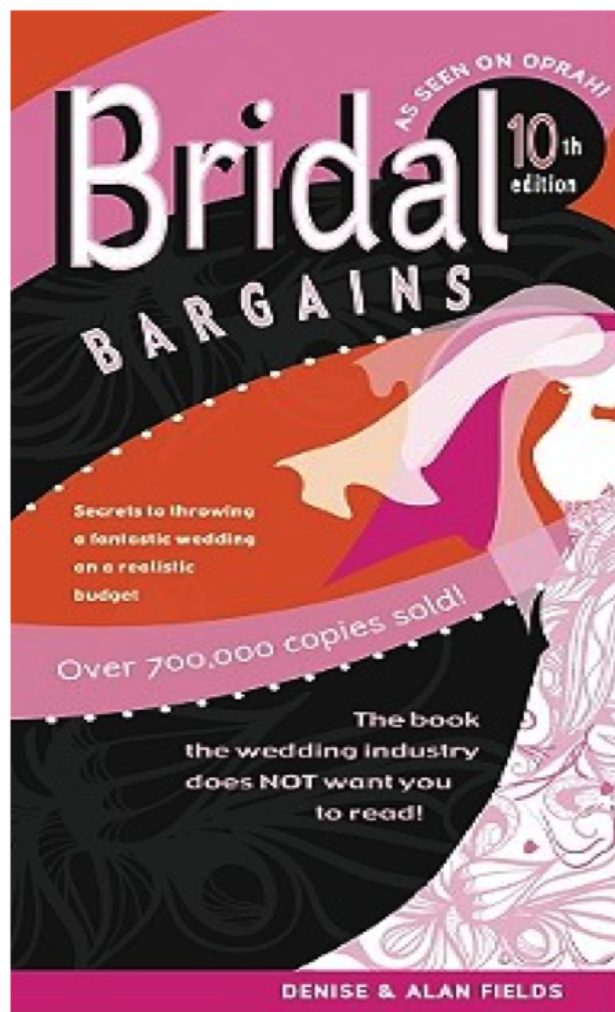


Let Alan and Denise Fields Help You Plan Your Dream Wedding, Even On a Tight Budget!



By Krissy Dolor

Now that Valentine's Day is over and done with, a new season is quickly approaching: Wedding season! And let's face it – you need all the help you can get. However, according to the WE tv Networks Wedding Report, the average wedding in 2010 cost \$24,000, which is a 23 percent increase from 2009. For many people, especially in today's economy, that budget may not always be realistic. And even if it is, why spend money when you don't have to? That's where the Fields come in. Alan and Denise Fields have been called the “wedding watchdogs” for their consumer books that offer advice to couples about to tie the knot. Needless to say, top dogs in the wedding industry didn't take kindly to the Fields' money-saving tips, and the couple was publicly ostracized for their efforts. Luckily, Oprah Winfrey (yes, *the O herself*) suggested the *Bridal Bargains* to her viewers, and the Fields went on to sell 400,000 copies. The authors recently released the 10th edition of their best-seller, which includes tips on how to save up to 40 percent on brand new, big name wedding dresses, ways to save 70 percent on wedding invites, and even advice on how to plan a green wedding. The Fields can show you that cheap doesn't necessarily mean tacky, and there are always ways to save on your dream day. Now you have more to spend on your honeymoon!

We spoke with Ms. Fields via email last month. Take a look at what she had to say:

You relaunched the 10th edition of *Bridal Bargains* last November – what inspired the relaunch?

We typically release a new version of the book every two years. This year was particularly great for us as it is our 10th edition. So we've been writing about weddings for 10 years now. Trends change, prices change and we want to keep the information fresh for our readers. Every year there is a

new crop of brides and we don't want to give them out of date information.

The notion of what's cheap and what's expensive vary, depending on a couple's budget. What's your limit, when you have to say, "That's too expensive"? And does it change depending on what you're buying (flowers vs. wedding dress, venue vs. invitations, etc.)?

Good question. We always advise couples to sit down (with each other and anyone else who is contributing money to the event) and figure out what your priorities are. So if you decide that photography and reception food are important, then you can allocate a larger percentage of the budget to those items. If flowers aren't that big of a deal, you'll be prepared choose smaller bouquets, less expensive arrangements, and so on. But we also try to help couples have the best looks for less. That way you have to make fewer trade offs.

We see that you've added a section about green weddings, which is awesome! What do you say to couples who are planning a wedding and assume that green weddings are expensive to plan?

Obviously, more couples today want to have the great wedding without the huge carbon footprint. The good news is there are many strategies to green your wedding that are actually less expensive. For example, the best way to green your invites is to make them all e-invites. Yes, traditionalists frown on this, but if you're committed, use the Internet. There are some great free- and low-cost services that offer graphically attractive e-invites. Evite.com is one example that is completely free. PaperlessPost.com is another service with even nicer invites, but they do have a small charge – still less than paper invites. Also, consider flowers and food grown locally. You don't have the huge carbon footprint of shipping orchids from Hawaii, you meet some of your goals for shopping locally, and it's often less expensive.

Why do you think many brides (and/or grooms) feel the need to plan an expensive wedding?

Grooms probably don't often want to have the huge production. □ But brides often dream from a young age about their wedding. And there are so many wedding reality shows and celebrity examples that seem to push the extravagant wedding. Finally, parents sometimes want their kids to have the wedding they didn't have – occasionally you have to remind them who's wedding it really is! With the economy still sputtering, it's just not realistic. So often typical couples recognize this and tone it down. We try to explain that your goal is not the “perfect wedding” but rather a “fun wedding.” And fun doesn't mean expensive, over-the-top, budget-busting gowns or flowers or food.

What's the number one tip you wish to share with your readers, one that everyone – no matter what they're budget is – should know about and use?

Negotiate. Everything is negotiable: every price, every item. This is probably the first time in their lives when a couple has the opportunity to brush up on their bargaining skills. For example, give a vendor your budget and ask them what miracles they can perform within that budget. Too often brides and grooms are given a price list and think they have to choose from that. We're amazed at how much you can get when you ask.

Cupid thanks Ms. Fields for her time! *Bridal Bargains* can be purchased on Amazon. Also, check out their companion guide, *Bridal Bargains Wedding Planner*. And to read more on the authors and their other work, visit their website at www.WindsorPeak.com. Happy planning!