

Tyler Sholdt
owner/jeweler, T. Anthony Jewelers

custom rings compare with ready-to-wear ones?

A | Commissioning a ring is surprisingly affordable. There are a few costs associated with the computer rendering and the wax casting, but I don't charge for design appointments or drawing time. My clients' money is spent on the diamond and the setting. Typically, they don't pay me any more than they would spend at a retail storefront, and I invite them to watch the fabrication process. If there is a monetary difference, the value of owning a one-of-a-kind piece and the benefit of seeing the craftsmanship that goes into it should outweigh it.

don't have an heirloom piece from your family, you can get the look.

Q | **What would you say to those couples who assume that with engagement rings, it's all about the rock?**

A | The diamond or center stone will always play the starring role; however, the band itself should not be overlooked. Even around the most classic solitaire, the elegant curve of the metal, the width, finish, prongs, and details either hinder or showcase the beauty of the diamond.

Q | **What's the bottom line on purchasing conflict-free diamonds?**

A | The largest and most trusted certification companies are GIA (Gemological Institute of America), AGS (American Gem Society), and EGL (European Gemological Laboratory). A diamond should come with a certificate from one of these companies, no matter where the stone is purchased. A good jeweler will provide you with these documents and address any concerns you may have.

Q | **What should couples do to prepare for a meeting with a custom ring craftsman like you?**

A | My role is to translate a couple's ideas and imagination. They can bring examples of their favorite diamond shapes, and images of fashion or décor they love, whether antique or modern or somewhere in between.

A | Palladium has been quickly growing in popularity; it has a color that's similar to platinum, and it wears the same, but costs less. I'll be honest, though: I still love platinum. The weight, the bright white color, durability, and purity make it my favorite precious metal.

Q | **What metal trends should the modern couple be aware of?**

Q | **What should couples know about the costs involved in commissioning a custom ring? How do**

Q | **Do vintage and modern work well together in the realm of wedding rings?**

A | Absolutely. I recently had a couple choose an elegant and very classic solitaire engagement ring, and then we designed an antique-inspired band to complement it. Even if you

Q | **What questions should couples ask themselves as they begin thinking about the food aspect of their reception?**

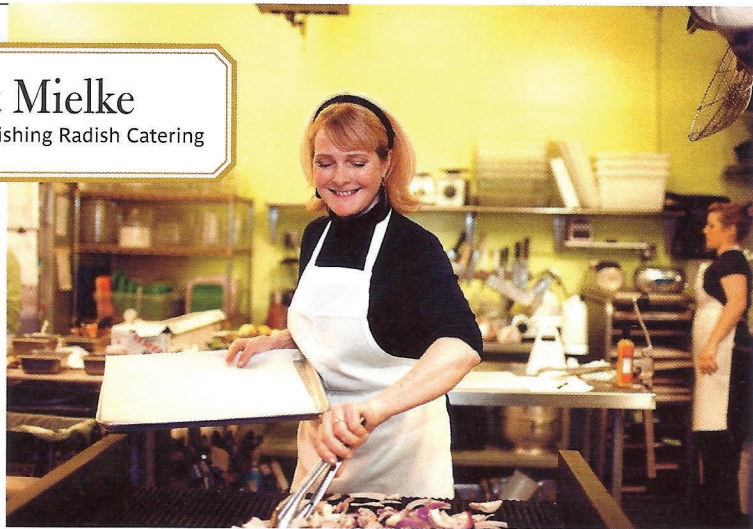
A | Caterers need to know how couples want their reception to feel. A plated dinner will evoke formality, whereas a family-style service format is casual and also encourages guest interaction. We also like to ask our couples to think about their history together—how they met, common interests, and favorite foods—so that we can really personalize the menu with them. If they love meat loaf, maybe we'll pass meat-loaf sliders at midnight; for a gardening couple, we'll do nasturtiums mixed into a green salad.

working the menu concept around the limited equipment or bringing in a mobile kitchen. The cost of renting ovens, refrigeration, grills, and other items can be substantial; it's critical that, early in our negotiations, we work out a budget that takes the site into account.

Q | **What should couples be thinking about when their catering budget is tight?**

A | It's important to keep in mind that the time of your reception will really affect the budget and your guests' expectations. When couples request a quote for light hors d'oeuvres during the standard dinner hour, we might see if it's possible to start the reception later. This allows for a less dinner-centric menu, which can lower the

Lisbet Mielke
owner/founder, Ravishing Radish Catering



Q | **Dietary restrictions are so prevalent nowadays. How can couples accommodate guests' needs while satiating and exciting everyone's palate?**

A | There is at least one food restriction for each event we do these days. Our chefs create a variety of

enters with lots of options, so if there are vegan guests or friends or family with wheat, dairy, or other intolerances, we can easily work together to make everyone happy. If it's just that a single guest cannot eat a certain food, we are able to adjust that particular plate rather than revise the

Q | **What should they know about how their venue might affect catering and meal service?**

A | If there are no kitchen facilities