



Perspective/Opinion

How to Plan a Pandemic Wedding

by Sophia Kiernan

Step 1: Book your wedding venue 16 months in advance. You know you want to get married in Green Bay, and you know pickings are slim in the Green Bay wedding venue market. Filter by ones that will hold your and your fiancé's massive families. Then filter by ones that serve something other than broasted chicken—if you're not sure if they serve something other than broasted chicken, call the owners. Most will be shocked that you want something other than broasted chicken.

Step 2: Book a rehearsal dinner venue, specifically the venue you have been planning to have your rehearsal dinner in since you were 12 (the only part of your wedding you've had planned since you were 12).

Step 3: Marvel at how on top of the game you are, and don't worry much about wedding planning for many months. Wedding planning? It's not that hard, right?

Step 4: Receive email from rehearsal dinner venue that they are closing their restaurant that has been a staple in Green Bay for decades. Darn. Can you believe that? Our rehearsal venue closed! How unlucky are we? Oh well, it's just the rehearsal dinner!

Step 5: Enter stage left: global pandemic. It's February! We're getting married in June! This will all be fine by then.

Step 6: It's not fine.

Step 7: Figure out “disaster backup plan” that involves one-sixth of your guest list.

Step 8: Coordinate Wedding 1.0 for 2020 while simultaneously coordinating Wedding 2.0 for 2021 with original venue.

Step 9: Set plan in motion and marvel at how flexible you are. Make a cute video with your fiancé announcing the news. Make sure everyone knows that you’re handling it like a champ, and that it’s all going to be okay. You’re coordinating two weddings and are practically 25% a doctor. You’re unstoppable.

Step 10: Receive call that original venue is closing, effective immediately, and you are now competing with 100 couples for those previously mentioned broasted chicken venues.

Return to step 1.



The good news? We did get married, on our originally planned wedding date of June 13th. It was certainly not the wedding we had spent a year and a half planning: a 300-person guest list and COVID weren’t exactly compatible. My husband, Nathan, and I have always identified as being “big wedding people” — we both come from big families with lots of cousins we love. A small wedding wasn’t even on the table when we started planning. In March 2020, we started writing a “disaster plan” of what we would do if we could only have fifty people, but we didn’t seriously think we’d have to actually uninvite two hundred and fifty people from our wedding. As it got

closer and closer, however, we realized that we were going to have to become small wedding people, and fast.

I read a book early on in the wedding planning process about “practical” planning. It basically said to let other people help you—you have so many people in your life who love you, and those people have skills. Let them use those skills to help you pull off a wedding. While I thought this was a lovely idea, I felt like this was supposed to be a party that we planned and other people enjoyed—my guests aren’t supposed to be having to help me make sure they enjoy it by tying ribbons on pews or baking desserts. Aaaanddd then God probably just laughed at me. Because the only way you can replan a wedding in one month during a global pandemic is to get a ton of help from people who love you.

We had a crowdsourced wedding, through and through. My godparents immediately offered their gorgeous backyard as a reception venue. My brothers played five instruments between the three of them at our Mass. Our friends sanitized the entire church while we took pictures. My aunt offered to make cheesecake for fifty people. Basically, our guests were the only reason we successfully pulled off this wedding—and that made our wedding even more wonderful.

It’s easy to think of a wedding as being about two people. And it is, in many ways, because I was the one in the white dress and Nathan was the one in the suit vowing unconditional commitment together from this day forward. However, I can already see that marriage only succeeds when you have support from all the people who have loved you into being the person you are. Nathan has been loving me and shaping me for a few years, but my aunts, uncles, parents and brothers have already spent a lifetime shaping me into the person who is able to stand at the altar and confidently say that I am ready and willing “til death do us part.” So now, I can see God’s hand working through them. They truly were the glue that held this day together!

So, yes, we are big wedding people. I thought if I was lucky, I would see the silver lining of this pandemic wedding by the time June 13, 2021 rolls around—

and instead it only took me until June 14, 2020. I got to talk to every one of our guests. I got to actually EAT the woodfired pizza at my own wedding. I got to sit in the backyard of my godparents' house, in my Wisconsin hometown, with four of my closest friends from college, in a wedding dress. I got to have fifty of our most important people in the church that I grew up in. I got to marry my absolute favorite person. I'm not just looking for silver linings anymore—the whole day was just perfectly golden.

Sophia Kiernan is a second-year medical student at MCW-Milwaukee who holds leadership positions in the Kern Institute's Student Physician Networking Program, as well as PMHSA, and PM&RIG. She enjoys trying new-to-her ethnic restaurants around Milwaukee, downhill skiing, or biking, depending on what weather Wisconsin is throwing at us!