

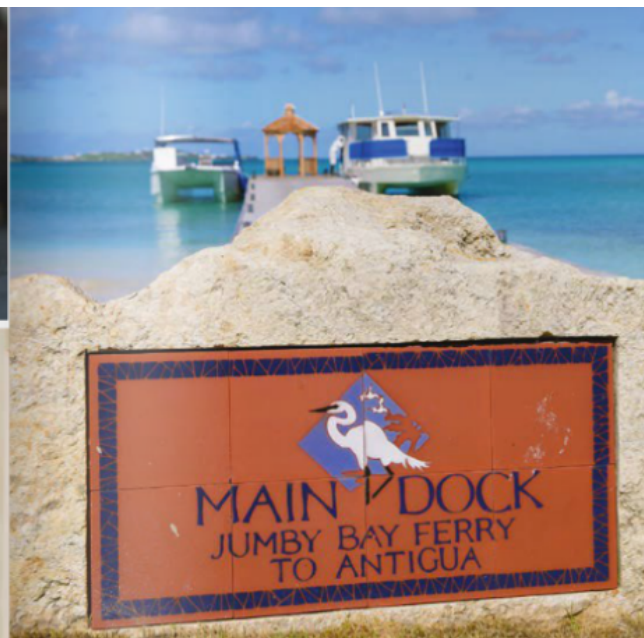


Opulence *How to achieve* in PARADISE

Angela Proffitt
Photos by: Jennifer Davis Photography & Joe Buissink

When you're planning a wedding to create opulence in paradise, a dream destination can turn into a disaster if you don't know how to prioritize your initiatives. You aren't choosing the specifications of an all-inclusive wedding package. It's the details, personal touches and accommodations that distinguish a luxury occasion.

To ensure you don't experience trouble in paradise, here are some tips that will help keep your I's dotted and your T's crossed:



COMMUNICATE TRAVEL PLANS

A luxury wedding is more than a ceremony and a reception. Friends and family who don't really know each other are essentially vacationing together, so you'll want to do a few things:

1. Collaborate with a travel agent to help streamline communication.
2. Prepare an itinerary for guests.
3. Ensure guests are comfortable from arrival to departure.

In my experience, I've found that making travel arrangements with private charter planes are cheaper than booking separate flights for dozens of guests. And some resorts maintain private runways with VIP lounges for getting through customs. Keep in mind that not all guests are well-travelled. I had a bride whose family hardly left the state she was from, and we had to communicate the steps for securing passports, getting through security and other travel details they have never had to consider.



Photos by: Jennifer Davis Photography

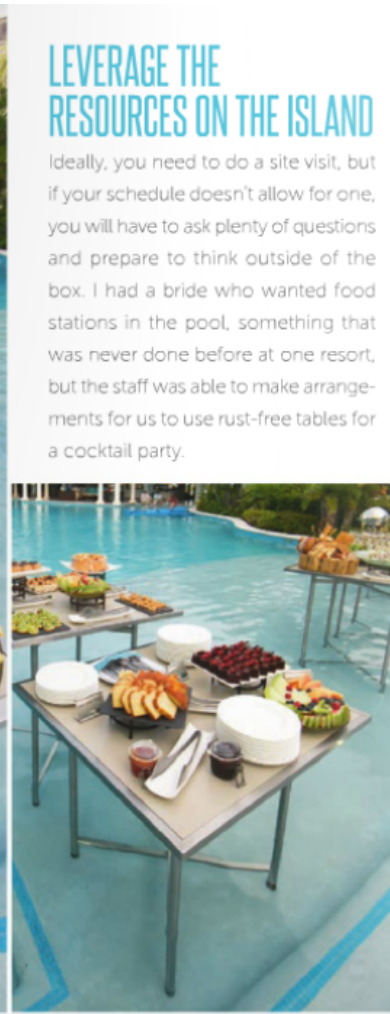
SET THE TONE

From the get go, you want your guests to know that they will be experiencing a luxurious occasion. For one bride, how we achieved that was to send a bottle of wine that was foiled in a custom, wooden-carved box to each guest. They got the idea very quickly that they were about to party opulently in paradise!



KEEP GUESTS ENTERTAINED

Work with the resort to have a schedule of activities for guests to enjoy. Since many of them will be meeting each another for the first time, plan a welcome party so they can get acquainted. For the rest of their trip, have a list of fun options ready, such as sunset cruises, dance lessons and spa days.



LEVERAGE THE RESOURCES ON THE ISLAND

Ideally, you need to do a site visit, but if your schedule doesn't allow for one, you will have to ask plenty of questions and prepare to think outside of the box. I had a bride who wanted food stations in the pool, something that was never done before at one resort, but the staff was able to make arrangements for us to use rust-free tables for a cocktail party.



NO REQUEST IS EVER TOO BIG

The last thing a bride wants to hear is that you "can't do something." If you aren't able to leverage resources on the island, you can make other arrangements. A bride I worked with wanted a chandelier at the reception. When the resort sent me pictures of what they had available, I knew it wouldn't meet the bride's expectations, so I worked with a company to have one shipped to the destination. The company rented a 200-pound chandelier to us and made a video teaching the event staff how to hang it. It took 45 days to have the chandelier sent to the island and 10 days to get it. Plan accordingly!

The opportunity to plan a luxurious destination wedding is a reflection of the elegance, taste and dignity of your client and the service you provide. It's a chance to create something unique and memorable that speaks to the splendor of the occasion and can provide a source for future business referrals.





Formal Dining

Table Settings & Etiquette

Meleisa Witter

Formal dining, with its attendant rules—called protocols, is one sure way of displaying opulence. Most of these protocols are traditions which emerged from Europe centuries ago.

One of the things I love most about Western-centric formal dining is the profusion of porcelain, crystal, silver and linens on display. The old world charm and etiquette pertaining to how people are seated, and the order in which the meal is plated and served also exude opulence.

Photo Credit: Joe Buissink

When You Arrive

Upon arrival, you will be directed to your seating by a host/hostess in a more intimate setting, or a name card will be placed at your table at large gatherings. You may receive a menu or find one next to your place setting. The event begins with cocktails, which last an hour or more.



Photo Credit: Joe Buisson

Meals and Service

The number of courses for the meal varies. The traditional French meal is thirteen courses, but the usual number today is between four and six courses. (The last dinner on the Titanic for first class guests contained ten courses).

All food preparation, serving the meal and removal is completed by staff. Food service proceeds to the right, counter-clockwise, starting with the guest of honor. Beverage service progresses to the left, clockwise.

Individual portions are prearranged and presented on a platter. More courses usually mean smaller portions and less wine poured per course. Formal dining includes multiple courses and second helpings are not offered. Once serve ware is taken from the dining room, it is not returned.

In keeping with the type of food to be served, a hot or cold plate is presented. Plates are served and cleared from the left side and one at a time. When a used plate is removed, the waiting staff simultaneously replaces it with a fresh plate. As both hands are involved in this process, plate removal at formal dinners is done one plate at a time.

Beverages are served and cleared from the right side. The goblet and wine glasses remain on the table throughout the entire meal. Only the sherry glass is removed at the end of the course it accompanies. With your permission, the butler will remove the wine glass if you inform him that you are allergic or prefer not to drink. If the same wine is offered over consecutive courses, it is served in the same glass.

Table Décor

Table runners, plates and cutlery are placed according to exact specifications: the edge of the table runner should be 1/2 inch from the table's edge; plates one inch from the edge of the table; the handles of cutlery also one inch. Flower arrangements are at eye level and candelabras are so placed that everyone can make eye contact.



Photo Credit: Joe Buisson



Order of Service

When there is an honored guest (in this instance- the bride, groom and wedding party), those guests are served first. Once the honored guests are served, service begins with the table next in line and moves counter-clockwise.

