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FROM THE PUBLISHERS
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THE NEW GUEST BOOK

Back in the day, guest books were just a way to compile names. Now they're used to collect memories. Read on to learn how to make this retooled tradition your own.

INSTEAD OF A BOOK...

Have your guests autograph these fresh surfaces. Be sure to provide the appropriate writing tools—glass pens for glass, fabric pens for fabric, etc.

- 1 River rocks, to display in a glass bowl
- 2 An album, filled with photo-booth pics shot during the first hour of the reception
- 3 Quilt squares, to be fashioned later into a keepsake blanket
- 4 A jeroboam (three-liter) champagne bottle, to be sipped on your first anniversary
- 5 A poster-size photo of the reception location, mounted on foam and set on an easel
- 6 A chalkboard, to be held up by each guest during individual photo sessions
- 7 Cards, to be hung from tree branches
- 8 An object that's meaningful to the couple—a guitar, a globe, a double kayak
- 9 A long scroll of paper that's been inserted into a typewriter
- 10 A video—guests won't be able to sign it, but they can leave a message from the heart



where to put it

- >> A wedding guest book is only as good as the number of people who sign it. Station your memento-in-the-making on a table near the reception-site entrance, so everyone can write down their good wishes as they walk in.
- >> Grab guests' attention by decorating the table with colorful linens, photo frames, flowers—anything that catches the eye.
- >> If possible, have a bridesmaid carry the guest book from table to table afterward until you've achieved full participation.

AFTER THE WEDDING

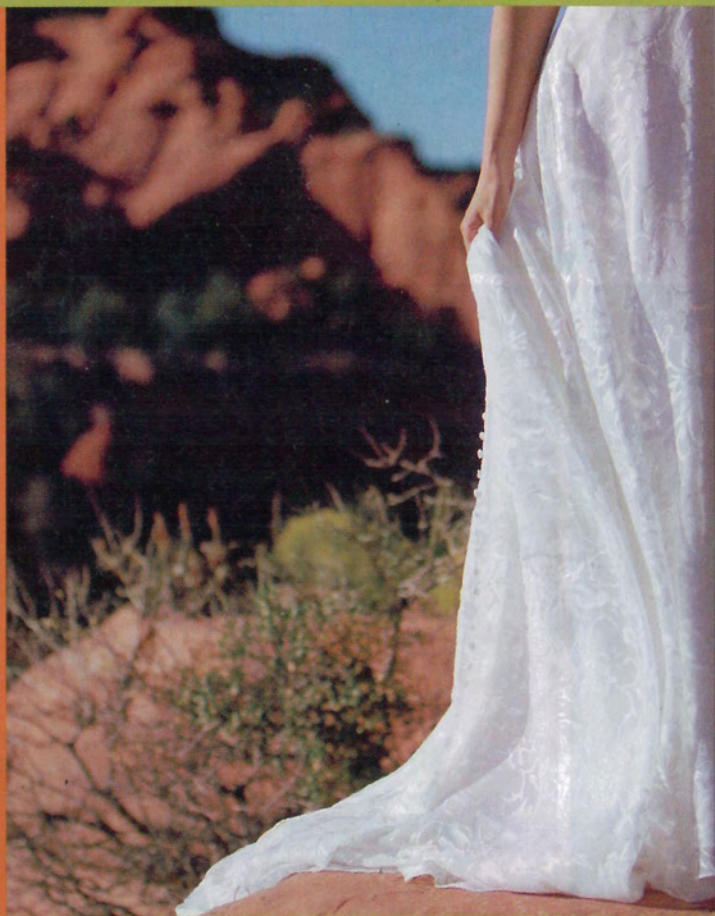
- WHAT** The guest book is supposed to be a lifelong keepsake. Make sure you choose a type you'll be happy to keep with you through every move, remodeling, and redecoration.
- WHERE** Don't let your memories languish in the attic. Depending on what form the guest book takes, consider giving it an honored place on a coffee table, bookshelf, or living-room wall.
- WHEN** Create an anniversary tradition by taking out your guest book every year and reminiscing over wine. —Yolanda Crous



My guest-book concept is a bit complicated. How do I make sure that everyone understands what to do?

Prop a sign with step-by-step instructions on the table. In addition, ask an in-the-know friend to watch over the area, so she can answer questions if they come up.

weddin



FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA, COUPLES ARE PLANNING PARTIES THAT CELEBRATE THE PLACE COCKTAILS IN **THE SOUTHEAST**, ANTIQUE-LEATHER BOUQUET RIBBONS IN **THE ROCKIES**, OR ONE OF THESE CREATIVE WEDDING IDEAS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY MAY JUST INSPIRE YOU

gs across america



THEY LIVE AS MUCH AS THE PERSON THEY LOVE. WHETHER IT'S SWEET-TEA VODKA
ROSE-PETAL CARPETS PATTERNED LIKE NAVAJO RUGS IN **THE SOUTHWEST**,
TO THROW YOUR OWN LOCATION-THEMED "I DO'S." | TEXT BY YOLANDA CROUS

LOCATIONS Outside the big cities, the go-to spots for midwestern vows are family homesteads and Great Lakes resorts. Farm weddings are usually indoor-outdoor hybrids, with ceremonies in the fields and parties in a barn, private residence, or tent. Great Lakes vows happen on the water or in one of the vineyards now sprouting up across the Midwest.

FOOD AND DRINK

In keeping with the region's family focus, more midwesterners are choosing to serve their wedding meals family-style, with heaping platters that are passed around the table. Prequels and sequels to traditional wedding entrées are another midwestern

must. It's not unusual to nosh on guilty-pleasure appetizers like deep-fried mac and cheese on a stick and French fries in a cup. For the after-party, some couples rent hot-dog stands and old-fashioned popcorn machines. The indigenous drink in these parts? Beer, beer, and more beer. Microbrews abound, as do amateur brewmeisters willing to whip up personalized batches for the party. The cake is often cut during cocktail hour; some couples honor family members by having them finish the job and serve slices to the guests after dinner.

MUSIC During the reception, most couples opt for a standard wedding band or DJ. But during

the cocktail hour, twosomes have been known to cast an old-time spell by hiring a barber-shop quartet or a polka-savvy accordion player.

WEDDING PARTY The bigger, the better in the Midwest, with five or six attendants on both the bride's and groom's sides. On a style note, Heartlanders take a conventional approach to dress-up: Bridesmaids stick to their stilettos, even if the ceremony location requires them to trudge half a mile across a grassy field.

OTHER DETAILS The key to a wedding here? Home-spun decor. Florists fill vintage vases found at flea markets with

wildflowers and wheat harvested from local fields. Families gather to create centerpieces out of potted plants. Gourds, pumpkins, and gingham-lined bushel baskets brimming with apples add splashes of color throughout the reception. For favors, state-fair sweets are all the rage: candy apples, fudge, and saltwater taffy. Many couples select a stationery motif that matches their location—a barn for a farm wedding; a nautical theme for lakeside affairs.

SOURCES Amy Fuerstenberg, Minneapolis; mimiweddings.com. Jessica Pennington, St. Joseph, Michigan; stellaeventdesign.com. Sara O'Shea, Morton, Illinois; sochicbridal.com.

the midwest

FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND FUN: NO WONDER THIS REGION IS CALLED THE HEARTLAND

