

# Advice from the Yentas

By Ashley Zeldin | PUBLISHED Mar 16, 2011 | Lifestyle

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These are not your grandmother's yentas.

The Wedding Yentas, a Conejo-based Web site offering planning advice to the modern Jewish bride, is the brainchild of Alison Friedman and Nicky Kahn.

“While planning my wedding, I had the hardest time finding resources,” said Kahn, who married husband Eric in August 2006 and co-owns Eight20 Photography with him. “As a wedding photographer, I talk to a lot of brides. Through the years, [the Jewish brides] all said it was hard to find the Jewish resources they need.”

The Jewish wedding planning sites that Kahn did find were either outdated or hard to navigate.

“There were so many blogs and Web sites for other brides, and I felt left out,” said Kahn, 28, of Westlake Village.

Friedman, 27, met Kahn during her own wedding-planning process. She hired the Kahns as photographers for her May 2008 wedding, and the couples stayed in touch.

In December 2009, Kahn approached Friedman, who worked in marketing before becoming a first-grade teacher, to create such a resource.

“Nicky said, ‘We need to do something for Jewish brides. With your experience as a writer and recent bride, and my experience in business, we should join

forces,' ” recalled Friedman, who lives with her husband, Bryan, in Thousand Oaks.

Research revealed wedding planning Web sites that served Orthodox Jewry, but “none for brides who want a ‘Jewish lite’ or ‘diet Jewish’ wedding,” Friedman said.

Five months later, The Wedding Yentas launched, thanks to Bryan Friedman’s coding and Eric Kahn’s design skills.

The Wedding Yentas provides information for all denominations of Judaism, from Reform to Conservative to Orthodox.

“We talk about all the different traditions and make it fun and enjoyable so that even a bride who isn’t having a bedeken or isn’t going to do the circling [around the groom] still knows what the traditions are and what they mean,” Kahn says. “I’ve learned things I didn’t even know.”

The resources allow users to shape their own experience through tradition.

“The modern Jewish bride will wear a strapless dress but still wants her husband to step on the glass and have a chuppah,” Friedman says. “You can pay homage to your heritage but still keep your own personality.”

The yentas also relate tips they learned during their own wedding planning.

For instance, traditionally, the bride and groom sip wine from the Kiddush cup during the ceremony. Friedman was advised of “a grape idea”: Use kosher white wine in order to avoid her dress becoming “a [red] wine tie-dyed shmata,” as she writes on the site.

The wine advice is one of many pearls of wisdom the yentas pass on to their readers.

Jessica Alpert, 25, has found inspiration on The Wedding Yentas site.

“It’s a wonderful resource to see other people’s weddings, their vendors and traditions, to possibly tie into my own wedding,” said the Sherman Oaks native, who will wed fiancé Eric Nicasastro in August. “It’s nice to have testimonials and recommendations.”

Alpert has taken particular inspiration from the Real Weddings archive, an ever-growing list of wedding tales from across the country and around the world. Real Weddings includes a vignette about each couple, some wedding photos and a list of service providers used.

“Every bride loves reliving her wedding day,” Friedman says. “Any chance that a bride gets to see her wedding up on a site for the whole world to see is exciting.”

Readers can submit their own stories for Friedman to retell as well.

“Naturally [the link] gets shared and [the featured brides] become their own yentas, if you will,” Friedman says.

The Wedding Yentas is also interfaith-friendly. Real Weddings has highlighted Jewish interfaith weddings, and the site’s directory of vendors lists interfaith service providers. Inspiration Boards, a mash-up of ideas linked thematically by elements such as color or season, is a popular example of content that transcends religion. Although the yentas are not a wedding planning service, they do offer “Ask the Yentas” sessions. Brides have asked them about incorporating traditions their non-Jewish wedding coordinators are unaware of, or even just to solicit a second opinion.

“You feel like they’re your Jewish best friends,” Alpert says. “They have a great sense of what works.”

The Wedding Yentas' readership spans from Los Angeles to Lexington, Ky., and is expanding internationally, from Liverpool to Lausanne to Los Cabos.

“It’s amazing how quickly [The Wedding Yentas] grew,” says Kahn, who was born in South Africa and raised in Oak Park. “I’m just so happy to be able to provide this service and see that people have found it so helpful.”

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