

A growing number of destination brides and grooms show their commitment to each other and Mother Earth by opting for an eco-friendly bash. For good reason: Besides supporting our planet, “green weddings can be more economical,” says Christina Friedrichsen, founder of [IntimateWeddings.com](#).” Here, Friedrichsen and fellow wedding industry veterans share simple steps couples can take to marry and save green. By Isabelle Gullö

1. SIMPLIFY THE DECOR

The beach or a flower-filled garden makes for a green venue that requires less energy and embellishment. “Highlight what’s already there in a simple way,” says Friedrichsen, author of *Intimate Weddings: Planning a Small Wedding that Fits Your Budget and Style*. Opt for floating, organic, locally grown blooms in glass bowls in lieu of lavish centerpieces, or go with a few elegant flowers in a vase as opposed to spending bundles on big bouquets. Having an edible decor can be fun, too, suggests Jill Meister, editor of [GetMarried.com](#). “Build your centerpieces around local fruit, like lemons, or use coconut or cacti to decorate.”

2. GO LIGHT ON THE MENU

Cut down on cost—and waste—by serving less food. “Place the emphasis on one great entree and one great dessert,” recommends Friedrichsen. Or stick to a light cocktail menu that pairs a few tasty appetizers and drinks. Choose menus of free-range meats, fish that’s not endangered and low in mercury or meat-free dishes. Serving locally grown food eliminates fuel reliance and supports local farmers.

3. CUT THE CAKE

Literally. Customized and multilayered wedding cakes typically cost a lot and leftovers are usually thrown away. Unless a cake is included in your wedding package, look for a smaller one made by a local baker; this way you also support the local economy. A wallet-friendly alternative: replace the cake with organic cupcakes.

4. RIDE GREEN

Having the ceremony and reception at the same location, or within close proximity, will limit travel impact and expenses. If the distance between venues is too great to walk, hire an earth-friendly shuttle service for your guests, like a trolley or rickshaws (bike cabs), or rent bicycles.

5. DO IT YOURSELF (DIY)

When it comes to saving money, New York-based planner Lisa Light, author of *Destination Bride*, points to the growing trend of DIY weddings—some brides design their own stationery, jewelry and decor elements. “Couples are very creative, using their own talents and asking other people to help.” At the end of the day, you’ll have a greener and more meaningful celebration.

6. SAVE ON STATIONERY

Your wedding invitation sets the tone for your big day, but that doesn’t mean it has to cost a fortune—or pollute the environment. It’s easy to find recycled paper options for invitations, save-the-date cards and menus. Or go for the e-cards. Another affordable and green alternative: Through [Etsy Alchemy](#) ([etsy.com](#)), couples can commission their green wedding stationery and have artists bid on the project.

7. WEAR VINTAGE

Brides can buy pre-owned wedding dresses and accessories for a fraction of the cost at sites like Vintageous.com and EncoreBridal.com. For those who'd rather not wear a used gown, companies such as [Natural Bridal Collection](http://NaturalBridalCollection.com) (naturalbridals.com) and [René Geneva Design](http://RenéGenevaDesign.com) (renegenevadesign.com) use such sustainable materials as peace silk, bamboo and organic linen and cotton. [Conscious Clothing](http://ConsciousClothing.com) (getconscious.com) creates hemp gowns and suits that add style to sustainability. With destination weddings requiring less formal wear, economical options abound, says Meister. "You have less heavy materials and shorter hemlines, which is hot right now with weddings in warmer climates."

8. BE CONFLICT-FREE

Look for diamonds that come with the internationally recognized [Kimberley Process](http://KimberleyProcess.com) certificate, proof that they are free of conflict. Jewelers like [Brilliant Earth](http://BrilliantEarth.com) (brilliantearth.com) and [Tiffany & Co.](http://Tiffany.com) (tiffany.com) work with suppliers who practice green, humane mining. [GreenKarat](http://GreenKarat.com) (greenkarat.com) uses recycled gold. Consider a less expensive and highly durable gemstone like moissanite or check out Gustav Reyes' exquisite wood creations ([simplywoodrings.com](http://SimplyWoodRings.com)). Shop for vintage jewelry or wear wedding bands passed down from a family member.

9. DO YOURSELF A FAVOR

Homemade favors with personal flair are always a hit, like a booklet of family recipes or a CD with songs played at the ceremony. Then again, not having favors for a destination wedding is perfectly acceptable. "For many couples, it's a waste of money," attests Friedrichsen, who proposes consumable favors inspired by the location.

10. GIVE SOMETHING BACK

Suggest that your guests make a donation to a charity in your honor. For inspiration, visit WeddingListGiving.com or GoodGifts.com. Or fill your wedding registry with gifts that keep on giving. Sites such as GreenFeet.com, WivaTerra.com and RegisterLocally.com offer a mix of items that are fair-trade, organic and locally handmade.