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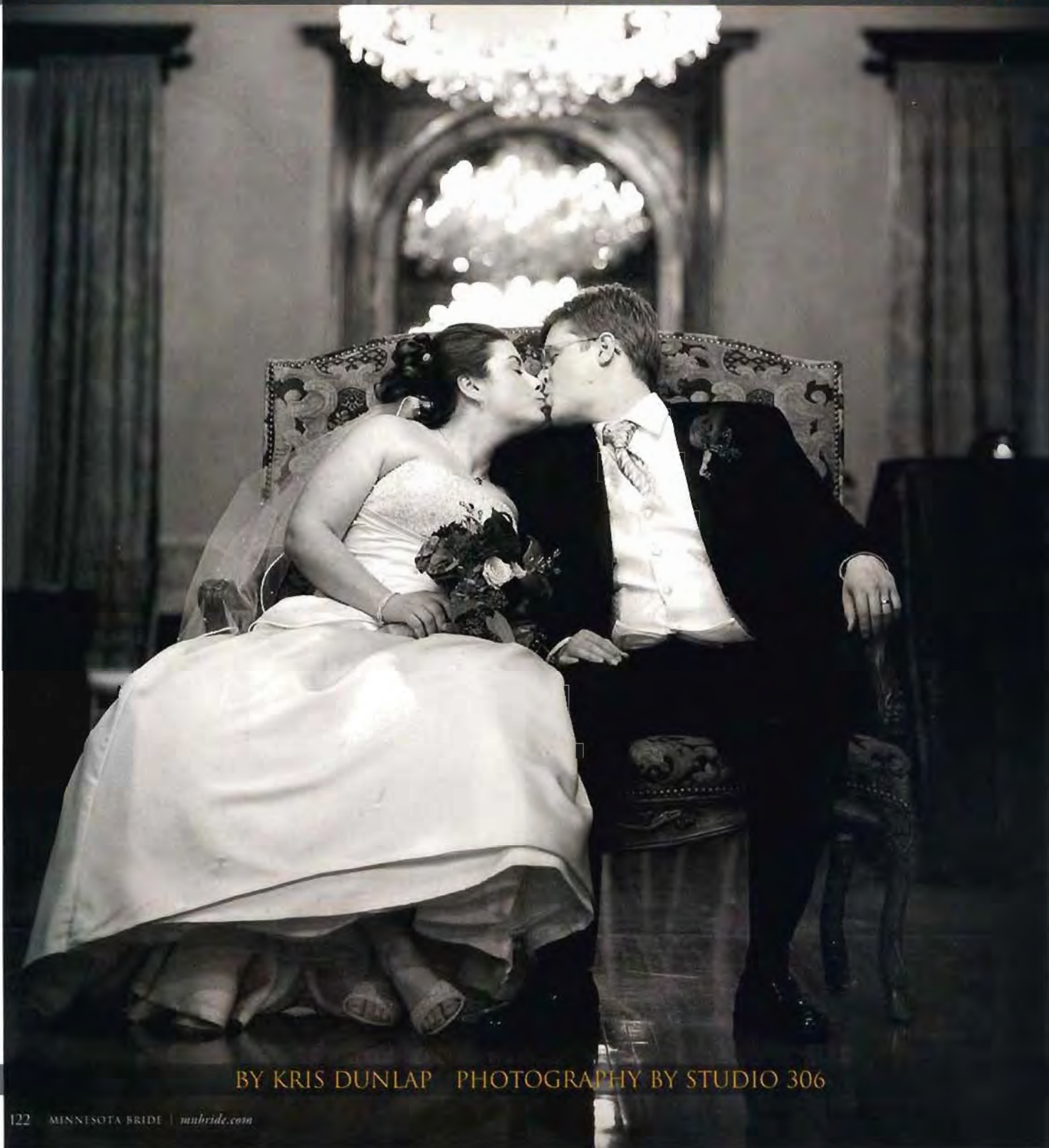
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# WEDDING RING IN THE NEW YEAR!



BY KRIS DUNLAP PHOTOGRAPHY BY STUDIO 306

# A countdown of the top 10 reasons to become a New Year's Eve newlywed.



**Get dressed up. Drink champagne. Go dancing with friends.** Hmmm...sounds like a smashing New Year's Eve bash—or a wedding. In fact, the two have so much in common, it makes sense to plan your big day on December 31. Turns out it's a popular choice. As wedding planner Nicolle Sellers of Mother of the Bride says, "It's everything all wrapped up into one." According to planners, brides and even guests, here's why exchanging vows instead of resolutions is more popular than ever.

## {10} No one will forget your anniversary.

Including you and your spouse. And every year, New Year's Eve will be a sentimental occasion. Sellers agrees: One bride told her that prior to her New Year's Eve nuptials, it was just another holiday. But for the rest of her life, it would now be her anniversary—a special day to relive her wedding memories.

## {9} You'll have a truly unique celebration.

New Year's Eve is becoming trendy as couples are getting married a little older, according to Nicole Walesch of B. Inspired. "They want to do something different and they've been there, done that for New Year's Eve," she explains. It's the perfect way for couples to make their wedding different from others. "Black tie and balloon drops are entirely appropriate," adds Sellers. "Plus, some cities shoot off fireworks guests can enjoy—for free." She even helped one bride who requested a "Vanity-Fair-party-after-the-Oscars" reception. "She wanted to 'rchotch' it up in a classic way," Sellers says.

## {8} Dinner is followed by dancing all night long.

Instead of doling out extravagant amounts of cash to get into a crowded restaurant or bar, everyone will enjoy a lovely meal, then their favorite tunes—whether handpicked by you for a DJ to play or via a live band. "Our parents helped choose the playlist," says New Year's Eve bride Judy Rockvam-Ehlers. "The dance floor was packed all night."

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(OPPOSITE PAGE) New Year's Eve weddings are becoming more popular than ever. Erin and Aaron Lauinger held their 2006 New Year's Eve wedding reception at The Semple Mansion.



## {7} Your guests are ready to whoop it up.

"Holidays are festive by nature, so they make for fun weddings," says Laura Fryberger, owner of Flings Event Design. Echoing that sentiment is Erin Lauinger, who was married on Dec. 31, 2006. "Everyone is already in a party mood and planning to stay out late," she says. You can make it *the* party of the year. Gretchen Culver, sales and events director for Bellagala, says that in her experience, "fun couples" plan New Year's Eve weddings. "The connotation of fun is already there," she explains.

## {6} The décor is a no-brainer.

"New Year's Eve lends itself to themes that wouldn't work for just any wedding," says Lauinger. Think noisemakers, confetti, hats, horns and balloons. She and her fiancé worked in a clock theme, offering silver travel clocks as favors. With help from Robin Martín of Gateaux Inc., where Lauinger is employed, they even designed a fabulous grandfather-clock cake with a working face. She adds that since it's cold outside and gets dark early, "it's easy to make the reception site inviting with candles and warm colors." They also used foil blow horns in different colors to cleverly indicate meal choice. Walesch feels that traditional New Year's Eve décor can set the tone for the party: "We put sparklers in the dessert and had a balloon drop."

## {5} Drinking champagne is a given.

Toasting friends, family and the happy couple feels natural on New Year's Eve. Plus, it's one holiday that encourages everyone to join in on traditional wedding kisses—before, during and after the clock strikes midnight. Says Ambiente owner Joan Nilson: "There is a magical quality to New Year's Eve. Everyone is in a different frame of mind."



**{4} Your new married life coincides with the New Year.** A fresh start as husband and wife on the eve of a new year just seems appropriate. "There's excitement for the new year and new beginnings," says Lauinger. "It's the perfect time to start your life together." Often, planning a New Year's Eve wedding is a meaningful, deliberate choice. "At Bellagala, I planned a wedding for one couple who met on New Year's Eve and got engaged on New Year's Eve," says Culver. "Naturally, that was the day they wanted for their wedding, too."

**{3} People love to get all dressed up and actually have somewhere to go.** Attending a wedding takes the pressure off planning the "best New Year's Eve ever." "It gives you the perfect excuse to have fun, dress up, go out and celebrate," says Erika Vickerman, a wedding attendee. "I think it's a win-win for guests and the couple—everyone loves a wedding, and everyone loves to celebrate New Year's Eve." Lauinger concurs, saying "it's one of the few nights out of the year Minnesotans are willing to dress up."

(ABOVE) Erin and Aaron Lauinger played up their New Year's Eve wedding by using a clock theme, complete with a clock cake by Gateaux Inc. and clocks as favors.

## **{2} Everyone's in town for the holidays.**

A wedding gives people an excuse to prolong their visit. Fryberger notes that if New Year's Eve falls on a long weekend, it's easier for out-of-town guests to enjoy a more relaxing stay. "Also, there's an extra day for the festivities—and recovery," she adds. Rockvam-Ehlers, who provided gift bags for those staying overnight at the reception hotel, says when she called for a count, it was triple what she and her fiancé, Rob Ehlers, expected. "We even received letters from guests after our wedding gushing about how much fun they'd had," she says.

## **{1} You'll spend your day with family and friends.**

"You start the New Year on a positive note," says Ann Hennessy, whose sister-in-law Lisa married Bill Zierlow on New Year's Eve. Nilsen says that every couple she's helped plan a December 31 wedding has been ecstatic about ringing in the New Year with loved ones. Sellers adds that New Year's brides have told her later "it kept the celebration going." And one wedding guest, Judy Vickerman, says she loved the idea of combining such a special occasion with a festive holiday. "The wedding was beautiful, and the reception had wonderful music, food and company," she says. "What more could anyone want?" \*

### KEEP IN MIND A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING NEW YEAR'S EVE NUPTIALS:

**BUDGET.** It may be more expensive to have a December 31 wedding. Bellagala's Gretchen Culver explains that "you'll pay peak rates because it's a holiday, and since hotels often plan their own event, there can be limited availability." Laura Fryberger of Flings Event Design agrees that travel and hotel costs may be higher. "Often reception sites and other vendors charge a higher fee, since they have to pay staff holiday rates," she says. Planners in general say that if a couple is 100 percent enthusiastic about choosing that day, they're more tolerant of higher costs. On a more positive note, Nicolle Sellers of Mother of the Bride says that New Year's Eve weddings "can actually lower the décor budget because everything is already decorated."

**TIMING.** Start the celebration later—you don't want the fun to wind down before the clock strikes midnight. Culver says that sometimes, that can be helpful to couples. "We don't have an overtime rate," she says. "We stay until the wedding is over, no matter what time it is." But Sellers also warns that some venues have a 12:30 a.m. last call, causing an abrupt end to the evening. Her remedy? "See if you can pay for an additional liquor license or throw an after-party."

**PLAN AHEAD.** The holidays are a busy time, so be sure to send save-the-date cards well in advance. Have fun with it, like Erin Lauinger did: Hers were shaped like champagne bottles. Both she and Judy Rockvam-Ehlers, another New Year's Eve bride, caution that venues and musicians book up early, so being organized and flexible eliminates headaches.

**GUEST LIST.** Be conscious of your guests' needs. "If you have lots of people with kids, they'll need ample time to find a babysitter," says B. Inspired's Nicole Walesch. And most guests will want to bring a "plus one," so be prepared to pare down your list to accommodate them.

**COMPETITION.** Friends and family may have traditions that they'd prefer not be disrupted, says Fryberger. Lauinger didn't anticipate that a few of her guests had other parties to go to after her wedding. And Sellers says that she is planning a 2007 wedding for clients who already know of two other couples getting married that day. On the other hand, the response rate can be incredibly high because people plan vacations around the holidays—and your wedding date.

**WEATHER.** In Minnesota, winter weather is infamously unpredictable. Lauinger remembers that it snowed all day, and "roads were a bit treacherous." However, weather can also work in your favor. Ann Hennessy fondly recalls the New Year's Eve wedding she attended. "Outside, it was a winter wonderland, with beautiful sparkly snow. It definitely added to the ambience."

**HOLIDAY CHAOS.** Rockvam-Ehlers notes that since Christmas was so close to her wedding date, it was essential to be ultra-organized, and to get invitations in the mail long before invitees were inundated with holiday cards.

**TOO WILD?** When you host an event on New Year's Eve, inevitably guests get out of hand. Rockvam-Ehlers' sibling, Roxanne Rockvam, remembers her sister Judy's wedding with a chuckle. "One of our relatives came out of the bathroom with her skirt stuck into her pantyhose. That's when I knew we were really having fun!"