

REHEARSAL DINNERS

Why should I have a rehearsal dinner?

When planning a wedding, often the last thought on the bride's mind is the rehearsal dinner. After all, isn't the whole point of getting married the wedding ceremony and reception? Sometimes it's hard to fathom putting energy into planning yet another event. Here are my top 4 reasons why having a rehearsal dinner is important in your wedding celebration:

1. Meeting of the kin

Often times the rehearsal dinner is the first time families are meeting each other. Although parents may have been introduced, this less formal event allows the extended families to mix and mingle. Plus it's great for the wedding party to meet so they are not strangers on the dance floor the next day.

2. Saying thank you

The rehearsal dinner is the perfect opportunity to say thank you to family and friends who've participated in the planning process. It gives you the opportunity to introduce your bridal party to your family and present any thank you gifts.

3. The groom's family

Traditionally the groom's family hosts the rehearsal dinner. If your fiancé's mother would like



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to be involved in planning the wedding festivities, this is a great project for her. Sharing the planning process allows you to focus on the big day and gives her an event to feel part of the celebration.

4. Quality Time

1 year of planning = 5 hours of celebration on your wedding day. Wow. That's a pretty big planning:party ratio. A rehearsal dinner is typically 3-4 hours of quality, relaxed time spent with your closest friends and family. For some reason, weddings fly by in the blink of an eye. So add some important time with the people you love most.

Who should be invited?

Rehearsal dinners can be an intimate evening with the immediate wedding participants or a huge pre-party with everyone who has traveled. At the very least, all of the members involved in the wedding ceremony should be invited to the rehearsal dinner: your bridal attendants plus their spouses or significant others, moms, dads and immediate family members (siblings and grandparents), and parents of any child attendants. If you have a close relationship to your officiant, an invitation can also be extended to him and his spouse. Often wedding guests who have traveled from out-of-town are also invited.

What happens at the rehearsal dinner?

First and foremost, the rehearsal dinner is a meal. But what really makes it a unique dinner is that your nearest and dearest friends and family are coming together to wish you well as you begin your married lives together. The most notable traditional of rehearsal dinners are the toasts (and roasts) from your friends and family. As the father-of-the-bride, best man and maid-of-honor are slated for wedding day toasts, the rehearsal dinner "opens the mic" to other friends and family. This more intimate gathering is the perfect place to toast the couple and share heartfelt stories and well wishes.

Where should a rehearsal dinner be held?

The event can be as fancy or casual as you like it. The sky is the limit! It's great to make the rehearsal dinner contrast to the wedding reception to treat your guests to a completely different experience. Rehearsal dinners are often held in private dining rooms at restaurants but can be hosted at a private home or unique venue. If having your wedding in a destination, think about having it in spot your out-of-town guests would love to visit.

Why should I hire a coordinator?

Many wedding checklists have the rehearsal dinner as one line item. However, it is an event that does take planning and has many of the same components as your wedding: guest list, venue selection, contract, menu, invitations, seating arrangements, table décor, transportation, timeline, setup, dismantle.... This can be a lot to add to your mile long wedding to-do list.

First, a coordinator will give you expert advice on helping you find the perfect venue for the size of your party. This can be a huge benefit for parents that are planning the event from out-of-town. Second, she will design an event that appropriately compliments or contrasts the next day. Third, she will take a mountain of items off your to-do list. By the time you get to the eve of your wedding, you should be relaxed and ready to walk down the aisle. This is what the rehearsal dinner is for! Relax! Enjoy! Celebrate! •

Rehearsal Dinner Photography by: Janae Shields

