

I DO

My wedding story: Katie and Sean Welsh

By KATIE WELSH

Both Sean and I were born and raised in the Catskills. Therefore, we wanted to stay in the region, use local vendors and capture the beauty of this area, something we both know and love—and bring together our love for outdoors, good food and family. Our goal was to create a unique and unforgettable experience, not only for ourselves but for our loved ones as well.

Before planning began, we decided we would throw out the phrase “this is what you do at weddings,” because we knew there was no way we would follow any sort of rule book when it came to this celebration.

Venue

Getting married at Handsome Hollow was a dream come true. The venue offers endless opportunities where couples can be free with imagination, no wedding the same. We had many of our guests anticipating our wedding because it was going to be in the mountains, out of the norm, away from the city, and they weren't sure what to expect, knowing that Sean and I both love entertaining. Having a big family—over 200 invited—there were several children that attended. Our guests couldn't have been more appreciative of our thinking of the kids, giving them plenty to do and the space to run wild and free.



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Katie Welsh gets ready for her wedding day, wearing a dress handmade by her mother.

Photographs by Dean Cerrati

My WEDDING STORY

Continued from page 1

Handmade dresses

My wedding dress was carefully designed and created from scratch by my mom (Mellonee Cappiello). Together we collaborated on the look and feel of the dress to ensure it fit the overall theme of the wedding. We added special touches by cutting her wedding dress and removing the lace, pearls and buttons and sewing these to mine.

After she was done, she made my shoes, my purse, cute dresses to get ready in for the bridesmaids and the flower-girl dress. The flower-girl dress was designed just for Maeve, using the same material as mine. Maeve wanted a dress she could twirl and dance in, so she could feel like a princess. I have never seen a four-year-old more excited to be part of a wedding.



Cheese-wheel ceremony vs. cake cutting

We decided to have a cheese wheel cutting ceremony with large wheels of cheese that were flown in from one of my favorite cheese castles in Wisconsin. Each wheel was carefully chosen and tasted along the way, decorated with fresh grapes, displayed on top of a rustic barrel, and set underneath the hugging tree made for a perfect backdrop. Once the ceremony ended, everyone headed

toward the cheese tower, grabbed a mismatched vintage coupe glass filled with champagne and waited for us to cut the cheese.

Our guests were fascinated by this, listening to "Signed, Sealed, Delivered," and a speech from my older brother. After the ceremony, toast and tears, the cheese tower was set on the harvest table for all to enjoy.



Planning + decor + DIY projects

We chose to take on the adventure of a lot of DIY projects along the way. We built our own custom cornhole set, signage with reclaimed barn wood and hand-drawn signage made from old rustic French windows, and designed our own wedding stationery suite. We added stems of lavender in each invite so that our guests would get a sense and smell of what the event theme would be for our big day. It inspired vendors and guests to match our wedding logo (see bottom of page 4).

We wanted everything to be simple, chic, with a touch of vintage, as Handsome Hollow offers beauty. Adding a lavender toss with sheer paper cones, filled with

handfuls of little lavender buds made for a Pinterest-worthy entrance as our guests entered the ceremony site. As we said "I do" and walked down the aisle, we were showered in good luck as guests threw their cones in the air.

We used a few props from the venue and eliminated escort cards by having each guest name pinned on a decorated chicken-wire frame. The photo booth was staged with props that represented our favorite things (sports, comics and cats). We created a kids' corner with bubbles, crayons, masks and pinwheels—something for everyone!

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Most memorable moment

Sean and I had an epic summer, with tons of planning, projects and parties leading up to the actual wedding day. It was very hard to come back to reality with friends and family traveling from all over the country and even from overseas, including Africa. In the meantime, working with our DJ, we had picked our favorite songs, eliminated songs we did not want to hear. We chose "Shout" as Sean's must-

hear favorite wedding song. He and I were on the dance floor when the song came on, surrounded by 180 people who love us, singing and shouting along. It was an overwhelming feeling that cannot be put into words. Not to mention that the photographer captured the shot perfectly. Neither of us will ever forget that moment, it was the most memorable of the night. Truly, the best day ever.



The bridal party stands on the porch of the Handsome Hollow farmhouse.

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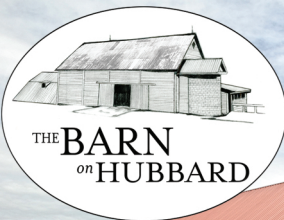


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Flower girl Maeve wanted a dress she could “twirl in.” Here, she has a special dance with the ring bearer.

My WEDDING STORY

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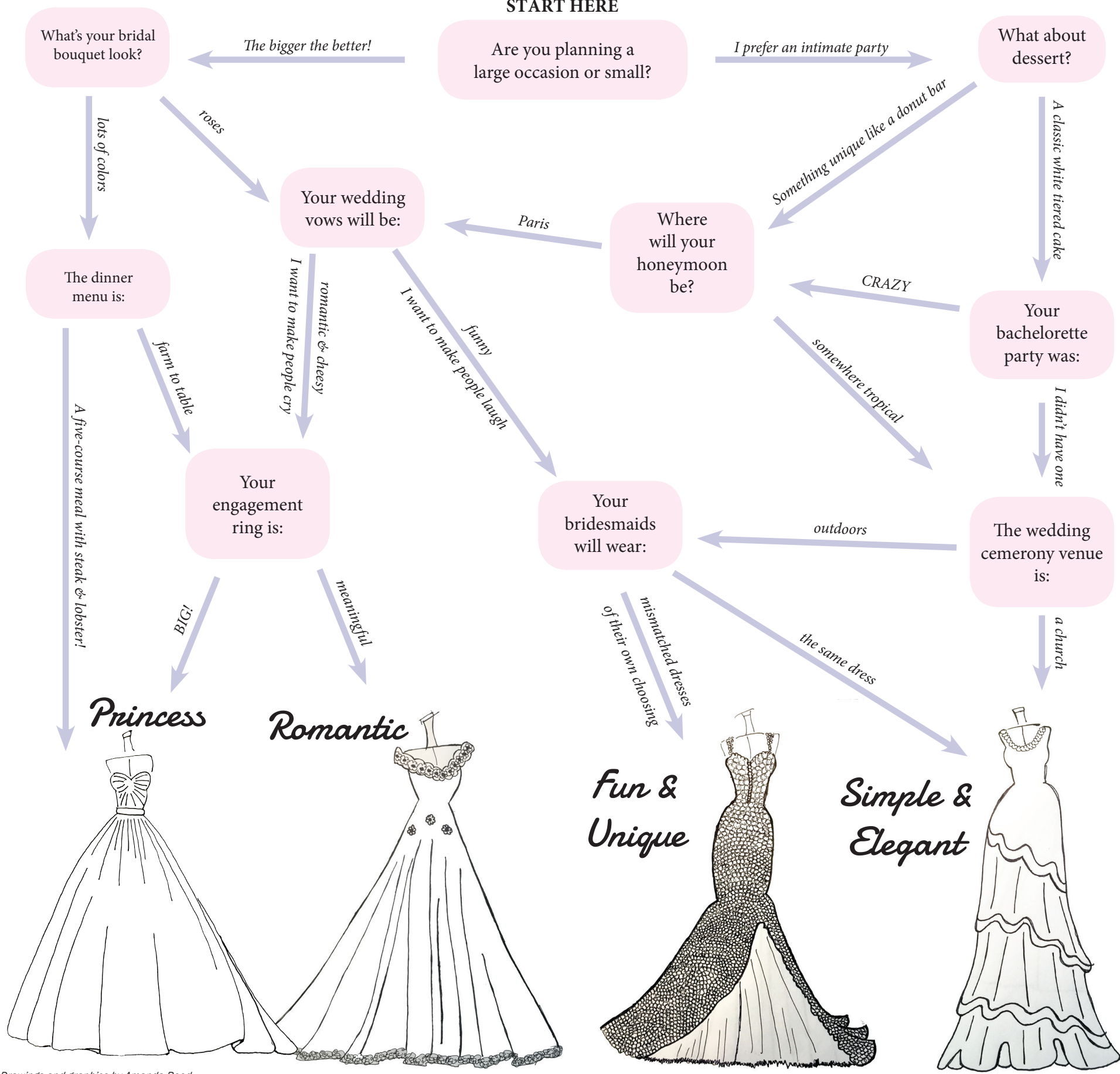
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Drawings and graphics by Amanda Reed

The wedding planner

A comforting presence on your busy day

By ISABEL BRAVERMAN

Hilary Smith says planning a wedding without a wedding planner is like building a house without an architect. She runs her own company, H. Smith and Co., in the Catskills and Poconos area. Since the inception of her company three years ago, she works with couples one-on-one to tailor-make wedding plans and make their visions come true.

The services she offers are either a whole wedding plan or “day-of-coordination” services. For the first option, her involvement starts about one year in advance, and she works on finding the venue to the caterer to the flowers and everything in between. For day-of-coordination services, she steps in only on the day of the wedding and helps things run smoothly. In addition, H. Smith and Co. can rent vintage china, silver, props and decor for any event, not just weddings.

Smith has been in the wedding planning business for a long time, earning her chops with a wedding planner in Litchfield, CT. “I worked for a really exclusive wedding planner. That’s where I learned [the business],” she said. Now Smith brings her skills to our area, as well as her many friends and connections. Couples can choose their vendors and bring them in from other places, but Smith knows people with exceptional services in the area. For example, she often works with Earth Girl Flowers to make flower arrangements and bouquets. “Up here we have a huge community of what I like to call ‘frienders.’ They’re people in the community who are working at a reasonable price, who are great at what they do, and we all know each other and work together.”

Many people might wonder, “Why do I need a wedding planner?” Saving on time and money is what a good



Hilary Smith

Contributed photo

wedding planner should do, Smith explained. “I know where to spend, where not to spend, who’s reliable, and who’s a good value.”

The process of hiring Smith as your wedding planner starts with a free consultation. Simply contact her through the website (<https://www.hsmithandco.com>) to set up a meeting. From there, the next step is

to agree on a proposal. After that, the real planning begins.

Smith works with the couples on their vision and budget, and “melds them together.” The hardest part of wedding planning can be staying on budget, and that’s something that Smith helps with. “People look at Pinterest and all these things, and they don’t realize that that picture, just that picture, costs someone like five grand just for that beautiful bar scene,” she said. “So it’s not always realistic. I go over with them: what do you love, what are your non-negotiables, and what can we do with the budget?” One



Photos by LC Allison

Wedding planner Hilary Smith can help couples set up a backyard wedding with a tent, and she organizes everything from the catering to the tent setup.



money-saving tip she gives people planning their wedding is to hold it on an “off-day,” not a Friday or Saturday, and during the off-season, like a winter wedding.

The next steps include seeing the site and creating an outline and timeline. Smith works both with weddings held at venues or at a home. She said that a common misconception is that backyard weddings save money. “They can be so magical, but you’re building your own venue, just for 24 hours, which can get expensive,” she said. “So I’ll come out and I’ll look at your house or property and

say if I think it’s doable and what would work. Because not everything will work on every property. I’m happy to go out and see everyone for a free wedding consult.”

She then works on getting estimates from all the vendors, collaborating on the concept of the wedding and designing the ceremony. “There’s so many different ideas, from the traditional religious wedding, to a Quaker circle, to their shamanic friend declaring them married.” After that she does a walk-through of the venue and maps out where everything will go, and talks with everyone to go over who

is doing what and the timing of everything. “How long the photographer is coming dictates when we need to shoot photos,” she said. “Once I confirm everyone’s roles and time, then I do a master timeline of the day. It starts with hair and makeup, all the way down to the next day when people are coming to take their stuff back, the breakdown.”

Two weeks before the big day, she confirms with all the vendors on date, time, location and directions. And she offers knowledge to people who are coming from out-of-area. “You might want to download directions if you’re going to Long Eddy or Tyler Hill because you won’t have cell service, and you won’t be able to call me to tell me you’re lost.”

She’s there when the tent is being installed. And on the big day, she says she is the first person there and the last to leave. She does everything from set-up, to managing the timeline, and overall making sure the day runs smoothly, including “cajoling, bribing, yelling—although sweetly—all behind the scenes to make sure it all goes the way they had wanted it to go,” she joked.

In addition to the standard wedding services, she will go above and beyond for her clients. She will help guests find accommodations and plan events, such as a post-wedding brunch. She even found a dog-sitter for a couple who wanted their dog to be the ring bearer. This summer she’s organizing a kayaking trip for the wedding guests. “That’s probably my favorite part of it, getting people out and seeing where we are, which I love, I love where we are.”

The wedding season is from June to October, and she does about one or two weddings a month. Most of her clients are from out of town, so for them it’s a destination wedding. She likens it to the popular farm-to-table trend happening in restaurants. “I feel like we’re the farm-to-wedding movement out here,” from the barn or farmhouse venues, to florists growing their own flowers, to a locally curated bar. “I love showing off our hometown,” she said.



Personal touches, like locally sourced food, are what Smith loves to do in helping to plan a wedding.



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The good ol' days **Let's have a barn wedding**

By ISABEL BRAVERMAN

It seems like everyone and their mom (well, maybe not their mom—their sister, perhaps) wants a barn wedding these days. Luckily, our area is booming with farmland, and with that, barns. Of course, it can't be just any old barn (although an actual old barn is more authentic). Wedding and event venues are upgrading the old-fashioned barn to something sophisticated, well-designed and most important, teeming with modern-day comforts (indoor plumbing anyone?).

While it's not your grandma's barn, these barn venues still offer a rustic experience for a true country wedding. And a barn makes for a perfect venue: lots of space, high ceilings, idyllic views and surrounding land for more activities. Who wants to be confined to one room?

These three local businesses are doing the barn wedding justice. Check them out for ideas and inspiration, or to book your very own barn wedding!

Handsome Hollow

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Set on 93 acres of land, the Handsome Hollow barn is perfect for a country retreat. You can wander through the fields and meadows and take a relaxing yoga class before your wedding. The barn even comes with a farmhouse with three bedrooms and a wrap-around porch to take in

the sunset. The original barn structure was built 240 years ago and features original post-and-beam construction. The spacious 4,000-square-foot building can seat about 150 people, and there's an outdoor covered-area that is a good option for dining. It has two restrooms and an on-site

kitchen, so your caterers can prepare food on the premises. The owners will even help you with planning. The website says, "We're happy to assist you in choosing your vendors, thinking through seating plans, choosing your ceremony site, and answering any questions at all about your day."



Photo by Handsome Hollow

Handsome Hollow

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BARN WEDDING

Continued from page 8

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A wedding at Fox Hill Farm comes with many amenities. The 19th-century original barn includes a grand entrance, dance floor and dining hall that seats approximately 160 people. On-site there is a pond, perfect for holding the ceremony, and a garden. There is also a newly renovated

cottage for the bride and bridesmaids to get ready and for the newlyweds to stay the night. For the groom and groomsmen, there's a "Fox Den" to gather and get ready in. Fox Hill can also provide flowers from the farm and create bouquets and floral arrangements. These amenities offer all

the makings of a home-grown wedding. The website states, "These treasures throughout the farm pay homage to the history of farming in northeast Pennsylvania, yet provide a unique atmosphere for you and your guests."

Photo by Michelle Lee Photography

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The Barn on Hubbard

Photo by Jessie Casey Photography

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