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multiculti magic

Celebrities look to the East for nuptial inspiration

■ **WHO** Julia Roberts, Danny Moder

WHAT Indian-theme cakes

DETAILS Roberts's friend Michael Dennison created five wedding cakes—one chocolate and raspberry with yellow icing, the rest lemon with pink icing—for their July 2002 wedding. The cakes were decorated with images of deities including the elephant-head god, Ganesh.

■ **WHO** Paul McCartney, Heather Mills

WHAT Indian food

DETAILS For their June 2002 wedding at Ireland's Castle Leslie, the couple

asked head chef Noel McMeel to prepare a vegetarian Indian meal. The feast was served in a lakeside marquee reminiscent of the Taj Mahal.

■ **WHO** Anne Heche, Coleman Laffoon

WHAT Moroccan theme

DETAILS Colorful invitations wrapped in handmade pink paper and tied with gold thread set the tone for the couple's wedding. At the reception, guests sat on ottomans at low tables that were dressed in orange douppioni silk and topped with pink, orange and lime-green tissue paper.

let's do punch

Champagne cocktails have lots of appeal right now, says Alexandra Angle, co-author of *Cocktail Parties with a Twist*. "For people who love cocktails but don't want hard liquor, this is a perfect alternative," she says.

Tropical Champagne Punch

(Serves 10)

- 1 bottle champagne
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mango slices
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raspberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pineapple chunks
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup star fruit slices
- 1 cup pineapple juice

Place all fruit and plenty of cracked ice in a punch bowl. Add juice and champagne. Serve in goblets or large wineglasses.



WHAT'S HOT

HEAPING HELPINGS

When it comes to the wedding feast, formal is out, laid-back is in. Family-style service, in which large dishes of food are set on the table and shared, is a growing trend, says Colin Cowie. It fosters a feeling of "family and togetherness," he says. It's also a much speedier way to feed guests. "Dinner should be no longer than an hour and a half," says Cowie. "That's all your attention span can handle."



Say cheese. Talk to your photographer about setting up a camera with a long shutter-release cord attached to it so guests can snap their own pictures, says Pasadena, Calif., event producer Diann Valentine, who did Toni Braxton's wedding. This is a chic alternative to distributing disposable cameras and a "huge hit" with guests, she says. Put the camera in a room with a couch, coffee table, flowers and hors d'oeuvres so people can lounge and relax.

Define your space. Marianne Weiman-Nelson suggests hanging large mirrors on the walls to add dimension, and photographs and paintings to make the room more personal. Colored gels with patterns of leaves or stars can also be fitted over lights so it feels like you're "underneath a canopy of leaves or a night sky," says N.Y.C. planner Claudia Hanlin.

Make potpourri. One bride saved all the flowers her fiancé had ever sent her, dried them, and mixed them with essential oils to create potpourri, says Sharon Sacks. She then gave each guest a box filled with some of the

potpourri and a note that said, "This is how our love has bloomed."

Spruce up the bathrooms. Celebrity event producer Colin Cowie likes to personalize public bathrooms by setting a CD player to play on repeat, lighting a fragrant candle, and providing an amenity basket stocked with mints, a needle and thread, comb, hairspray, etc. If the lights are fluorescent, turn them off and use candles instead. Otherwise place gels over lights for a warm glow. New York City event designer Preston Bailey suggests saving samples from cosmetics counters and putting those in the bathroom.

Rove from room to room. Cowie likes to serve dinner in a small room, then have guests move to a larger space with a DJ and a dance floor afterward. "Having multiple spaces allows you to tell a story and take guests on a wonderful journey," he says.

Raise the bar. L.A. event and interior designer Alexandra Angle recommends decorating the reception bar with flowers and herbs that can be used as drink garnishes. She has used everything from edible flowers like nasturtiums and Johnny-jump-ups to herbs such as mint, lavender and basil. "One time we even had

kumquat trees decorating the bar and we used kumquats as a garnish," she says. A word of caution: Know where the plants came from to ensure that they haven't been sprayed with chemicals. "It's best to get them from a farmer's market or a friend's garden," says Angle.

Offer recipes.

If you're serving a favorite dish, Hanlin suggests giving guests the recipe for it along with one of the main flavorings or spices. "At one wedding we gave out envelopes containing a packet of curry and the recipe for an Indian dish the groom had made for the bride," she says.



Don't overdo the appetizers. Los Angeles chef Joachim Splichal, founder of the Patina Group, who catered the weddings of Pete Sampras and Jakob Dylan, likes to serve mini-appetizers during cocktail hour. His favorites: lobster salad with mint served in a soup spoon, or shrimp and dates on a fork. "The point is that these are little tastes," he says. "They are not too heavy, so guests won't fill up."

Use a family heirloom as a cake topper. "The obvious idea would be bride and groom figurines from your parents' or grandparents' wedding, but anything from your china cabinet that works as a cake topper will do," says Debbie Geller. "One couple used a cup filled with flowers. It was beautiful."

