

63 MARTHA STEWART WEDDINGS'S
TOP WEDDING PLANNERS

A smart way to stay stress-free when pulling together your big day? Turn to a professional! Here, we list our favorite planners by region (though many will travel) and share why we love them and some of their best advice.

IN THE WEST

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

ALISON EVENTS, San Francisco
→ Sweet Stat → Alison Hotchkiss Rinderknecht has planned some 300 events, including her own (see page 352). alisonevents.com @ + + +

JENNA LAM EVENTS, St. Helena
→ Top Tip → "Don't get overwhelmed by the big picture," says Lam, who gives couples a month-by-month schedule to make the process more manageable. jennalamevents.com + +

LAURIE ARONS SPECIAL EVENTS, San Francisco → What We Love → Good planners listen to clients. But great ones, like Arons (who's been at it since 1994), know how to guide them if an idea isn't workable. lauriearons.com + +

ROSEMARY EVENTS, Mill Valley
→ What We Love → Rosemary Hattenbach focuses on every detail of a wedding: not just the setting and the sights but also the smells, sounds, and tastes. rosemaryevents.com + +

SHANNON LEAHY EVENTS, San Francisco → Top Tip → "Using buzzwords like *laid-back* or *formal* can help dictate the mood you want to set and answer most planning questions," Leahy says. shannonleahy.com + + +

SHELTER CO., San Francisco
→ What We Love → This company specializes in outdoor events at far-flung locales (and provides pop-up lodging via its luxe canvas tents). shelter-co.com + + +

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

BASH, PLEASE, Los Angeles
→ What We Love → Creative directors Paige Appel and Kelly Harris offer full-service planning, designing, and production for anything they dream up, anywhere. bashplease.com + + +

SYMBOL KEY

- * offers partial planning, month-of help, or consulting
- @ has multiple office locations
- + provides design services
- 30 percent or more of his or her jobs are destination weddings
- ▲ a real wedding of his or hers has been featured in *Martha Stewart Weddings*

"Book the 'big five'—planner, ceremony location, reception venue, photographer, and band—then take a hiatus to breathe and enjoy the engagement itself."

CALDER CLARK,
CHARLESTON, SC

BETH HELMSTETTER EVENTS, L.A. → Bio Bit → Santa Barbara, CA, Aspen, CO, and Maui, HI, are Helmstetter's top booked locales. bethhelmstetter.com + + +

DUET WEDDINGS, L.A. → Their Style → Rebecca Stone and Cathleen Stern love pretty touches and flawless execution but feel the emotions of the couple are what truly make a wedding. duet-weddings.com + +

GELLER EVENTS, L.A. → Sweet Stat → Debbie Geller's boutique firm has spent more than two years planning some weddings but taken others from beginning to end in less than two months. gellerevents.com +

LA FLEUR WEDDINGS & EVENTS, Santa Barbara [and Maui, HI] → What We Love → In addition to the big day and its surrounding events, Jill La Fleur's team assists with honeymoon planning. lafleurweddings.com @ + + +

LISA VORCE CO., Santa Ana
→ Her Style → Vorce teases her clients that she's interviewing them as much as they are her to make sure they are able to place full trust in her team. lisavorce.com + + +

LOVE & SPLENDOR, Grover Beach
→ Top Tip → Owner Angel Swanson notes that the earlier you bring on a planner, the sooner you can benefit from his or her knowledge. loveandsplendor.com + +

MINDY WEISS PARTY CONSULTANTS, Beverly Hills → Bio Bit → Best known for working with high-profile brides like Jessica Simpson, Weiss and her team plan up to 60 weddings each year. mindyweiss.com * +

SITTING IN A TREE, San Diego [and Sayulita, Mexico] → Their Style → Destination weddings are owner Tori Hendrix's favorite. She likes the magic of having loved ones together for a weekend in a place other than their own. sittinginatreedesign.com * @ + + +

COLORADO

BLUEBIRD PRODUCTIONS, Aspen → Their Style → "We emphasize that planning is about the bride and groom, not what we want," says founder Virginia Edelson. "Our role is to be their best advocate." bluebirdaspen.com +

GOLD LEAF EVENT DESIGN & PRODUCTION, Aspen [and Palm Beach Gardens, FL] → What We Love → This company always finds ways to showcase the couple's hobbies and passions at the wedding. goldleafevent.com * @ +

LOVE THIS DAY EVENTS, Winter Park [and Missoula, MT] → Their Style → "We are rustic-luxe," says lead planner Kara Delay. "Give us a barn, a meadow, or a ski shack and we can create something magical." lovethisdayevents.com * @ + +

GOOD TO KNOW
A planner focuses on logistics and execution. An event designer concentrates on the look of a wedding. Many on this list do both.
Pricing varies: Some pros charge flat fees; others, a percentage of the total budget; and a few offer specific packages, but most will customize their rates.

UTAH

MICHELLE LEO EVENTS, Sandy → Sweet Stat → Although Leo typically plans a wedding in eight to 12 months, she once pulled one off with three weeks' notice. michelleleoevents.com * +

WASHINGTON

SINCLAIR & MOORE, Seattle
→ What We Love → This husband-and-wife team is passionate about producing beautiful events; we featured their own wedding three years ago. sinclairandmoore.com * + +

IN THE SOUTHWEST

ARIZONA
IMONI EVENTS, Phoenix [and San Diego and Denver] → Bio Bit → Most of Jennifer Thy's events take place across the Grand Canyon State, especially in Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Tucson. imonievents.com * @ + +

TEXAS

THE NOUVEAU ROMANTICS, Austin [and New York City] → What We Love → Along with planning, they

offer event, stationery, and floral design to create a consistent aesthetic. thenouveauromanatics.com @ + +

IN THE MIDWEST

ILLINOIS

A PERFECT EVENT, Chicago
→ Sweet Stat → In the biz since 1992, "chief eventeur" Debi Lilly has planned 200-plus weddings. aperfectevent.com * + + +

ESTERA EVENTS, Chicago
→ Their Style → Owner Hilary Carpenter describes their motto as "the art of approachable elegance" and ensures each event is "as welcoming as it is gorgeous." esteraevents.com * +

MICHIGAN

A DAY IN MAY EVENTS, Traverse City → Sweet Stat → Ninety percent of Alicia Caldecott's events are tented,

and most are at family homes or summer residences. adayinmayevents.com * +

MINNESOTA

ROCKET SCIENCE WEDDINGS & EVENTS, St. Paul → Their Style → "We do what we call 'up north destination weddings,'" says owner Gretchen Culver, who often plans events at private homes in Minnesota and Wisconsin. rocketscienceweddingsandevents.com * +

IN THE SOUTH

ALABAMA

GINNY AU, Birmingham → Sweet Stat → Sixty percent of Au's business is international; she travels an average of 2,500 miles to work a wedding. ginnyau.com * + + +

FLORIDA

ANNA LUCIA WEDDINGS, Tampa
→ Bio Bit → Unlike companies in other parts of the country, this team plans most of its events in November, April, and May. annaluciaevents.com * + +

GEORGIA

ASHLEY BABER WEDDINGS, Atlanta → Her Style → "We love to keep up with clients after the big day to watch their milestones," says Baber. "To know we were a little part of beginning that life together is really special." ashleybaberweddings.com * +

LOVELY LITTLE DETAILS, Johns Creek [and Napa Valley, CA] → Bio Bit → After an earthquake hit Napa, Jacin Fitzgerald had four days to move 110 guests to another location. lovely-littledetails.com @ +

TOAST EVENTS, Atlanta → Top Tip → "The guest list is the hardest part, between deciding whom to invite and dealing with several people's input. It's a necessary evil, but after that, everything gets much easier," says owner Lindsay Pitt. toast-events.com + +

KENTUCKY

HOLLIS STARKS & CO., Louisville
→ Her Style → Starks has a business background and a strong sense of responsibility when it comes to clients' budgets. She doesn't believe in "funny money." hollisstarks.com * +

LOUISIANA

TYING THE KNOT WEDDING COORDINATION, New Orleans
→ Her Style → Elyse Skansi specializes in destination weddings for clients traveling to the Big Easy. tyingtheknotweddingcoordination.com * +

OKLAHOMA

GIBSON EVENTS, Oklahoma City → Her Style → Lindsay Gibson's worldly, eclectic aesthetic draws clients with similar attitudes. gibsonevents.com * +

SOUTH CAROLINA

CALDER CLARK, Charleston
→ Top Tip → Clark says the cornerstone of any great planner-client relationship is trust, and that's why she cultivates it from day one. calderclark.com + + +

EASTON EVENTS, Charleston [and Charlottesville, VA] → What We Love → Lynn Easton and her team are very clear about what can be achieved within a certain budget and will help facilitate Plan B if Plan A isn't feasible. eastonevents.com * @ + + +

KRISTIN NEWMAN DESIGNS, Charleston → Her Style → Newman strives to soak up the couple's sense of style and listen to their priorities to help the pair make choices that are "so them." kristinneemandesigns.com + + +

TARA GUÉRARD SOIRÉE, Charleston [and NYC] → Sweet Stat → Her weddings have ranged from 15 people to 1,200 attendees, but on average, she plans for 250. tara-guerardsoiree.com @ + +

TENNESSEE

JESSICA SLOANE EVENT STYLING AND DESIGN, Nashville

We ran the stats to come up with the following averages based on weddings spearheaded by these planners:

17 Weddings a year	178 Guests in attendance
12 Months in advance suggested to book a planner	51 Percent that listed September as the most-booked month to wed, while 22% named October
8 Years in business	2,000 Guests at the biggest wedding
8 Guests at the smallest	

→ Top Tip → "The biggest mistake is booking vendors or a venue prematurely," says Sloane. "Make sure you're 100 percent happy before signing contracts and paying deposits; many are non-refundable." jessicasloane.com * @ + +

VIRGINIA

MERRIMENT EVENTS, Richmond
→ Her Style → Virginia is for lovers, which may be why most of Courtney Spencer's weddings are planned within state lines. merrimentevents.com +

SIMPLY CHIC EVENTS, Ashburn
→ Their Style → Their recipe for a great wedding? "A tad of creative event pros, a dash of details, a pinch of humor, and a smidgen of ceremony seriousness," says event planner and designer Jamie Sears. asimplychicevent.com * + + +

IN THE EAST

MAINE

L. BROOK EVENTS, Falmouth
→ Top Tip → "Sit down separately and make a list of three or four things that are most important to you. Talk about those priorities, and create a master list to work from," suggests owner-designer Lindsey Norton. lbrookevents.com * +

MASSACHUSETTS

RAFANELLI EVENTS, Boston [and NYC, Washington, D.C., and Palm Beach, FL] → Bio Bit → Byran Rafanelli planned Chelsea Clinton's nuptials and once built a barge in Boston Harbor for another wedding. rafanellevents.com * @ + + +

NEW HAMPSHIRE

BY EMILY B., Sunapee → Their Style → "We approach events as if we're telling the couple's story," says owner Kristin Burgess, whose company is named after author Emily Brontë. byemilyb.com +

NEW YORK

AAB CREATES, Brooklyn
→ What We Love → Xochitl Gonzalez and Mayra Castillo mix things up culturally to honor a bride or groom's roots—for example, incorporating a fusion menu or a Chinese lion dance. aabcreates.com * + +

ANG WEDDINGS AND EVENTS, NYC → Bio Bit → Tzo Ai Ang has lived in four countries located on four continents, allowing her to work well with clients from unique places and with diverse backgrounds. angweddingsandevents.com * + +

DAVID REINHARD EVENTS, NYC
→ Their Style → Frequent fliers Ann David and Nicky Reinhard will plan and execute an unforgettable wedding wherever their clients take them. david-reinhard.com + +

DAVID STARK DESIGN AND PRODUCTION, Brooklyn → Bio Bit → Stark's work as a designer and event planner stems from his roots as a fine artist. His studio approaches an event as a three-dimensional art piece customized to the clients. davidstarkdesign.com + +

JZ EVENTS, NYC → Bio Bit → With a background in hospitality, Jennifer Zabinski uses her knowledge of all things service-oriented, from food to staffing, to plan seamless events. jzevents.com * +

LOLI EVENTS, Brooklyn
→ Sweet Stat → Eighty percent of Lauren Sozmen's weddings are in the Big Apple; the rest are in France. lolievents.com * +

MARCY BLUM ASSOCIATES, NYC
→ Bio Bit → Blum literally wrote the book on planning (*Wedding Planning for Dummies*) and has been in the biz for 29 years—longer than anyone else on this list. marcyblum.com * + + +

MICHELLE RAGO DESTINATIONS, NYC → Sweet Stat → Fifty percent of Rago's weddings are local; the other half are destination affairs, with Paris being the top spot. michelleragoldt.com * @ + + +

THE WEDDING LIBRARY, NYC → Bio Bit → Claudia Hanlin and her team helped make Tiler and Robbie's day run smoothly (see page 300). theweddinglibrary.com * + + +

TRACY TAYLOR WARD DESIGN, NYC → Bio Bit → Ward planned her own 2010 wedding and started orchestrating others two months later with help from her husband, who still works alongside her. tracytaylorward.com * +

PENNSYLVANIA

THE STYLED BRIDE, Philadelphia → Their Style → Owner Beka Rendell and wedding director Susan Norcross love the reveal when the bride and groom first see each other, since it's a moment that happens only once before the I do's. www.thestyledbride.com *

WASHINGTON, D.C.

ANNE BOOK SIGNATURE STYLE → Top Tip → "The first decisions are often hard choices that come after very romantic initial ideas," says Book. "Create your vision of the who, what, when, and where, then match it up with reality." annebook.com + +

PINEAPPLE PRODUCTIONS → Top Tip → Owner and founder Allison Jackson recommends you love your bad-weather Plan B as much as your Plan A. Happily, there was no rain for Michelle and Kim's wedding on page 142. pineapplepro.com + + +

RITZY BEE EVENTS → Their Style → "We want our clients to have ideas that fit their sense, setting, and style," says Maria Baer, co-owner along with Kelly Seizert. ritzzybee.com + +

STRAWBERRY MILK EVENTS [and Baltimore] → Top Tip → Creative director Julie Savage suggests that when setting a budget, couples should plan on spending no more than 50 percent on venue-related costs. strawberrymilkevents.com * @ + + +

BICOASTAL PLANNERS

DAUGHTER OF DESIGN, L.A. and NYC → Sweet Stat → The first wedding of hers we featured was a luxe Lake Como, Italy, fête, but 70 percent of principal planner Annie Lee's events take place two to three hours from the Big Apple. daughterofdesign.com * @ + + +

FIREFLY EVENTS, L.A. and NYC → Top Tip → "Location is key!" says owner Teissia Treynet. "Look at a variety of spaces. It's similar to finding 'your person'; when you know, you know." firefly-events.com * @ + +

LYNDSEY HAMILTON EVENTS, San Francisco, L.A., and NYC → Her Style → She often produces midday styled destination events. lyndseyhamiltonevents.com @ + +

YIFAT OREN & ASSOCIATES, L.A. and NYC → What We Love → Although she's distinguished for her celeb clients like Reese Witherspoon and Drew Barrymore, Oren is skilled at making every bride the star of her day. yifatoren.com @ + + +