

Pre-Celebration Central



THE LATEST TREND in bridal parties signals a departure from the traditional luncheon bridal shower, with its customary pastel décor, tea and finger sandwiches. In fact, many brides are doing away with the shower entirely and opting instead for the spa bachelorette party, featuring crudités, champagne and massages for all. Spa owners can capitalize on this trend by marketing their facility as *the* place to throw a party, as The Lounge Spa has masterfully done.

"We do a *lot* of parties," says Koskas. "We'll get six to 10 women who all have fun, and in turn want to throw their parties here."

The Lounge Spa doesn't charge a space rental fee for between five and 10 guests, nor for the theme-oriented decorations, plates, napkins, glassware and special touches. There is also no minimum spa treatment purchase (the spa adds 20% gratuity to all services

to ensure staff is taken care of), and guests can choose from any treatment on the menu. Events can be booked for any day or time of the week.

What do partygoers pay for? "The treatments and the food—simple fruit trays, cheese and crackers, sandwiches, salads, cupcakes, desserts—and they can bring in their own alcohol, usually champagne," Koskas replies. "All we ask is that they show up on time, have a great time, tell their friends and leave with the swag bag we provide. The repeat business we get is worth the price of not charging for the space and the extras we provide."

About 80% of The Lounge Spa's party clients are drawn from its Yelp listing, featuring exciting photos of past parties and motivating Yelpers to visit the spa's übercool website, which includes a "VIP Parties" tab on the menu to showcase a variety of past party imagery, and encourages guests to book their own special event. "I don't have a publicist, because our website and Yelp presence have done the job for us," Koskas says.

She does, however, enlist dedicated party help. "I have my own events coordinator, who started out at the front desk. She does a lot of business-to-business

Here Comes the Groom

Let's not forget about the guys. Whether it's for a good ol' fashioned shave or a manly manicure, more grooms than ever are heading to the spa to spruce up for their weddings.

"They're getting manicures, pedicures, waxings, massages and just looking to relax on the big day," says Croghan. The Grand Del Mar makes XYs feel more at home with the spa's sophisticated men's lounge, outfitted with red leather chairs and a cocktail bar. "We want to make them feel comfortable and to have a place to just hang out for a bit," Croghan says.

Grand Del Mar staff is also trained to ease the groom into waxing procedures that the bride-to-be may have suggested. "Sometimes, men don't even know they're receiving these treatments until we are finished. They walk out amazed," Croghan

says. "Other times, our staff has very effective and subtle ways of providing recommendations in that area, such as saying, 'Would you mind if I removed some of the hair around your brow line?' No one wants a groom with a uni-brow!"

Vdara's newly launched groom packages include Groomed & Polished, which includes a haircut, style and MAN-icure for \$77 and the Tie the Knot, for \$212, which includes the above plus a 50-minute deep-tissue massage. "We saw a missed opportunity last year in terms of wedding packages, so we introduced these new packages to serve clients who need simple, results-oriented treatments," Mariani says.

At the Spa & Salon Bellagio in Las Vegas, the Groom's Royal Shave (45 min./\$60) and Men's Grooming, a brow trim



and nose and ear waxing (\$50), are a hit among husbands-to-be.

A Y-Chromosome Facial (80 min./\$170) and The Dirty Hairy Cut (a head-to-toe manscaping service that costs \$20 per body part or \$100 for full body) are popular pre-wedding requests at Face to Face New York (facetofaceny.com), especially since the spa was featured in a recent bridal issue of *New York* magazine.

"Press has always been key to our marketing and promotion," says Face to Face's owner, Enrique Ramirez. And in its quest to stay oh-so-*au courant*, Face to Face recently began offering... wait for it... *pejazzling* services (\$20), which can only be described as the masculine answer to the popular women's service, vajazzling, in which body bling is added to clients' private parts.

The New Newlyweds

As more states move toward legalizing same-sex marriages, more spas are welcoming same-sex couples for wedding parties, couples treatments and showers. Enrique Ramirez

of Face to Face New York, a gay-owned and gay-friendly spa, has a few tips for spa owners on how to make all kinds of couples feel special in your spa.

"The spa itself might

welcome anyone, but spas often have technicians from all over the world who might not be as open-minded," Ramirez says. "It's our job as owners to train and educate staff on how to treat people equally and how to talk with sensitivity."

For starters? Never assume anything, Ramirez suggests. If a man comes into your spa and says he just got engaged, don't assume he got engaged to a woman—and vice versa. Follow the same rules of polite conversation you'd employ regarding religion and politics: Don't ask intrusive questions or engage the client in a

discussion about sensitive matters such as how his or her family feels about the union, or the politics of marriage equality.

"Everyone wants to feel safe and welcome, and not different," Ramirez says. "As spa owners, we need to make sure that happens."

If you want to make sure people know your spa is gay-friendly, Ramirez suggests cross-promoting with local hotels, bars and businesses that are directly connected to the gay community, as well as advertising in gay magazines and on travel websites. "Let others know," he says, "that yours is a welcoming place."



romantic state," Rodriguez says, "and to continue that state in their journey through life together."

Vegas' Spa and Salon Vdara draws wedding-day business with an array of makeup and hair offerings, in addition to spa treatments. Its popular Vow to Wow package (\$387) includes a trial up-do and makeup the day before the wedding, and a full up-do, makeup application and quickie mani/pedi on the day. All packages include the option to add on special touches such as champagne, hors d'oeuvres and fresh flowers for hair.

"Our policy is: Tell us what you want and we can pretty much do it," says manager Sharon Mariani, who uses advertising, social media and online menus to spread the wedding-services word, and regularly attends consumer bridal events.

Of course, not everyone has a Kardashian-size wedding budget. Which is why smart spa owners have created bridal options that cater to a range of tax brackets. Vdara's packages start at \$108 (Eye Do for eye makeup application and a salon blow-out); for grooms, \$77 (Groomed & Polished for a haircut, style and MAN-icure).

Some spa owners offer express services—even if they aren't listed on the menu or website—to the newly engaged as a way to help keep couples' costs down.

"We'll see what clients with smaller budgets want and take down the time and price," Ramirez of Las Ventanas says. "We can usually create affordable treatments for any party. Sometimes clients just have to be honest about what their budget is and see if the spa will work with them."

Post-Wedded Bliss



SPA-ING DOESN'T HAVE TO STOP after the wedding. Savvy spa owners like Koskas take advantage of opportunities to sell gift certificates for post-nuptial couples' massages to help the newlyweds wind down from the event. Because so many couples now take a day or two before embarking on their honeymoons, such treatments are a great way to bridge the gap from stressful wedding day to fun-filled honeymoon.

The Grand Del Mar, for instance, offers a Couple's Classic service (120 min./\$620 weekdays; \$640 weekends) that includes a relaxing mineral bath, a moisture-intensive wrap, and a head and foot massage. "It works well for the day after the wedding, when they want to come in together to really unwind," says Croghan.

Vdara offers up a Happily Ever After package (3.5 hrs./\$1,050) for newlyweds that includes 80-minute, side-by-side deep-tissue massages, custom facials, showers, chocolate-covered strawberries and Veuve Clicquot champagne. "It's for the couple who just had their big wedding, everyone has left, and this is their first day of married life," says Mariani. "What better way to start your life together?"

Carrie Borzillo is a freelance journalist and author based in Los Angeles.