

**FOODIE TALKS****BY SUBHABRATA MAITRA**

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We decided to get married in 2007, and as we lived in Mumbai and worked with hotels, we could not take advantage of the holidays and have our wedding over Christmas. The only thing I was certain about was the time of the year which was less busy i.e. May-June. Being from hotels, I know the food and service is the most important factor in any wedding, and have to be of highest standards.



In 2007, most had hardly heard of destination weddings, and during that time, we were dependant on venue booking. We booked the venue and fixed a local caterer to cook the local favourites for our guests.

I knew I made the right decision. I can be indecisive but also love organisation, so I went in with a million ideas as to how we wanted our day to be a reflection of us. Sudipta was always open to ideas and nothing was too much trouble, but the real work didn't start until we went back to Kolkata, our home city.

We had to organise our entire wedding in the 2 weeks as we had only 3 weeks of holidays. That included the dress, suits, photographers - the lot. It was such a stressful time, and then we made numerous changes. And then the wedding happened.

Slowly the era came when weddings really became the hotel's specialty and they made it all look so easy. They were so professional and efficient that anyone who walked in had their nerves calmed down after the first meeting. The managers spoke for hours as to what guests wanted and what they were hoping to achieve. I loved their openness and willingness to be honest. Often at times when you are planning a wedding, suppliers will tell you what they think you want to hear.

The glamour and decadence of the ballroom of a hotel is indescribable. The wedding is truly the best day of anyone's lives. The hotels took all the pains and as one looked back on the wedding, they remembered the day as a special opportunity to create a lasting impression as authentic as the couple.

"Honesty on a Plate" is what wedding guests can expect from any good caterer on their special day. Let us understand that food is a big part of a successful wedding and chefs are happy to help you plan your dream wedding menus. I have been lucky to attend two of the biggest weddings that India has witnessed and the lessons have been immense.

I have seen flowers pouring in quantities. Although that was a big fat Indian wedding, it is undeniable that flowers in the décor are among the most crucial aspects of modern weddings. I believe flowers are irreplaceable and are the ever-green jewels of wedding décor. In terms of floral décor, the trends change from season to season. A lot of English cut flowers and French garden conservatory looks involving a lot of organic materials, dried flowers and

The changing face of the desi wedding



roots, and different kinds of green, fresh leaves and berries comes into play. A trend this year is tone-on-tone colours like beige on beige, etc. For the cocktail function, people prefer exotic cut flowers.

By the way, holding a wedding at a hotel is not as charming as it used to be. Extravagant venues are the demand of the day.

In regards to flowers, I would say that roses are the most popular wedding flowers in the world and peonies are the costliest wedding flowers in the world.

As hotel weddings are becoming passé, the new concept of "local meets global," which is just hip speak for destination weddings, is becoming ever popular. These often entail a lot of planning and ground work, and generally a "local" or "ethnic" flavour is maintained in one of the functions to bring in the nostalgic factor to the celebrations that are held overseas. For cocktails or reception, people love to do English, Caribbean, Florence-themed settings to retain the elegance of the foreign locale.

As hoteliers, we often face challenging requests. You can have a client who wants a floral dome of pink rosebuds for the wedding and then the event company will need to import thousands of bundles of roses of the same colour and size which will be a huge challenge.

The destination wedding trend started off with locales in the far east being fashionable, but now the eastern European region is also becoming more popular due to price and flexibility. Clients demand that the wedding be organised in the local traditions of the destination besides their own. Normally, the wedding functions carry on for two nights or three, depending on logistics and the destination. Themed functions are definitely conducted to make the wedding experience an out-of-the-box one.

I sometimes turn the pages of my wedding album, well, to be honest, hardly sometimes as the album is so bulky and



stereotypical, but now when I am in this event management business, I see that clients are moving away from traditional group pictures taken on the stage to candid photography. They want us to tell a story through photo-documenting the wedding and seem more willing to spend on creativity and quality. The client's involvement today is far more participative and the level of encouragement we receive for creativity in our work is more than it used to be. In fact, pre-wedding shoots have become popular and have moved on from being only about clicking a few nice pictures of the couple together in an informal setup to being one that tells a story of their journey. These shoots have become an essential aspect of any wedding. People today don't mind travelling to an exotic destination or a grand setting to get their pre-wedding shoots done. Today, couples want grand and ambitious themes, backgrounds, and settings. It is now more of a short film for many couples. Photographers need a few sittings with the bride and groom and sometimes even with friends and family to arrive at a story and then go ahead and plan a shoot schedule to capture the entire story with the couple being the heart and soul of it. Every minute detail from concept of the shoot and the attire to the location and the props are planned. An even more modern way is video storytelling. When it comes to videos, the demand for short crisp videos has skyrocketed. Earlier, people wanted every moment and every aspect of their event to be captured. Now, the demand for a very short video with a palpable emotional angle is given more importance than the regular full-length video. Everyone wants their wedding to be captured in a cinematic fashion, and not merely a boring recording of the event. People love the beauty shots that are taken while the bride is getting ready. Every couple wants their story to be told in a short, concise video.