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Your WAY

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Thanks to social media, there's more wedding inspiration than ever. And that's a good thing. As you'll see from our @youyourwedding Instagram account and Pinterest boards, if you're looking for fresh fashion and décor ideas, there's plenty to get you thinking. Maybe you'll find the flower arrangements you've had in your head for months but could never quite describe properly; maybe you'll see something that sends you off in a totally new design direction.

There is, however, an important point to bear in mind – a point that may seem obvious, but that lots of people overlook: a picture only tells part of the story. A catering idea that looks effortlessly cool on your Instagram feed may be a logistical nightmare in reality; an elegant décor idea you spot on Pinterest may in fact only last in its immaculate state for all of five minutes on the actual day. That's not to say you can't emulate something you see on social media – more that you need to be aware of what you'll need to do to make these elements work in real life. That's why we asked leading industry experts to look at the ideas that are popular on social media, which may not be as straightforward in reality – and explain how to make these as practical as they are pretty.



Hanging flower displays free up table space and look beautiful, too

Photograph by
Matt Parry
Event design
& styling by
Susie at Knot & Pop
Flowers by
Jo Flowers

PRACTICAL VS PRETTY

*Do the most on-trend wedding ideas actually work in real life?
We asked the experts how to use them on your day*



Ensure everyone gets their fair share of food

Family-style dining

In theory, this is a lovely idea:

guests tuck into shared platters, giving the social feel of a family dinner. The reality is that portion control is not everyone's strong point. We've heard from guests who have been left with little to eat by the time the platters have reached them. And a hungry guest is not a



happy guest – particularly if they then hit the free bar on a practically empty stomach.

The fix: "This comes down to the way the food is presented," says Tim Hanbury of Apollo Event Consultants. "Make sure you have enough staff to help move the food around; staff who wander by the tables and move dishes around will ensure everyone is fed. The key is to keep it circulating."

Escort cards

As an alternative to a table plan, escort cards may seem both practical *and* pretty. These are individual cards with each guest's name and table written on – easier to change than a printed plan if there are any last-minute drop-outs. However, if you have a larger guest list, people are going to struggle to find their names amid all the other cards.

The fix: "Firstly, make sure you arrange them in alphabetical order," says leading luxury planner Kim Balasubramaniam. "Secondly, have a back-up list of who's sitting at which table for your wedding planner or venue to have so that they can assist guests who can't find their table. Thirdly, consider having a secondary table plan just inside your reception space for those guests who either forget to get or can't find their escort cards!"



Tall table arrangements

Opulent blooms that reach for the ceiling are all the rage. However, we have to ask: how are guests supposed to speak to the people across the table during dinner?

The fix: "We advise clients who want tall floral table arrangements that they need to be at least

65cm high," says Michal Kowalski of Blooming Haus. "This means there's enough negative space for guests to easily talk unobstructed. In the same way, low arrangements shouldn't exceed 30-40cm in height. The flowers and foliage play a great role, not only in aesthetics, but also in functionality, so avoid too many cascading flowers in tall arrangements, which will take up more air space." Alternatively, Bernadette Chapman, director of The UK Alliance of Wedding Planners, suggests using hanging arrangements. "This could be a floral chandelier, flowers hanging from the ceiling or Edison bulbs," she says. "These give you a similar effect to a tall table arrangement in that they're adding interest and dimension to the design."



Create space to get guests talking

Hay-bale seats

This type of seating is ideal for a rustic look. But your guests' enthusiasm for your sense of style will wane once they sit on them and are forced to endure straw poking into their posteriors.

The fix: Thin covers won't cut it. "The only way around the comfort issue is to place the plumpest of cushions on them," says Tim.

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Champagne coupes

Also known as champagne saucers, these are wider and flatter than the traditional flute. Closely associated with the 1920s (although the design predates the period), they have a glamorous Art Deco appeal. However, this is a case of style over substance – the shape means your champagne will quickly lose its sparkle. What's more, it's pretty easy to spill, so you'll have to beware overenthusiastic toasts.

The fix: Choose a flute or tulip shape for champagne, and keep the coupes for non-sparkling cocktails.



Avoid flat fizz with flutes

Fire pits

Popular at all kinds of weddings, fire pits are excellent for creating a laid-back evening atmosphere, keeping guests warm, toasting marshmallows – and giving everyone's outfits an unpleasant fragrance that lasts for weeks. Yes, they certainly have their advantages, but that lingering, rolled-in-ashes odour isn't one of them.

The fix: Smokeless fire pits are available to hire in some places, but are less common. If you go ahead with the usual version, preparation is key. "There is definitely a knack to fire pits," says Tim, party planner to the likes of Mick Jagger and the royals. "The big mistakes people often make are not lighting them early enough and having seasoned dry wood. To get your fire pits just right, light them at least an hour before guests arrive. That way, anything you put on them will burn fairly quickly."

