



Milton Gil Photography

Do Us All a Favor

By Nayda Rondon

"The favor is the last important component of the wedding," emphasizes Jaynee Bucco of Jaynee's Party, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, and a 22-year veteran of the party-planning business. "They are getting more attention today than they did some time ago." With all the great current options available, you shouldn't have a problem finding the perfect favor. To help you choose something that truly reflects you, your groom, and your magical day, we've gathered information on the hottest party item trends finding favor with brides and grooms this spring and summer.



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Favors Of Love

Concern for the Environment & Others

All of our industry experts are forecasting "green." "Probably the most exciting trend is the movement toward eco-friendly or less wasteful favors," says Karen Bussen, wedding and entertaining expert with offices in New York City and Fort Lee, New Jersey. "Couples are becoming more conscientious of reducing waste at their celebrations and becoming more interested in locally produced products."

Her eco-friendly suggestions:

- Visit a local farmer's market for seasonal fruits, herb plants, or other homegrown products. Use them as centerpieces in bowls or baskets, then give them away.
- Support area businesses by offering jars of local jams or honey (with a "How sweet it is!" note).
- Give soy or beeswax candles, which provide a cleaner, nontoxic burn.
- Check out wedding favor Web sites, such as www.beau-coup.com/green-wedding-favors.htm and www.weddingthings.com/category/eco_friendly_green_wedding_favor.



“Couples—no longer only concerned about trendy colors—also care deeply about helping the environment and being socially conscious,” says Bonnie Marcus, president of the Westport, Connecticut-based Bonnie Marcus Collection, which specializes in paper products. “A fabulous—and inexpensive—favor idea is giving out beautifully colored envelopes filled with seeds for guests to plant their own flowers.” **For a great centerpiece/favor idea, Kathi R. Evans, president of All the Best Weddings & Celebrations, Toms River, New Jersey, suggests individually planted flowers guests can take home.**

Other eco-chic options include items such as scented soaps (*Editor's pick*: Earthworks Pur-Essence Bar Soaps wrapped in eco-friendly colored papers made from fallen mango leaves and pulp of bamboo and mulberry shoots; priced at \$10 per bar or \$700 for 100 bars, \$900 for 150 bars) and sachets (*Editor's pick*: Hillhouse Naturals Sachets—fragrant envelopes containing herbs, dried flowers, and spices; priced at under \$3 each).

Many couples are donating to charities of their choice and providing guests with certificates to indicate they have made a donation in their name. Others are purchasing favors that donate a portion of proceeds to charities or research, according to Kristine Nigro, owner of Crown Elegance, Staten Island, New York.

“Our pink ribbon favor boxes are perfect for a sweet treat while contributing to a great cause,” notes Cathy Gabriel, creative director-owner of Concepts II Completion, Brooklyn, New York. “The pink ribbon seed pack is a two-for-one deal: it donates toward cancer research and the plantable packs are eco-friendly.”

“Rather than giving throwaway gifts in big packaging, put a note on your program or menu card that a donation to your favorite charity has been made in honor of your guests,” says Bussen.

“Couples could plant a tree in the name of each guest and present everyone with a certificate of where their tree is located. It is important to give each guest a small card with information about the charity and why it's important to the couple; guests may feel the charity is important as well and make an additional donation to the organization,” Marcus elaborates.



Plantable Ribbon - Courtesy of Crown Elegance



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Personal Touch

“Let the favors reflect your personal style,” says Nigro. “Make it something your guests remember you by.” Even staples like candles or frames take on personalized flair when the packaging is accented with your wedding colors, notes Gabriel, who reports that her business custom-designs monograms that couples can use on favor packaging, programs, menus, and place cards.

“Look to the place where you're from or the place where you'll celebrate for inspiration,” Bussen advises. For instance, Marcus notes, at an informal beach wedding, give flip-flops. And you can never go wrong with handmade, meaningful gifts that highlight you and your groom's unique talents or interests.

Be true to yourself, Gabriel emphasizes. “If you and your significant other are all about wine, then wine bottle openers will make sense when your guests receive it.”

Don't forget to tap into your wedding's theme and season, Evans recommends. An example of seasonal favors she's put together: a fancy take-out container stuffed with gold and white tissue paper. The sticker matched the wedding colors, and inside was a cellophane bag filled with homemade chocolate-covered pretzels and seashell candies in different flavors, which complemented the wedding's Jersey Shore theme.

“Lots of couples want to do something fun at the door to end the party. We recently did mini pizzas in to-go boxes with personalized labels. They're perfect for when everyone's been drinking and dancing. We also did individual wind chime favors for guests at a wedding where the bride and groom were both in the music industry. We hung them up and used them as escort cards, so they got triple use (decor, beautiful sound at the entrance to this outdoor party, and guest favors),” says Bussen.

Eat, Drink, & Be Merry

“Everybody likes something to eat, especially something sweet,” insists Evans, who reports that specialty or homemade candies in decorative boxes with the couple's new monogram are big. Nigro notes that some couples are choosing to give bottles of premade cocktails, while others are giving guests prepackaged slices of cake in small boxes with



The Petite Cafe - Stuffed Cupcakes

thank-you notes attached. For an even sweeter effect, couples may want to send their guests off to indulge in a mousse-filled Stuffed Cupcake from The Petite Café. (*Editor's pick*: The staff at Contemporary Bride was lucky enough to taste a variety of delicious confections. And we all agree that these tasty treats from The Petite Café would make an unforgettable favor that everyone will love!) “In 2009 we will be introducing a line of gourmet teas as a standalone item or as the perfect complement to any sweet treat,” says Gabriel. Another unique, new trend in wedding favors is the chocolate dipped apple. Mrs. Prindable's Handmade Confections produce adorable chocolate, caramel, or nut-dipped apples that would be the perfect treat for any wedding guest. Some of these delectable desserts are even made to look like mini, fruit brides and grooms!

At Jaynee's Party custom-designed candy favor boxes with beautiful embellishments and stone appliques are filled with edible gourmet chocolate favors. “It's also versatile, as it can be used as a seating card and favor or just attached with a simple thank-you note,” Bucco explains. Another popular Jaynee's Party option: the Spring Candy Buffet, a penny candy display set up during the last hour of the wedding; guests fill their custom take-out bag with candy favorites and walk away remembering your “sweet” wedding day.



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Favor-ed Colors

Naturals are hot, according to Bussen, who adds that on the higher design end, unusual shades of regular colors (turquoise instead of baby blue or coral or fuchsia instead of pink) are being seen more frequently.

“The 2009 color palette will be more muted and monochromatic, while accent colors will be light and fresh. Many brides will search for boxes, ribbon, and other accents to complement their theme and colors,” predicts Gabriel, who advises using variations of colors that blend together instead of trying to match exact shades. Black and white with a splash of an accent color, such as green or blue, is a popular color scheme, according to Nigro, while Bucco notes that yellow is always summery and fresh, and rich lavenders and purples are being considered today's new black.



Mrs. Prindables Handmade Confections

Perfectly Practical

Function is key. “Keep it simple,” Evans emphasizes. “Remember all the favors you've gotten from parties and weddings that you've either tossed or are sitting somewhere collecting dust. Make it meaningful and useful.” Nigro cites luggage tags, pizza slicers, cheese graters and vegetable peelers, and flower or herb seeds as popular, practical favor items. “Brides and grooms want to give their guests favors they can use at the wedding—comfortable slippers to change into, personalized tins of breath mints, or other items guests can use, especially if they will be staying over at a nearby hotel or resort,” she says. “Brides often create beautiful guest bags to greet their guests when they check in to their hotel.”

Evans says to think multipurpose. She likes picture frames, which can also be used as escort card holders, in which guests' names and table numbers are in the frame; they're taken home and used for the photo the bride and groom send with their thank-you notes.

Clever and cute count too. “‘We Clicked’ mouse pads are just one of the ways to think outside the box,” Gabriel says.



Slice of Love - Courtesy of Crown Elegance

Out of Favor

“Each client is different,” Evans says. “Bold and over the top for one; sophisticated and elegant for another.” In Nigro's opinion, candles, key chains, and picture frames are on their way out, while Bussen mentions tulle bags with sugared almonds, candy bars, and anything with the couple's names or the date on it as waning in popularity.

“Today's bride and groom look for something unique that their guests will use over and over,” says Bucco. “Their choice is a true reflection of their style and taste; more importantly, it is their way of saying ‘thank you’ to their guests.”

“After the wedding, besides the wonderful memories, the wedding favor is the one memento that guests take home with them to remember the special day,” Marcus explains. Make yours count!



Bonnie Marcus & Co.