre-reception alfresco cocktail lounge at Allée Bleue. OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT The detail's in the decor at Hawksmoor House's Blue Barn. TOP RIGHT Final bridal preparations in the Grey Room at Hawksmoor House. BOTTOM Majestic marquee celebration at Allée Bleue.

of events, but it will also have an impact on budget parameters. 'The relationships we have with our partner venues are an essential factor. Over the years we have come to know every nuance of every venue available to us and we are able to confidently suggest a number of options with the advantages of each clearly set out. Matching each client's wedding ideas with the right venue for them is such a pleasurable part of the job – we're matchmakers,' laughs Christina.

Two vastly different wedding venues that have proven to be regular partners for the company are *Allée Bleue Estate* (www.alleebleue.com) and Hawksmoor House. The first is a large-scale working farm and wine estate in the

Franschhoek Valley that boasts a myriad differing wedding opportunities catering for numbers that range from three (including the officiant) to 300. 'When we bring prospective couples here they are always amazed at how many options are available to them – we've created sophisticated indoor winter soirees, intimate celebrations in the palm garden, and erected huge marquees in front of the manor house,' says Christina, who rates this sprawling destination as one of the most versatile in the area. She says that the newly launched Le Grand Hall, the flagship facility of the estate and the largest indoor venue in the Winelands, with its smart interior and state-of-the-art technology, is

undoubtedly setting a new standard for über weddings. And with capacity for 300, it is set to be the ballroom venue *du jour* for society bridal couples.

Hawksmoor House (www.hawksmoor.co.za) in Stellenbosch, on the other hand, is an intimate (14-suite) luxury boutique guesthouse and wine estate that, according to Christina, is the perfect setting for a genteel gourmet luncheon or a bespoke gathering for select family and friends. 'Our close working relationship with Hawksmoor House has helped us coordinate weddings that speak a shared language – understated, supremely elegant affairs where the luxuries lie in the details.' Details like lavish guest gifts, intricate accommodation arrangements for couples and their guests and a host of unique concierge-like offerings in between. Christina explains that Hawksmoor House's flexibility ensures its popularity: 'We've conceived the most beautiful celebrations with the best decor and lighting in the Blue Barn, and we've also produced marquee weddings in their immaculate gardens,' she says.

With a location sorted, the next aspect couples tend to turn their attention to is the point-of-difference factors. 'We have relationships with a host of world-class chefs, decor specialists, renowned photographers and top-notch entertainment professionals, and this is a huge advantage for our style-conscious, time-strapped customer base.' One such photographer is *Jean-Pierre Uys* (www.jeanpierrephotography.co.za) who is



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now sought-after by brides internationally, who fly him around the world to shoot their big day, says Christina. 'We love working with talented partners like Jean-Pierre who consistently push the boundaries of innovation and excellence.'

With their many years of experience in this highly competitive industry, the Wedding Concepts team is also well versed in arranging out-of-the-ordinary requests. From celebrity singers to trapeze artists, stilt walkers and fire throwers to African children's choirs, nothing phases them. The Wedding Concepts

team thrives on out-of-the-box requests such as negotiating helicopter landing rights, securing first-class seats to last-minute destinations, sourcing out-of-season blooms and tracking down rare vintage wines.

As bookings for weddings for 2011 are signed and sealed, and the Wedding Concepts team starts planning its next round of summer celebrations, so a new generation of brides is preparing for their big day. When questioned what the next big thing in weddings will be, Christina explains, 'We're seeing more and more lavish

weddings, where absolutely no expense is spared, where French Champagne is on tap, dynamic entertainment is a given and pre- and post-wedding travel arrangements involve five-star offerings.' Perhaps this is because people are waiting longer to get married nowadays and have more disposable income or perhaps because, in today's fast-paced world, love and celebrating it is more in fashion than ever before? One thing's for sure though, if you celebrate your wedding in the Cape Winelands, you're already more than halfway to an unforgettable day.



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Wedding Concepts is Cape Town's premier wedding planning and management business, handcrafting weddings of distinction for discerning clients from across the globe. 'We don't coordinate weddings, we manage the process whereby vision and dream become a tacit reality. With our proven expertise we provide the spark that ignites the imagination of our clients.'

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