

Well-Rehearsed

Avoid rehearsal dinner mishaps by following these tips

■ The rehearsal dinner is *almost* as important as the wedding—it's the kickoff to your wedding weekend and helps set the tone for your big day. We consulted event planners extraordinaire Ivy Robinson of Ivy Robinson Events and Heidi Crowder of Carolina Weddings and Events to get the dos and don'ts of planning a rehearsal dinner in 2014. —Blake Miller



Make it wholly different from your wedding.

"A lot of people make the mistake of having the rehearsal look and be like the wedding," says Robinson, who cautions that guests may end up bored attending two nights of parties that are nearly identical. Instead, Robinson encourages couples to make their rehearsal dinner strikingly different from the wedding in terms of theme, food served, and music played.

Keep in mind: Size doesn't really matter.

These days, explains Robinson, rehearsal dinners can be as small as 10 people or as big as 200. There is no right (or wrong) guest-list size.

Pick a theme.

Whether it's a Lowcountry boil with bluegrass music, jeans, and cowboy boots or it's a formal sit-down dinner with a garden aesthetic, pick a theme, says Crowder.

Skip electronic invites.

"The invitation helps set the tone for the rehearsal dinner," says Robinson. Electronic invites aren't formal enough.



Provide a dress code for guests.

"Share how formal your event is with your bridal party and guests," says Crowder. "I can't tell you how many groomsmen show up in jeans when the girls are in fancy dresses."



Assign toasts.

To keep from having too many mic-happy guests pledge their love for the newlyweds at the wedding reception, consider having the best man and maid of honor give their toasts at the rehearsal dinner instead, suggests Robinson.

Decide who pays.

Though it's customary for the groom's family to pay for and host the rehearsal dinner, it's not necessarily the rule, says Robinson. She explains that it often depends on the financial situation of the bride and groom, who often pay for the rehearsal dinner themselves.



Make it fun.

An event such as an oyster roast or pig pickin' where guests play cornhole, for example, or country line dance, says Robinson, gets people involved and keeps them entertained.



Destination weddings?

Invite everyone. When it comes to destination weddings, different rules apply, advises Robinson: "If your guests doled out several thousand dollars to get to your destination wedding, it's your responsibility as the host to entertain and feed them." This includes the rehearsal dinner.