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BY KRIS DUNLAP PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER CRESS

Champagne

Fun-loving couple Michael Vasquez and Kristen York had a ball toasting their new life together with a New Year's Eve marriage celebration.

Kisses

THANK YOU FOR CELEBRATING OUR WEDDING DAY WITH US!
LOVE,

Kristen & Michael

KAZOO - TO GET THE COUPLE TO KISS, USE THE
KAZOO TO HUM A SONG CONTAINING
THE WORD "LOVE"

BLINKY LIGHTS - WEAR THE MAGNETIC PIN
DISTRIBUTED WITH DESSERT TO ENJOY DRINKS
AT THE BAR ALL NIGHT

PLACECARD FRAME & MAT - FRAME A PICTURE
FROM THE PHOTO BOOTH TO HAVE A LASTING
MEMORY OF THE EVENING



Michael Vasquez and Kristen York chose The Depot for their 2006 New Year's Eve nuptials.





It takes a vivacious bride and groom to plan a successful New Year's Eve wedding. For Michael Vasquez and Kristen York, it all began before they even met, when they just clicked—literally. “We connected through mutual friends on the social Web site Friendster,” explains Kristen. After exchanging numerous e-mails and phone calls, they decided to meet. “It was my first and last blind date,” says Michael, laughing.

Kristen, a first-grade teacher at a Minneapolis charter school, helps ease the transition to life in the U.S. for East African refugees. Michael was drawn to her kindness. “She pours her heart into anything she commits to,” he says. Kristen noticed Michael’s calm demeanor and his amazing eyes. “When he first looked at me, I felt nervous, excited and at ease all at the same time,” she recalls.

Their similar, offbeat senses of humor also drew them together. “She is pretty funny, but more importantly, she thinks I am funny,” Michael says. Kristen agrees, adding that Michael can “always make me laugh.”

The two dated for almost a year before getting engaged. But both knew they had fallen in love long before that. After six months, Kristen’s two best friends flew into town to meet Michael. “They started gushing immediately, saying that they’d never seen me so happy, confident or comfortable with anyone,” Kristen recalls.

The couple decided to move into Kristen’s condo, requiring countless home improvement projects and trips to Home Depot. “Michael was such a trouper, so on the coldest morning of the year, when he asked me to go on a walk, there was no way I could shoot him down,” Kristen says.

But Michael had more than just a walk in mind. His ideal proposal had two requirements: First, it had to be a surprise, and second, it had to be on the Stone Arch Bridge they viewed from their window.

So, after bundling up and traipsing around St. Anthony Falls, they headed home. Kristen, miserable, covered her face with her mittens. Michael asked, “What are you doing?” She whimpered, “I’m cold!”



(facing pages)
Kristen and Michael’s wedding was full of merriment, complete with noisemakers, masks, hats and sparklers.

He said, “No, what are you doing for the rest of your life?” Kristen turned around to find Michael on one knee, on the Stone Arch Bridge, asking her to marry him.

Completely shocked, she started crying. They hugged and kissed for 20 minutes before Kristen realized she hadn’t even answered him. When she said “yes,” mischievous Michael pulled two boxes out of his pocket. One contained a fake ring from eBay, a proxy Kristen affectionately refers to as “The Hong-Konger.” The other had three loose diamonds, so they could pick out the real ring together.

The couple loves that someday, they can show their children and grandchildren where they got engaged. And their wedding party made a donation, resulting in a plaque under the Stone Arch Bridge reading “Michael and Kristen, December 31, 2006. What are you doing for the rest of your life?”

Celebrating their wedding on New Year’s Eve seemed perfect. “There’s something very romantic about it: It symbolizes a new beginning, people are in the holiday spirit and it has that cozy, winter feel to it,” says Kristen.

With the date set, they knew the details were best left in the hands of a pro. Cue Laura Fryberger of Flings Event Design. “She took our

ideas and turned them into gold,” says Kristen. “It was like having the Internet, magazines and how-to guides in a real person.” Laura met with the couple and Kristen’s mom, Sally, asking questions, exploring creative options and doling out assignments to keep everyone on track.

The wedding site was chosen based on three criteria: It needed to have two different spaces for the ceremony and reception, fit 250 people comfortably and offer hotel accommodations. “After visiting about 20 sites, The Depot in

Minneapolis was the only one that met all three and gave me goose bumps,” recalls Kristen.

When Laura pointed out the gold undertones in The Depot, the wedding colors fell into place. “We put a spin

on the black and gold theme of New Year’s Eve by using antique gold, ivory and chocolate brown—my favorite color,” Kristen explains.

More interested in candles than flowers, Kristen adored their dramatic centerpieces, featuring tall, curly willow and hanging candles. They also decided to sprinkle rose petals on the tables and to keep the wedding party’s flowers simple and elegant.

The ceremony was written by Kristen and Michael. “We wanted it to be short, sweet and personal,” says the bride. Kristen put a special

“What are you doing for the rest of your life?”

touch on other components as well. The invitations were especially unusual, styled like miniature folders, with information on layered cards. For music, the couple chose classical musicians for the ceremony, a sophisticated jazz trio for dinner and a DJ for dancing.

Kristen's dress was a classic strapless gown with small beading at the top, and more detailed embellishments running from the waist down to the train. The bridesmaid dresses were custom-created by a seamstress who could sew from a photo and measurements. Good thing, too—Kristen's bridesmaids were scattered in different states. She picked out the chocolate brown fabric and they picked out the style. "It was really neat to see each of their personalities in the dresses," says Kristen.

The rehearsal dinner was also decidedly untraditional, with the wedding party and family dining at Pracna, followed by polka at the renowned Nyc's Polonaise Room in Northeast Minneapolis, where they were joined by out-of-town guests. "It was so fun to see our friends mixing with older relatives, singing and dancing," says Kristen.



Finally, the big day arrived. Along with a snowstorm. Having the ceremony and reception in one spot "ended up being very good planning," according to Michael. And just as the ground outside was covered in pure white, so was the bride inside The Depot—only she was basking in Michael's warm glow as she walked down the aisle. "He was smiling and looking at me with so much love," she says. For Michael, seeing Kristen in her wedding dress was one of the day's highlights. "She looked amazing," he recalls.

At the reception, the unique touches continued. Gift bags adorned every setting. "Inside was a high-quality metal kazoo, with instructions," says Laura. "To make Kristen and Michael kiss, tables had to hum a love song on it." There was also an old-fashioned photo-booth next to the guest book, where people could glue pictures from their photostrips with a message for the happy couple.

Kristen's dad, Dick York, created a 10-minute slideshow, a moving tribute to the bride and groom that captured them from childhood to adulthood. A longer version played all night on a flat screen behind the bar. "He put many hours of work into it and it was awesome," says Michael.

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Rather than a receiving line, the entire wedding party helped Michael and Kristen deliver trays of cupcakes to every table to greet guests. In each cupcake was a small flag with a magnetic blinking light pin attached—quite a festive sight. The lights served another purpose as well: Guests put theirs on to get free drinks at the bar. "Once the party got going, people had blinking lights on their noses, eyeglasses, ears, everywhere," laughs Kristen.

Laura's addition: a clock projected onto a screen beginning at 11 p.m. for the big countdown. After the last dance, no one wanted the party to end. Kristen and Michael made sure that it didn't. "Laura found a trolley that would run from 12:30 to 2:30 a.m. to bring people to and from a bar downtown," Kristen says. They turned it into their send-off. Everyone waited outside with sparklers while the newlyweds ran to the trolley. Then friends piled on and were dropped off at the bar. "Michael and I said goodbye and the trolley took us back to the hotel," explains Kristen.

It was truly an unforgettable event, filled with fun, friends, family and love. "From the moment the rehearsal began to the moment the post-wedding brunch ended, I was just overwhelmed with joy," Kristen recalls. "It was the most touching experience to have everyone I love in one room, celebrating the beginning of my life with Michael."

Happy New Year, indeed. *

WEDDING RECIPE

EVENT DESIGN:

Laura Fryberger, Flings Event Design

PHOTOGRAPHER: *Jennifer Cress Photography*

INVITATIONS: *Paper•Rock•Scissor*

FLOWERS: *A Wedding Bouquet*

VENUE & CATERING: *The Depot*

CUPCAKES: *Cupcake*

CHAIR RENTAL: *Skyway Events*

LINEN RENTAL: *Studio 6*

CEREMONY MUSIC: *Peggy Doerrie*

DINNER MUSIC: *Independent Jazz Trio*

DJ: *Bellagala*

PHOTOBOOTH: *Photobooth Memories*

TROLLEY: *Capital City Trolley*

TUXES: *The Wedding Shoppe*

VIDEOGRAPHER: *Ryder Seeler*

DRESS: *Mon Cherie from The Wedding Shoppe*

SHOES: *TJ Max*

VEIL: *Laure Engel, seamstress who also made the bridesmaids' dresses*

RING: *Polar Bear Diamond and Jeffrey Jeweler*

HAIR & MAKEUP: *Metropolis Salon and Spa, and Eclipse Salon & Spa*