

# SHE'S WELL REHEARSED

By Sam Whiting

The rehearsal dinner has potential to be even more fraught with peril than the wedding reception. It is the one opportunity for the groom's family to get revenge on all the perceived slights inflicted by the bride's family over the course of the long engagement season. Kathy Goodman, 34, offers a unique service to keep things smooth and apolitical. She runs Well Rehearsed ([www.wellrehearsed.com](http://www.wellrehearsed.com)) out of her house on Twin Peaks.

When a client arrives, knees atremble, he or she is escorted down the stairs and into her clean and polished home office. The Well Rehearsed logo is painted on the wall and everything is in the Well Rehearsed team colors of yellow, black and white. Just so there is no confusion, Goodman also dresses in the team colors. The wedding season is just now heating up, but she found time to clarify the duties of a rehearsal dinner planner, a consultant category she created.

**What do you do?** I take the event from simply a sit-down dinner and elevate it and bring some personality to it. I don't get involved with the food preparation. I'm not a caterer. I will get involved with menu selection and finding the appropriate place to hold the event. Then I go into a custom design that really helps them tell a story that is unique that kicks off the wedding that is going to happen the next day.

**How did rehearsal dinners get started in the first place?** That's a good question. I should know that. It's definitely an American tradition. I don't know when or why. My assumption is that it's a way for the groom's side to be involved with the wedding celebration, because traditionally it is the bride's family that pays for the wedding.

**Who contacts you, the bride or the groom?** Both, or the mom of the groom.

**What is it that they want?** They want a memorable experience that first night when all of their friends and family are together. Sometimes it is

the first time the families are meeting, so it's a really important night. The rehearsal dinner is sort of where the toasts and roasts from family members and friends can come out.

**Do you coach the bride and groom on how to act?** I absolutely coach them and walk them through the evening and the time frame. There is a cocktail reception as people are arriving for the event and then going through the evening. There will be toasts, and a lot of times they have put together a slide show. It's not as complicated as the wedding. I always recommend that couples do some sort of seating arrangement.

**What is the No. 1 thing not to do at a rehearsal dinner?** Get too drunk.

**What qualifies you as an expert on rehearsal dinners?** My business has organically grown because of how I planned my rehearsal dinner in 2004. That was the start of my business. Not only did I plan it, but it was actually a surprise for my husband. I also planned the wedding.



Kathy Goodman's planning service offers tips for toasting on its drink coasters, above, and other helpful info on its brochure, left.

**Why didn't your husband plan your rehearsal dinner?** Because I wouldn't let him (laughs.) I'm an event planner, so I wanted to plan it all.

**How did you go about that?** I took a look at the rehearsal dinner event that was paid for by my husband's family and they needed help. They were ready to host a dinner. I looked at the event and said, "Let's make this night about him." I designed the event around his hobby, which is woodworking. Everything from the invitations to 2-by-4s running down the table was about him. When the guests arrived, automatically they knew it was about Dan. The groom's cake was shaped like a 2-by-4, and it was displayed on a real miter saw.

**Kathy Goodman runs Well Rehearsed, a rehearsal dinner planning service, out of her home on Twin Peaks.**



**You didn't use the saw to cut the cake?**

No. That would have been a bit much.

**How far in advance do people contact you?**

Weddings are planned a year in advance. Rehearsal dinners I like to think are planned three to six months out, but I like to think it is a little closer than that. People sort of forget about it, then they think, "Oh, my gosh, we're hosting 40 or 60 people, what are we going to do with them?" Then they contact me.

**What are your fees?** I have a full service and partial service. The full-service design package starts at \$1,750. My venue selection starts at \$400 and the event design packages start at \$750. Since each client has different needs, I customize my packages to their unique event.

**How many have you done?** Since I started the business in 2007, I've done about 15 full service, and about 40 partial service.

**How do you prevent friction between the two sides?**

I always ask if there is anything I need to worry about because of so many families having divorced parents. I haven't worked with any families that have too much friction. Or if there has been friction, it's dissipated before that.

**How do guests spot you at the dinner?** I'm part of the atmosphere, but I try to keep a low profile. I usually have a clipboard with the timeline on it. Usually when you have the "power clipboard," people figure you are involved.

**Do you wear a headset?** Usually I don't need to wear a headset. The largest rehearsal dinner I've worked with was about 120 people.

**What other types of events do you plan?** Birthday parties, anniversary parties, bachelorette parties, bridal showers, baby showers.

**What about bachelor parties?** Sure, why not? It's actually nice working with the groom.

**Where would you have it?** Vegas is always a good spot for a bachelor party.

**What have been some of your favorites?**

One that I still love is the USC rehearsal dinner that I designed. The bride and groom are huge USC football fans, and it was so much fun to bring that to the night before the wedding because it didn't translate to their wedding day. We had the USC fight song playing as guests entered the room.

**Do you do any matchmaking?** No, that's not part of the deal. You have to come already matched.

**Has anybody become unmatched after they started planning it?** Nope. All my couples are still happily married. I'm 15 for 15. ♦

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