

The Kindest Cut

When you can't invite everyone you know, you can still trim your guest list with tact and grace

By **Connie Jeske Crane** Illustration by **Mandy Lau**

PLANNING A SMALLER, MORE INTIMATE WEDDING? You're not alone. Industry insiders have pointed to smaller weddings as a definite trend. Today's celebrations "are getting more intimate — not necessarily small, but they are getting more intimate," says Danielle Andrews Sunkel of the Wedding Planners Institute of Canada. "It's not the huge faceless event."

There are some lovely aspects to a smaller affair. Without 400 guests to worry about, couples can lavish more attention on their nearest and dearest. Shyer brides and grooms may feel less overwhelmed.

And, "it's less stressful," adds Genève McNally, of Vancouver-based wedding planners, DreamGroup Productions. "Plus, the money you save is wonderful and goes towards an expensive mortgage in Vancouver," she laughs.

Finally, a smaller occasion can wildly expand your venue options, notes McNally: "There are so many great spaces in Vancouver."

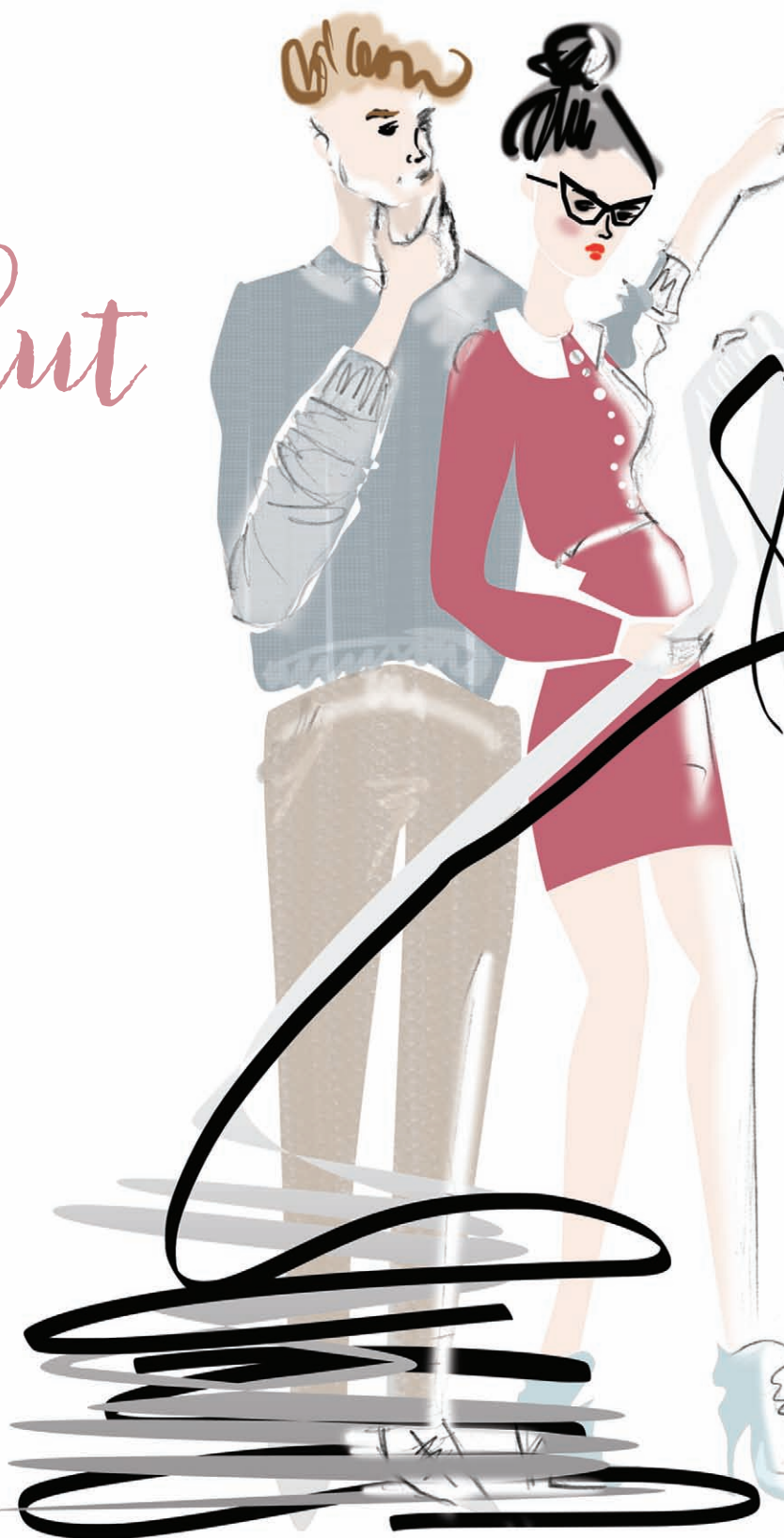
Yet for all these pluses, experts say there's a trade-off, and it comes in the form of all the negotiations and blowback associated with trimming people from your list. "I don't know that it is entirely possible not to hurt feelings. That is a very tricky situation," says Sunkel.

Tricky or not, Anna Post, etiquette expert and great-great-granddaughter of the renowned Emily Post, says couples shouldn't feel guilty. "Smaller weddings are perfectly fine to have. It is completely up to you and your budget."

With smaller weddings on the rise, we sought some sound advice. Here's what the experts had to say.

GATHER SPECIFICS

Before sitting down with your parents (not to mention future in-laws) to hammer out the guest list, Post advises you know your budget, so you "have a good sense of how many people with that budget you might be able to invite. You may need to consult with your caterer first." You should also keep in mind how many guests your venue can accommodate.





If you want a small wedding regardless of budget, Post says, then “know how large you want it to be.”

MAKE THE LIST

If parents are contributing to your wedding budget, Post says, “They are hosts, and they do have a right to be inviting people — at least a say. There is no set etiquette about who gets what percentage of the guest list. This is something every couple is going to need to negotiate with their parents.”

Possible scenarios, says Post, include having the couple take “half of the list and parents each their quarter [between the bride’s side and the groom’s side].”

With their portion of the list, she explains, couples should think in terms of groups. “You have your list of college friends, and office friends, and your list of current social friends.” If you have to cut a group, you explain accordingly: “It’s not ‘I had to cut you’ — it’s ‘I’m limited with the list and I’m not able to invite anyone from work. I’m sure you understand.’”

With your workplace, Sunkel has this advice: “If you [invite] somebody who is very obviously to everyone else a close personal friend, then everybody is going to understand that.” In a group environment or small workplace, “If you invite one person, you’re going to have to invite the entire team.” Then again, if you don’t have close friends at work, you simply may not invite anyone at all from the office.



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FOLLOW STANDARD ETIQUETTE

If you're not inviting someone to the wedding, don't invite them to your showers, or parties leading up. "It's a hard-and-

*while it's fine to
announce your
engagement
on social media,
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to a minimum*


fast rule," says Toronto etiquette expert Karen Cleveland. "It is so hurtful to invite people to the events leading up to your wedding if you can't invite them to the wedding."


COMMUNICATE WITH CARE

"It's okay for you or your wedding party to be hinting to people that this is going to be a small wedding, but leave it at that," advises Post.

For anyone who asks, have a polite answer ready, advises Cleveland. "Certainly, have a cordial but warm response saying that you're super-excited, though keeping things really small and intimate."

And while it's fine to announce your engagement on social media, keep ongoing references to a minimum. "You don't want to be happily bragging about how gorgeous your dress is to people who won't get to see it," says Cleveland.

"Really what it comes down to is, all these people are just so happy for [the couple] and they're excited," says Sunkel. If couples see it this way, "They can be a little more sensitive and understanding and tactful when they let them know it's going to be a small event." 



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