

Locally Grown Weddings put focus on green

Group helps couples plan nuptials with a local, sustainable focus



Aurora Meneghello

Locally Grown Weddings works exclusively with like-minded venues that also have an organic and sustainable philosophy.

Anna Volpicelli

June 9, 2013

If you hire Locally Grown Weddings, you'd better have your marital wish list prepared.

Before starting to plan, the team wants to know everything about the bride and the groom. They welcome them at their office at Activspace, a shared-office-spaces building in the Mission District. They seat the couple, offer them a drink and ask the future newlyweds all kinds of questions: favorite cuisine and flowers, allergies and, above all, if they have ever thought about an eco-wedding.

A complete wedding planning service focused on green business, the company comprises Sadie Waddington, Stephanie Hibbert, Madeline Trait, Pei-Yee Woo and photographer Jenna Hesse, who joined the company a couple of weeks ago. They provide everything a couple needs for an eco-friendly celebration: planning, catering, photography, flowers, design and desserts.

In the past two years, the five women have organized 40 weddings in venues around the Bay Area. They work almost exclusively with local venues focused on the same organic and sustainable philosophy, including Campovida, which has recently opened a new location in Oakland, Sova Gardens in Sebastopol and Park Winters in Winters (Yolo County).

"Generally, people who choose Locally Grown Weddings like our green commitment, or they like what we do and when they discover that we work only with local vendors, they are more excited," says photographer Aurora Meneghello, a founding member who recently left.

Waddington, Hibbert and Meneghello were doing these jobs separately when they founded the company two years ago. They met through mutual friends and, after sharing ideas on celebrations and honeymoons and discovering a similar passion for a green lifestyle, they decided to start a business. After a couple of months, at an event planner meet-up, they met Trait, a floral designer, and Woo, a desserts chef who loved the project and expressed the desire to be part of it.

According to Zem Joaquin, founder and CEO of Ecofabulous, a website devoted to style and sustainability, more and more brides will make green choices about their special event in the future.

"I like the idea of Locally Grown Weddings. They point to a trend," Joaquin says. "The wedding must express important values, and sustainability is one of those." Eco-friendly wedding planners "can guide you to a deep awareness."

For Locally Grown Weddings, working with a low-impact resources to reduce the event's carbon footprint is a priority, and a commitment that has helped the group earn Green Business certification from the city of San Francisco. For all Locally Grown Weddings, the group selects food and flowers from local or sustainable sources, uses car-sharing services to travel between wedding locations, and uses recycled paper for "save the date" cards.



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Locally Grown Weddings (Stephanie Hibbert, left, Aurora Meneghello, Madeline Trait, Pei-Yee Woo and Sadie Waddington), top, is a complete service for sustainable weddings, inset.

"Being eco is not just selecting recyclable products but also determining if it is better to choose locally made products that may not have 100 percent recycled content products over that could have been manufactured in China but are 100 percent recyclable," Trait says.

A green wedding is also a way to give back and have fun but with a low impact on the environment.

"For food, I choose only seasonal, local and organic ingredients," Hibbert says. "I only use sustainable products, because I think it is very important, most of all nowadays, to know where the food comes from and how it is grown."

Hibbert even prepares small "to go" packages for the guests of leftovers.

This anti-waste mind-set is shared by the rest of the team. "When I create something, I am also researching and making the best decision on the materials to be used for that project," Trait says. "I want to make sure that everything can be used again or recycled. When the flowers are dead, I compost them or sometimes I dry them and use the petals for confetti."

During the celebration, you can see Trait making wrist corsages for all the female guests, Waddington laughing with the parents of the couple, and Hibbert making jokes with her kitchen crowd.



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Weddings planned by Locally Grown Weddings.

"Our wedding was the best day of our lives, and that was in large part due to the Locally Grown Weddings team," says Catie Osborn, a recent client.

"During our celebration, they worked hard behind the scenes. They moved around, taking pictures, fixing decorations or preparing cocktails, but we barely saw them. By the end of it, we wished these women were guests at our wedding, rather than working at it."

Locally Grown Weddings: www.locallygrownweddings.com.

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