

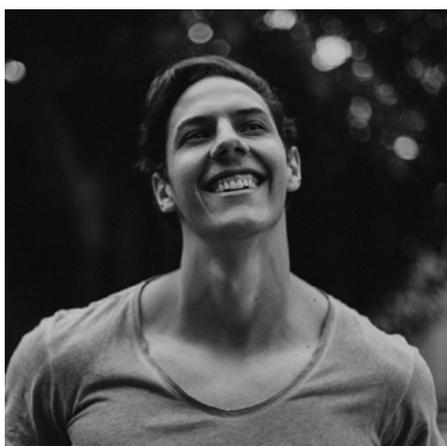


# HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR WEDDING SUPPLIERS

By Sheldon Evans of Almost October Wedding Photography

*almost october.*

WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY



Hey! I'm Sheldon.

I'm a full time wedding photographer and I've taken it upon myself to interview some of the top wedding vendors around the world to help you with planning your special day and picking the best vendors for you.

As a photographer I get to see a lot of the inner workings of all the effort that goes into planning a wedding and can actually be quite involved with the planning myself a lot of the time. This is really only because I will generally be the one spending the most time with the couple on their wedding day.

## What is this book about?

I've had the privilege of shooting alongside some of the most incredible vendors, although I've also unfortunately seen my fair share of "wedding disasters" thanks to vendors just not doing their part and ultimately not **caring** when it comes to their clients.

I like to think of weddings as big collaborations rather than just a group of service providers being paid to do a particular task. If as a photographer I can work with the planner to outline the schedule for the day, then the florist and the designer can work together, the cake designer and the chef, the dress designer and the jeweler. We're all in this together so why not make the process a little more enjoyable for all of us?

### How do I know who to trust?

It all comes down to forming a connection with each of your suppliers. Communication is key! If you're able to get your vision across and they understand it then you'll work extremely well together. Do they answer your questions properly? Do they go above and beyond what you've asked? Do they follow up regularly? **Most importantly, do you get along with them?** There's really no point in having a wedding planner who can design the most extravagant and beautiful wedding if simply dealing with them makes you want to punch them in the throat! Remember, the process of planning a wedding should be just as much fun as the wedding itself, no one enjoys unnecessary stress!

Anyway, enough from me. Let's get to the actual helpful stuff.



# Choosing a venue

Picking a wedding venue can be quite a big deal. Or not. Depending on how you approach it. First you need to decide on a general vibe for your day. What atmosphere do you envision when you dream about your special day? Do you want a traditional wedding or something completely left field and out of the ordinary? Will it be held at night or during the day? Indoors or outdoors? Is having a garden ceremony or gourmet food a deal breaker? By making a list of everything you “think” your ideal venue should have you’ll have already narrowed down your search quite a bit.

I’ve spoken to **Katie Myles**, the Owner & Operations Manager of **Immerse**, a stunning wedding venue nestled in Melbourne’s Yarra Valley, and asked her a couple questions.

What would be the best advice you could give to someone picking their venue?

- Try not to see too many venues in one day. Looking at venues can be very overwhelming with so many venues offering different things. Try and spend at least 30 minutes at each venue so you can get a feel for the place.
- Take your own photos and notes! This can help you remember which venue was offering what.
- Come back and taste the food and wine – while the menu and wines may be different, it will give you an idea of what style and standard the venue offers.

What have you found that brides struggle with the most when picking a venue?

The biggest issue I come across is brides struggling to try and please everyone. It can be very difficult to find something that suits everyone, and then it might not end up being the one you love! I think it’s important that you find something you think it’s the best fit for yourselves as a couple, after all, it’s your day!

## How important do you think it is to have a wedding facilitator on the wedding day?

We think it's a bit risky to have your whole day in one person's hands – after all people get sick, go on holidays or even change jobs! Instead we have a whole wedding team designated to running your day. There is then a member of that team working with you throughout the day (if you're getting ready on-site) to make everything perfect.

## I've seen weddings get rained out with no contingency plan, what sort of backup plan do you offer?

We have our beautiful Vineyard Chapel as a wet weather option. It also has 4 air conditioners so works perfectly for hot weather too.

## What are the biggest mistakes you've seen brides make when it comes to selecting the perfect venue?

While detail is important so you can make sure that the venue can cater for your needs, I think it's also important that you get a good vibe, and get along with the venue staff. Sometimes this can be overlooked.

Another mistake is not having a proper go at a guest list before you start looking. Thankfully it has never happened to us, but it can happen that you understate your guest list, then when you come back to the venue they are unable to fit that many people. Guest lists are very tricky, but always try and have a decent try at a list before booking anything in.

## What would you say makes your venue different to all of the other venues out there?

We like to offer a very personalised experience. We are a family owned business and treat every couple as part of the Immerse family. This means that we really make sure we get to know our wedding couples, so we can truly understand what they want their day to be about and make that happen for them. On top of that we also have extensive rose gardens, multiple breath taking ceremony locations, and a huge variety of photo opportunities.

## Would you like to add any final thoughts for the stressed-out bride?

Try and relax! Remember that planning your wedding is meant to be fun, so don't let it get on top of you. It is always best to ask questions and for help rather than ruining one of the best days of your life with stress and anxiety. We're here to help!

If you'd like to take a look at the **Immerse venue** yourself you can do so on their website or get in touch with Katie below.

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# Selecting a Photographer

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You'll probably notice a few images scattered throughout this book, the reason for that is that I'm a photographer and I love images and adore the process of creation. So I'm going to give you a few tips to use when going about picking someone to capture your day.

What's the most important advice for a bride picking a photographer?

- My absolute most important tip would be to make sure that you get along with your photographer and that they're not just the most boring thing on earth. Sure, the photographer you like may create beautiful images, but if they're got the personality of a brick, they're going to be a real killjoy during your day. After all, this is the only other person (besides the one you're getting married to) that you're going to be spending the majority of your day.
- Ask your photographer about their philosophy. With some wedding vendors, you really don't need to care about their philosophy however wedding photography is not one of those places. If their answer is "Brides are smoking hot and I get paid to take their pictures", they're probably doing it for the completely wrong reason. On a serious note though, if your photographer doesn't truly love what he does, it's going to reflect in your wedding photos, one of the few tangible things you'll have to remember the most important day of your life.

## How do I find a photographer?

When I first started out in my career and was looking at ways of getting my work in front of new brides, the first place I turned to was online and to venues. Although there's one problem with this, there are TONS of sites online as well as venues who'll recommend photographers...**for a price.** Paying someone to recommend you or to be put on a "preferred vendors list" is just not something I see as ethical. Rather, look for photographers you feel a connection with and go with them. You'll be the one looking back on your images once years have gone by and you'll want to look at something that reminds you of the day in the most authentic way possible.

## How do I know if I'll get along with my photographer?

Meet with them! Chat, talk, have coffee or grab a beer if that's what you'd prefer. If they're not in the same country as you or you're planning a destination wedding, hop on a Skype call. I often spend heaps of time talking to my clients about their lives and what they do before I realise we haven't even started talking about the wedding yet. Let them into your life the same way you would a friend. That way you'll feel more comfortable with them on the day and it'll be just like having another friend at your wedding.



## What can I do to make sure I look amazing in my photographs?

- Firstly, that's your photographer's job although there are a few things you can do to help out. One of those things is to plan your wedding around lighting. This is the number one factor when it comes to creating great images, if you don't have good light, it's going to be very difficult to produce beautiful images. Talk to your photographer about the lighting at your venue, the time of day you want photos taken, whether you'll be having your wedding at night or during the day. If your reception is going to be candle-lit, your photographer will most likely have to use some form of flash.
- Another little tip is to give your photographer an itinerary for the day, this way he'll know what's happening when and you won't have any missed moments. I've attended weddings where the photographer hasn't even met the bride before the wedding day and has zero idea as to what's taking place next. He ended up running around like a headless turkey. Not only will that be bad for your photos but you'll have a turkey at your wedding. No one wants an actual live turkey at their wedding.

## What is the biggest mistake brides make when choosing a photographer?

A lot of couples don't understand the importance of a wedding photography contract. If your photographer doesn't issue you with a contract when booking them, insist on one. A verbal promise may seem perfectly fine for now although sometimes bad things happen and you want to make sure you're in a position to handle those things. A contract will guarantee the delivery of your images, speed of delivery and what happens if for some tragic reason they lose your images because they haven't backed them up.

## Final thoughts.

It may seem like a tough decision trying to pick the "perfect" photographer but in the end it's best to go with your gut. If you know you've got the basics covered with contracts, you like their work and they make you feel happy the pick the person you feel ticks all the boxes and just have a splendid time on your wedding day.

\*BONUS PHOTO TIP

## Trust your photographer

You've seen your photographer's work, you've seen what they can do, so trust them. They'll be able to find your best angles, accentuate your positives and have you looking beautiful as ever. They invest a lot of their time into growing and improving their craft. So you can at least be confident that your images will be at least a little bit better than all of their previous work.





# Choosing your flowers

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Flowers, flowers and more flowers. A staple at almost every wedding are beautiful flowers and bouquets but there are a few things you need to know first before deciding on what you'd like to go with. You may think that having highly aromatic flowers for your centerpieces sounds like a romantic idea but it could drive your guests insane, especially those with allergies. **Franci** from **Franci's Flowers Wedding Design**, a destination wedding florist in Tuscany Italy, is here to help.

## How should a bride decide on a floral theme for her wedding?

Themes and colours differ from year to year but it's important that you pick a style you like. Nowadays brides are overwhelmed with all the inspiration on the web. Don't get me wrong, Pinterest is an amazing resource but can be also misleading if you don't have clear idea of what you want. I have a deep belief that each and every person can be represented by a flower and that's what you should go with. I for one have always loved tulips since when I was I small child, it has significant meaning to me and I like the way it looks so that's what I would choose. If you identify with the sunflower, say if you're a simple country girl, there's no way I could force you to pick a Calla Lily, a chic and modern flower. Just like many other aspects of the wedding, it's important you feel a connection with your choices.

\*BONUS PHOTO TIP

## Schedule your couple shoot time

There's a time in the day known as the "Golden Hour" and that's the hour just before the sun sets. It's the one time of day that you can guarantee beautiful light, although this look isn't for everyone. Talk to your photographer and find out what time of day would be best to do the couple shoot. That way they'll have a heads up and know what sort of lighting conditions they'll have to work with.



### What's the best way to work with your florist?

It's important to me that your florist dedicates enough time to you and your wedding. Each project is unique and it can take anywhere from 6 months to a year to really perfect the look you're going for. Don't rush, making up your mind can take time.

I work with two teams so we often handle two weddings on a day, although I always make sure that I'm there the day before to help set up and make sure we have the freshest flowers. I then arrive on the wedding day to deliver the bouquet to the bride personally and make sure she's happy with it and check that everything for the ceremony and reception is going according to plan. Working with a team who is as passionate about what they do as I am is essential if you want to trust them, it's not just about business, it's about true passion. No matter whether I work on a simple intimate wedding or a huge extravagant one, it's always an emotional journey and I do my best to provide a memorable service.

### What are some tips you can recommend for all new brides?

Communication is essential, don't be afraid to talk about budget, give me details, and show me what your vision is.

Keep in contact with your suppliers. I mainly work on destination weddings in Italy so I'm always available for Skype calls, especially when I'm traveling as I also work in Barcelona quite often.

Keep an open mind. It's been a regular occurrence in the past for a bride to give me a blank slate and creative freedom.

If you're planning a wedding or elopement in Tuscany, Italy, give **Franci's** website a visit or contact her below. She'll get back to you in within 24 hours. That kind of service really is great!

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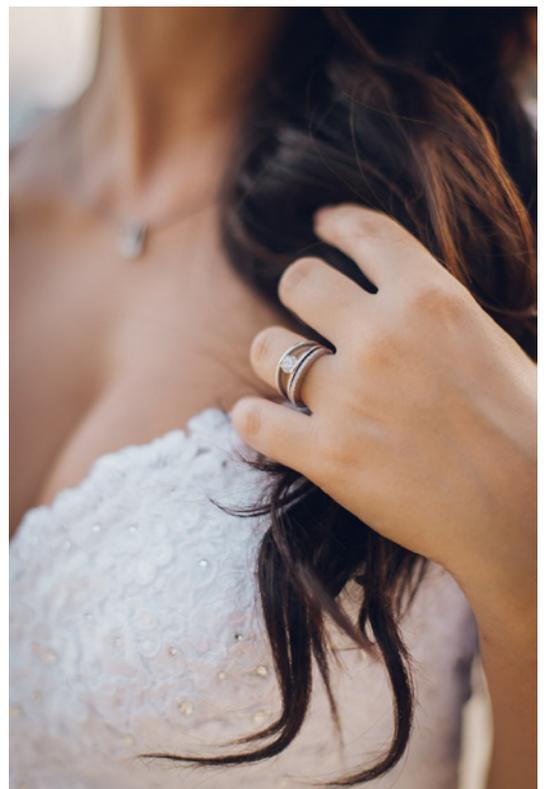


# Picking a ring

I think we can all agree that when it comes to picking your wedding ring it's all down to personal style. Although there can be a few factors that can change that. Maybe there's tradition in your family to go with a certain design or maybe you want a platinum ring while he wants yellow gold. Rings don't have to match! Well that's what I like to think anyway. Here are a few questions answered by **Luca**, a goldsmith who was taught the trade by his father in their family workshop although in 2005 he moved to Florence, Italy to study gemology at the Le Arti Orafe Academy. Now, he runs **My Golden Age** in Genoa. This is what he had to say.

How would you suggest brides go about picking their perfect ring?

- Dare to be unique. The wedding day ends however the wedding rings remain forever as symbol of love and union. I don't think there is anything more romantic or exciting. It's also for this reason that many couples decide to go with handmade rings, it adds a level of uniqueness to the wedding.
- Don't let fashion or traditions influence your choice, rather follow your style and taste. The perfect ring for your style and expectations does exist. Even if your perfect ring isn't out there, it can be made. That's why custom jewelers are around, to help you create your perfect ring if there isn't anything out there you fancy. Just make sure that this is high up on your to-do list, custom rings take time!
- If you don't want matching rings, that's fine! I believe that diversity is always a value in a couple. Opposites attract each other, right? I would say if you want two different rings, do that, but to make them special have a small detail or custom engraving that's similar on both of them.



## Who is your favourite client?

I really enjoy working with couples who want to put a little bit of themselves into their rings. I'll often work off of the client's design using my own collection only as inspiration. It's not always easy for the client to imagine the end result so I've decided to create my own collection (which grows for year to year with more designs) for my clients to use as a starting point.

## What is the most unique aspect about your gold-smithing business?

Each ring is individually handmade from start to finish. I want to be able to tell a story with the rings that I create. My Golden Age reflects a style that I love, simplicity of shapes and intimately small details and a reason to say "I do!". My collection is a world made of essential shapes, rose cut diamonds, genuine smiles, charming small imperfections, happy brides, ancient knowledge handed down from father to son.

If you'd like to get in touch with Luca, you can find his work on his website or mail him at the address below and he'll be able to help you with creating your custom ring.

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### \*BONUS PHOTO TIP

## Have your first look privately

If you're planning on having a first look for your wedding (which I highly recommend), then do so in private and let it be an intimate moment before all the craziness begins. Your family and the rest of the wedding party may want to watch but stand your ground and let it be a private moment between you two, (and the photographer to capture it of course). If you're having a difficult time trying to explain to your family why this moment should be private, let your photographer do the talking. They'll usually be able to handle the situation and explain why it's better.



# Going with a planner

So you've been scouring the Internet, finding tutorials, learning from previous brides and just trying to tackle this whole wedding planning thing by yourself. I know, it can be a little bit daunting, but that's where the expertise of a dedicated wedding planner can come in to save the day. I've gotten in touch with one of my all time favourite wedding planners **Matthew Oliver** to share some tips and secrets to help you decide whether opting for a planner is for you.

## What is your general philosophy when it comes to weddings?

For us it is always about making the couple relaxed and happy. We want to get to know you and build a relationship, as then we can really get an idea of what your perfect wedding looks like and create it for you. Plus it makes the entire planning process so much fun!

## What would you say your top 3 tips are for anyone choosing a planner?

- Look internationally for a planner that you want to work with, who will share your vision. Don't feel like you have to settle for a local planner, just because they are local.
- Speak to many different planners, you want to see who is available and make an informed decision right for you and your partner, rather than going with the first planner you find.
- Make sure the spark is there, you're going to be working very closely with this planner, possible over a long period of time. You've got to get on with them, and want to see and speak with them often!

## What have you found that brides struggle with the most when picking a planner or deciding to go with a planner at all?

I think cost often ends up being a struggle for them, not necessarily for themselves, but justifying it to other people, whether it be their partner or parents. There's no getting away from it, planning a wedding can be super stressful and as planners we are here to take that stress away and make the planning process as enjoyable and memorable as the day(s) you are creating. Also it is key to remember that planners will have suppliers they love to work with and special deals with those suppliers (we do!), they can often save you money, maybe even enough to cover their own planner cost!

## What is the best way to go about handling travel arrangements for destination weddings?

We are happy to take on any element of the planning process and this can often include travel arrangements. At the very least we always ensure to keep the logistics of guests traveling to weddings in mind when looking at elements such as the venue location and accommodation. We don't want the guests to worry about their travel arrangements, it should be 'smooth sailing' for them.

## What are the two biggest planning mistakes that new brides should try avoid making?

- Bringing in elements to your wedding for other people. Doing something in your wedding because someone else wants it is something you need to try and avoid. The last thing you want is to look back and regret something of your wedding and it wasn't even something you wanted. Always remember it is a day for you and your partner.
- Picking a venue at the higher end of your budget and not checking if there is a mandatory supplier list. If the venue is at the higher end of your budget then it's likely the suppliers you're going to have to use are going to be as well and that is just going to push the wedding budget way up. Make sure to check for any caveats when booking!

## How do you stay calm under pressure?

Experience! Not only experience from planning weddings but also from different areas of our lives, my planning partner Bertie for example used to run a IT support department and dealing with the crises that came from that. It's knowing how to look at a situation in a different light when the pressure is on and making it work, whilst remaining calm and exuding an air of control.

## What's the best or most unique thing about Matthew Oliver?

It's got to be the experience of working with us which is unique, we will become friends and ensure you are loving every moment of planning your wedding. Whether it be telling us your weekend plans over WhatsApp, going through supplier lists on a Skype call or discussing design ideas with a glass of wine we will bring the experience, creativity, structure and of course us!

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