

May 6, 2009 (WPVI) – I was almost 35 and had yet to kiss a frog that turned into a prince. Maybe I'm just meant to be a great aunt and godmother, I decided. And almost on the heels of that decision, a story took me to the Miel Patisserie in Cherry Hill on a story about making chocolate. With a name like Rocco, I expected the chef to be a harried, middle-aged European with a wife and kids. I was instead brought up short by a handsome young man with dark curls and eyes and a kind smile. Some part of my heart, long asleep, sat up fully awake.

Within months we were engaged, buying a house, and planning a wedding. How in the world would I pull together an event on a budget that took most people over a year and cost thousands?

In this economy, I'm sure the money question is on the minds of many a bride and groom, regardless of how long they have to plan. Can you believe the average cost of the American wedding is now \$27,000? A lot of folks shelled out for that special day^ now are suffering through years of debt. But you don't have to: You can have a beautiful wedding at a reasonable price, if you're willing to be creative and open-minded. I have some ideas of my own to pass along, but I also wish I had had a copy of the current Real Simple magazine budget wedding guide. Here's some of the best stuff, both from me and the editors:

- **Save the Date for Savings:** June brides are the stuff of daydreams, so much so most venues know they can get away with charging top dollar that month. If you want to save money, consider planning your wedding for any month but June, especially if you're open to non-summer months. And cut into the cost even more by opting for a Friday night or Sunday afternoon.



- **Register Smart:** Hopefully your loved ones will outfit your house with fine linens and lovely dishes. Some may even surprise you with big ticket items like furniture. But there will probably be some things you don't get, some of them items you know you need and would use daily. So register in a place that

offers a "completion package." That's a place that will offer you a discount - usually between 10 and 20-percent - on the items you buy after the shower. But with so many people marrying later, maybe you and your betrothed already have all the household goods you need. Some great websites gives you a way to direct shower and wedding gifts into things you can use more than stuff: If you'd rather money to go towards debts or a new car or house, register for cash gifts with myregistry.com. Or if you have a head for the markets, guests can gift you with your preferred stocks at mystocks.com. Or here's one if you're trying to be frugal and would like some help on a nice splurge: thebigday.com let's your guest purchase aspects of your honeymoon. Maybe they can upgrade your suite, pay for a nice dinner, a surfing lesson or a couples massage.