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Marin Brides Marry in Style

Four local couples put their own spin on saying "I do."

BY MIMI TOWLE AND SOMER FLAHERTY



Anne Carnahan & Laurent Maertens Cavallo Point, Sausalito

It took half a decade after they first met for Anne Carnahan and Laurent Maertens to finally start dating, and at that point they were both only 17. The high school sweethearts met playing a game of softball in PE class in Germany. "Laurent knew none of the rules, causing him to believe that he had tagged me out when I was, in fact, totally safe," says Anne.

After graduation, they each left Germany for college. Laurent was in England studying international business while Anne studied sociology at Vassar in New York. She says their

long friendship helped them get through their years of separation in college. "Well, that and Skype," she adds.

After a proposal on bended knee in Central Park and graduation, the newly engaged couple still lived apart. Anne moved to San Anselmo while Laurent figured out the details of his fiancé visa.

When the couple chose Sausalito's Cavallo Point for their wedding location, Anne saw it as an ideal spot where their group of international guests could meet and enjoy both Marin and San Francisco. The couple's personalities and international backgrounds—Laurent is Argentinean, from Belgium and born in Austria; Anne is American, born in Switzerland and schooled in Germany—imbued every aspect of the event, from the German Gummi Bear wedding favors to the giant map where people could pinpoint what country they'd arrived from (nine different ones in all, the farthest being Namibia) to Anne's handmade paper-flag garland standing in for a traditional altar in the outdoor ceremony, flowing in the breeze. The guests, most of whom had traveled thousands of miles for the event, cheered as the couple exchanged vows, ready to start their new life together—now in the same place.

Photographer: Matthew May Photography, 650.207.8216, matthewmayphotography.com

Caterer: Cavallo Point Lodge, cavallopoint.com

Beverage service: Cavallo Point Lodge, cavallopoint.com

Cake: Studio Cake, studiocake.com

Flowers: Nancy Liu Chin Designs, nancyliuchin.com

Music: Spinheads, Peter Dinklage, thespinheads.com

Wedding planner: Amy Nichols Special Events, amynichols.com

Dress: Monique Lhuillier from Bridal Galleria, bridalgalleria.com

Hair/makeup: Wow Pretty, wowpretty.com

Lighting: Enhanced Lighting, enhancedlighting.com

Invitations: PS Paper, pspaper.com

Conor Flynn & Meredith Eves Flynn

Lake Como, Italy

Well before Conor Flynn and Meredith Eves were engaged, they toured the small village of Moltrasio on Lake Como, Italy, and the villa Meredith's father had just bought. "We knew if and when we did get married, it had to be there," Meredith says. Five years later the couple stood at the altar of Chiesa di Sant'Agata, an 11th-century church just down the road, as the priest performed the ceremony in Italian—thoughts of their chance introduction at a Vegas Halloween party and their future together no doubt swirling in their heads.



Once Meredith realized their authentic Italian experience came with an authentically Italian priest, she had the ceremony translated into English for their programs and had a translator on hand for the vows. *Sposa bagnata, sposa fortunata* was another phrase everyone learned that day. It means wet bride, lucky bride. "We did not expect hail in June," Meredith allows, "but it definitely added to the excitement."

Mother Nature didn't have to add anything to the reception. Hotel Villa d'Este, built in 1568 as the summer residence of Cardinal Tolomeo Gallio, has been winning awards since 1873 and was just named "world's best hotel" by ForbesTraveler.com. Besides the sizable four-tiered cake the hotel manager bestowed as a gift, the biggest surprise was the father of the bride's toast. He took to the stage and sang "Sunrise Sunset" from *Fiddler on the Roof*. "From the moment he sang 'Is this the little girl I carried,' I was struck with emotion," Meredith says. "I realized how much I've grown up and yet my dad and I are very close, so I will always be his little girl. And I still get chills when I think about how the whole room joined in on the chorus. It was magical."

Photographer: Flavio Bandiera, flaviobandiera.com

Caterer: Villa d'Este, villadeste.it

Invitations: Lobella, Daly City, 650.757.1403

Dress: Anne Barge gown reworked by Rosie Nixon in Mill Valley, who made the veil and the bolero for the church by hand, rosiegowns.com

Hair/makeup: Robert (mother-in-law's hairdresser from Palm Beach, Florida)

Music: Ceremony/cocktail hour, Quartetto d'Archi string quartet; dinner, Jumping Jive band; after dinner till 4 a.m., DJ at Villa d'Este's club

Flowers: Rattiflora, Como, Italy

Wedding favors: Limoncello from Ravello, a small town in Amalfi

Clara Franco & Adam Weis

Healdsburg, CA



It's not just about you," Sonia Franco said when told that her only daughter, Clara, was planning on a low-key wedding. Clara and Adam had known each other since elementary school in Petaluma, and after being reunited post-college, where Adam hired Clara to work with him on the set of an indie horror film, they never wanted to be apart again. Saving for their future together, they assumed a big shindig wasn't in the cards.

Wrong. "I come from a big Latin family, and I'm the eldest granddaughter," Clara notes. Flipping through *Here Comes the Guide*, imagining their friends and family in various picturesque settings, they were easily persuaded to change their minds.

Still, they did it their way. A traditional cake was replaced with red velvet and snickerdoodle cupcakes, a friend generously provided a homemade faux-photo booth for fun, and instead of a church, they went for the glory of nature. The verdant setting of Healdsburg Country Garden included a 90-year-old oak tree, shading guests and wedding party from the 104-degree heat. Grapes ripe enough to eat hung from a patio fronting a historical barn, which became a rockin'

dance hall. And in step with family tradition, Clara's mother and aunts joined in on the preparations, making for lifelong memories and a drastically reduced bottom line.

"It was everything I had hoped for. It made me so happy to see friends and family dancing and partying into the wee hours of the night," Clara reflects. "The moment I will never forget is walking down the aisle, my father at my side, and as we turned the corner toward Adam, all 165 guests stood up for me. It felt like a fairy tale."

Location: Healdsburg Country Gardens, hcqweddings.com

Photographer: Steve Gunther, stevegunther.com

Caterer: Ray's Catering, rayscatering.com

Cake: Sift Cupcakery, siftcupcakery.com

Invitations: Conor Buckley, conorbuckleyart.com, Petite Paperie, petite-paperie.com

Dress: Christina Wu from Starlet Bridal, starletgowns.com

Bridesmaid dresses: J.Crew, jcrew.com

Flower girl dresses: weddingtutu.com

Makeup: Cristina Hlebakos for MAC Cosmetics at Nordstrom Corte Madera, 707.291.4149

Hair: Andrea Quartarolo, 707.318.3598

Music: DJ Daxx of Santa Rosa, didaxx.com

Wedding coordinator: Elsa Vera Productions, elsavera.com

Party favors: Wine stoppers with handmade cards

Erica Gomez & Tim Lane

Poipu Beach, Kauai

Back in 1998, Erica Gomez landed her first job, in the gourmet coffee department at Cost Plus in Greenbrae. It didn't take long before she

spotted Tim, the cute guy in wine and furniture. "I totally pursued him," she remembers, laughing. The attraction was mutual for the two Redwood High graduates. Nine years later Tim invited Erica to his favorite tropical destination, Poipu Beach, fronting Kiahuna Plantation on the island of Kauai, his family's go-to vacation spot for since he was a young boy. There, on the western edge of this country, he asked Erica to become his wife. And it was there they relaxed in the warm sand and planned their wedding. "We wanted everyone to experience the beauty of this place," Erica says, "but we thought it would be too costly." After they crunched the numbers at various destination spots including the wine country and Tahoe, Kiahuna was not only at the top of their list, but surprisingly the most affordable.

A self-described control freak, Erica did have to adapt to the Hawaiian style of event planning. "I called to reserve the big green lawn; the person on the phone said, 'Oh sure, no problem, we'll pencil you in' and I said, 'No, Sharpie us in.'" When it came to ordering the cake, the pastry chef at the nearby Hyatt was a friend of a friend. Erica gave her some specific instructions over the phone—no deposit, no tastings—and hoped for the best.

She got it. Her centerpieces were simple: Mona Gonzaludo, on-site special events manager, suggested some cost cutting tips, such as whole pineapples (\$2.35 each) from Costco. They looked great and doubled as breakfast the next day. "It worked out better than we could have ever expected," Erica says. The couple has already booked their vacation for their one-year anniversary—at Kiahuna, of course, dinner with Mona included.

Location: Kiahuna Plantation, outrigger.com

Photographer: Liz Belfor, imagesbyliz.com

Caterer: Plantation Gardens (Mona Gonzaludo), 808.742.1908, pgrestaurant.com

Cake: Sandi Hulst, 808.742.9844

Invitations: Passion Paper, passionpaper.com

Dress: Melissa Sweet from Alexandra Bridal Salon in San Francisco

Makeup: Laola Lake from the Hyatt, 808.639.6696

Hair: Owen at Elements in Kauai

Music: Guitar/ukulele, Kenny Rapozo, 808.822.3335

Flowers: Casey Sparks, Martin Roberts Design, martinroberts.com

