



be our guest

Deep red maple leaves, a brick-lined courtyard, heritage architecture. Such were the surroundings when, on an autumn evening last year, Tamara Robbins and Edward Griffith celebrated their nuptials with 125 guests in the Distillery District, a Toronto neighbourhood with the right mix of rustic and chic that the couple adore, a feel they carried throughout the event, including the fall-foliage-theme invitations and wishing tree. But Tamara's not just any bride. *STYLE AT HOME's* associate design editor, Tamara approached her wedding planning much as she would a story: she did her research and was always prepared. "I found a lot of people online," she says. "And if they couldn't help me, often they knew someone who could." Her perseverance paid off. Everything from the flowers to the favours was coordinated — all in a warm scheme that suited the fall festivities. One year later, Tamara invites us behind the scenes to share what she learned. Her ideas are so smart and stylish, you'll want to steal some for your own wedding or next big bash. Written and produced by Tamara Robbins | Photography by Jessica Lin



▲ **perfect palette** A distinct colour palette is a surefire way to pull together any event. Look for inspiration in books, magazines, textiles and even nature. Colour palettes are usually strongest when limited to two or three hues. Edward and I wanted a fall scheme that suited our mid-October festivities, but with a twist: hits of rosy pink brightened up the earthy combo of pumpkin orange and rich burgundy. To create depth and boost the palette even more, texture was added through the use of dupioni silk fabric, and shiny satin, luxe velvet and grosgrain ribbon. **tip** Glue paint chips from your palette to a business card-size piece of card stock to hand out to caterers, cake bakers, florists and stationery designers (and don't forget your bridesmaids!). They can add it to your file or their wallets to keep at the ready.

◀ **canopy chic** For our interfaith wedding (I'm Jewish, Edward's Catholic), we liked the idea of a nondenominational wedding canopy that represents a couple's future home. However, since we didn't want miles of white tulle, we were in trouble! There was nothing on the market that suited our taste or the venue (The Boiler House in Toronto's Distillery District), and just when we decided we'd have to have a canopy sewn, I stumbled upon Diana Kelley's website, graydove.net. Her company, Gray Dove, custom-makes modern canopies in any fabric and colour. Her designs are clean-lined – just right for The Boiler House. Edward and I picked dupioni silk fabrics from Robert Allen and ribbon from Mokuba, and Diana came up with a wonderful design. When choosing how to mount the canopy, we decided traditional white poles weren't going to work in our rustic urban setting, so we opted for dowels about two inches thick from Home Hardware, finishing them with Beauti-Tone's Wood Shield semitransparent stain in Twig. At eight feet tall, the dowels were the perfect height for creating a simple but rich frame around our ceremony. An aisle runner was made from Robert Allen's Spheres in Burgundy and sewn by Drapes and Sew Much More. It really lead the eye to the focal point – the canopy – and the dark colour wasn't too distracting on the ground. ▶

▼ Newlyweds Edward Griffith and Tamara Robbins celebrated their nuptials last October in Toronto's Distillery District. Surrounded by 125 guests, the couple exchanged vows in a historic brick-lined courtyard before retreating to the chic setting of The Boiler House, a restaurant they love for its rustic urban decor and architecture, fantastic food and exceptional service.





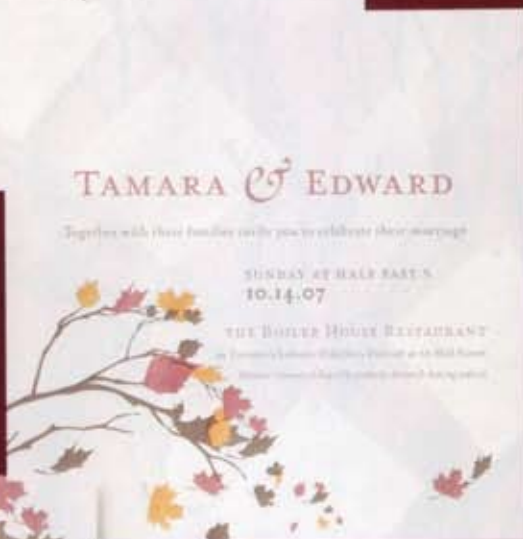
▲ **card cachet** Throwing any kind of party generally means last-minute anxiety. But that's really not my style. I like to be prepared, and picked up a great tip from one of my all-time favourite wedding books, *Jo Gartin's Weddings* by Jo Gartin. Jo suggests using tiny envelopes instead of traditional seating cards. With each guest's name written on the front, it's simple to slip a small card with the table number noted into the envelope, which allows you to easily change your seating plan up to the last minute without having to redo anything.

▼ **bold blooms** Fresh flowers set the tone of a room like nothing else, and they don't have to be expensive to be amazing. We wanted lush impact but were on a tight budget. Because we were using a restaurant with small, square bistro-type tables, we didn't need the big arrangements that would be required on traditional large round tables. I liked the idea of fun, graphic, simple arrangements, and found an excellent designer in Margaret Corrigan, Wild Thyme's owner and creative director. Margaret created wonderful groupings with bold punches of all three of our colours. This concept would work for any budget – just take the scale of the vessels and arrangements up or down a notch, or use different flowers.

► **sweet treats** While wedding cakes can be delightful, the best ones cost a fortune and the inexpensive ones tend to be uninspired. A cupcake tower says fun, and there are tons of decoration styles and icing colours to choose from. Let your baker know your colour scheme, as he or she can often match it in icing. These ones were made by Eat My Words, a not-for-profit that donates all proceeds to the Stephen Lewis Foundation, which funds AIDS-related projects in Africa. Knowing that you're doing something good for those less fortunate makes the sweet even sweeter.

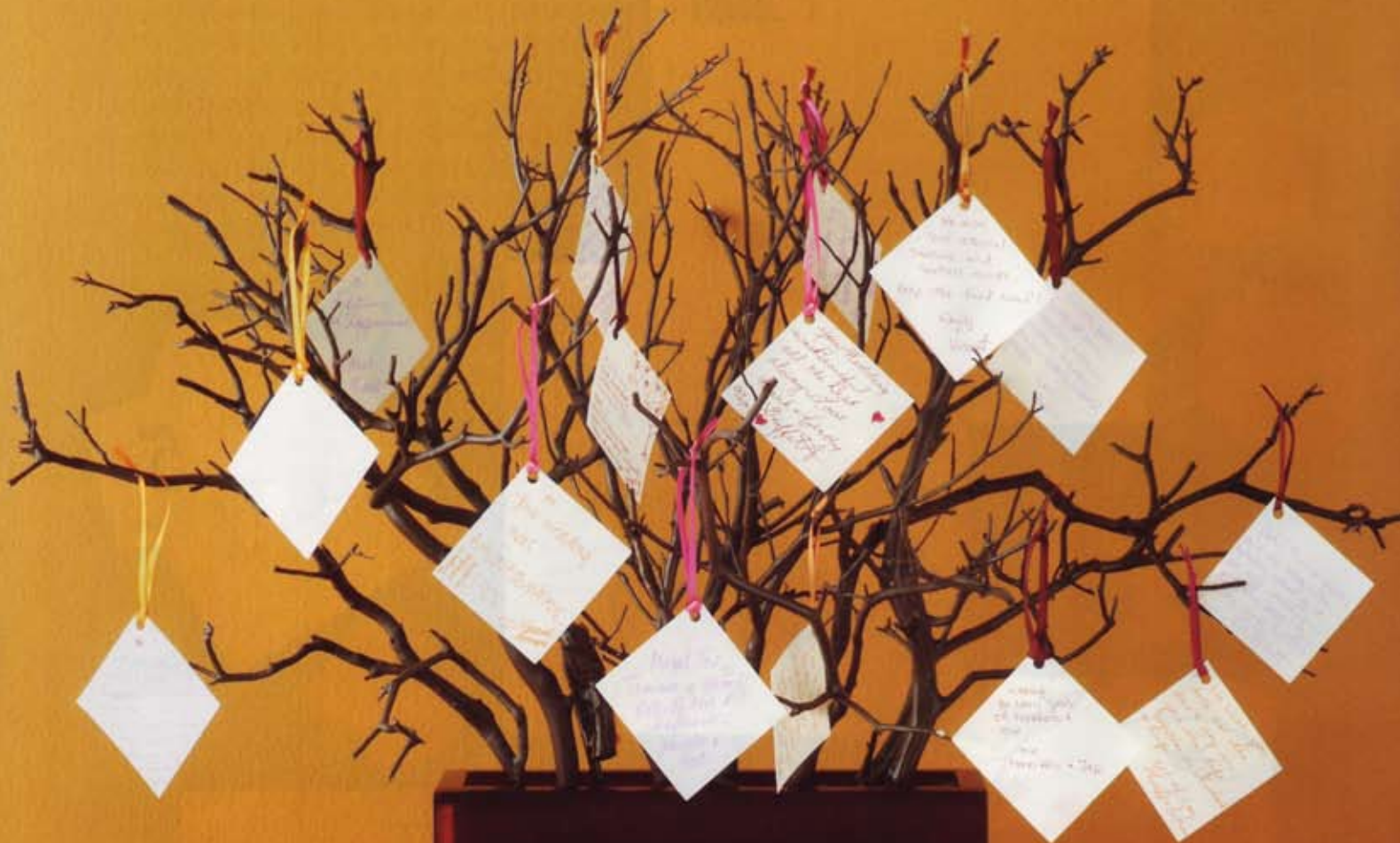


artistic invites I'd always dreamed of having letterpress-printed invitations; Edward wanted his friend Scott Boms, principal and creative director of Wishingline, to design our stationery. A dilemma only until I discovered Lunar Caustic Press, one of the few printers in Toronto that do cold-type composition letterpress printing; that meant that Lunar Caustic Press could convert a digital file to letterpress. Amazing! We found some premium, acid-free card stock called Oxford Papers (made from 30% postconsumer paper waste) in a palette designed by Holly Hunt for Gilbert. Yes, we created a few more steps for ourselves by getting the paper and then sending it to the printer along with a digital file of Scott's design, but we got exactly what we wanted. I truly believe that if you plan ahead, it's not that much more work. And although we opted for many modern elements for the decor, we liked the traditional touch of having envelopes addressed by hand. Calligrapher Louis Wint suggested a script style that wasn't too flouncy for the invitations. ▷



► **rustic resto** Instead of booking a standard banquet hall for your event, consider choosing a restaurant. The benefits are huge. Often, an empty hall lacks personality and requires a large budget to decorate; going with a restaurant means you'll avoid hefty rental bills (the hall, linens, chairs) and save on the decor. Soon after we were engaged, Edward and I had dinner at The Boiler House in Toronto's historic Distillery District, and we thought the urban yet rustic vibe would be perfect for the wedding. Plus, the food was amazing, the staff swift and competent, and the

venue came complete with groovy chairs, cool bathrooms and breathtaking architecture. The bonus of going with a restaurant? Many, especially larger ones, have event planners on staff. Stacey Fulcher of The Distillery Restaurants, which manages their restaurants in The Distillery District, was amazing and took care of everything we didn't have time to worry about, even renting cordless mics for speeches. **Tip** For an outdoor ceremony, consider booking the venue a year in advance, so you'll have an idea of what the area will look like at that time of year.



wishing tree A guest book is a great way for guests to share their thoughts about an event. But why settle for a simple book when there are so many creative ways to express the event's style? In a nod to our love of nature, Edward and I created a wishing tree using manzanita branches in a sleek, modern planter. Guests wrote their wishes on cards tied with ribbons in our palette. After the wedding, we put the cards in a decorative box that sits in an accessible spot on our bookshelf.





recycling with style I like recycling for more than one reason. Conserving the environment is important to Edward and me, and we also like incorporating the past into our present: it's eco friendly, meaningful and budget conscious. Edward had his late mother's engagement ring deconstructed by Linda Penwarden, who then incorporated some of the stones into my engagement ring; the gold was used for Edward's wedding band. My stepmother kindly donated her old wedding dress so I could repurpose the beautiful lace into a long jacket to go over my dress. We chose recycled stock for our invitations and signage, and I even re-covered canvases from the STYLE AT HOME prop room to display our escort cards (see page 164).

◀ **party favours** I've been a fan of A Couple of Squares cookies for years because they taste just as good as they look. The fact that they're prepackaged individually meant less work for us, and therefore was one less thing to worry about. Plus, the cookies and icing can be customized – right down to the colour of the grosgrain ribbon ties. And who really needs more tchotchkes at home? Edible favours always win in my book!

▶ **take-home treasures** Out-of-town guests deserve some pampering. Help them unwind in their hotel room with a gesture that won't be forgotten: nestle a scented candle and a note in a Chinese takeout box to let them know how much you appreciate them making the journey. We customized the boxes with ribbon from Mokuba and Penny People Designs thank-you stickers in our palette. WHERE TO FIND IT, PAGE 188

