

WED DOSSIER TRENDS

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LIGHTS, CAMERA, WEDDING!

When it comes to perfect reception décor, it's all about the lighting

It's safe to assume that when your parents tied the knot, the lighting at the reception was little more than an afterthought. They probably had little more than a simple stage spotlight to shine down on their first dance as a married couple.

Now, savvy brides and event planners are discovering that the event's lighting is as critical as the flowers and color scheme. In addition, new technology and higher budgets have converged to create limitless options for an unforgettable event, from colorized backlighting and customized light patterns to glittery disco balls on the dance floor.

In other words, lighting has come out of the dark when it comes to weddings. "It's everything to an event," says William Fogler, founder of Wm Events, an exclusive Atlanta-based event design firm. "It's just like when you go to a restaurant, and your mood changes because of the lighting. Brides are finally understanding the lighting is key."

In the past several years, staple elements such as gobos—templates that are placed in front of a light source to reflect the pattern on a larger surface—have become more personalized and unique. A pattern with the couple's initials is a standard favorite, but many new gobos are made from glass, which enables a more intricate design. Full-color photos can also be used, so a cherished snapshot of the couple can be projected onto the wall for guests to marvel over.

"If the bride loves hydrangeas, and that's what her centerpiece will be, we can throw a hydrangea up on the walls or onto the dance floor so she can dance on it," says Doc Waldrop, a lighting designer and partner at Infinite Designs, a full-service production company that specializes in lighting.

Integrating the color scheme into lighting elements is another increasingly popular trend and helps set the backdrop for breathtaking photos, says Ric Mershon of Roswell-based Ric Mershon Photography.



Uplighting can add drama to any reception.

Uplighting—a technique that projects light onto the walls from floor to ceiling—has come a long way from harsh white to the exact colors of the wedding, creating an eye-popping background palette for both posed and candid shots.

"If you have a color scheme, work those colors into the uplighting," Mershon says. "Reds are great, I've seen purple and love it, but it's really up to the bride and designer."

More brides and event planners are utilizing intelligent lights, which are high-tech computerized fixtures that can be programmed to move and/or change colors throughout the evening. The options are endless: colors that change periodically; different intensities to produce textured backgrounds on the walls or a romantic night sky with twinkling stars; even a live shot of the wedding from a video camera.

Waldrop also notes that more receptions are moving toward individually lit areas, like a flashy dance floor complete with disco ball and moving lights, and a moderately lit sitting area where relatives can catch up. "Give people a choice, and they will find their own comfort level so everyone is happy," he says. "And that's the whole objective you're trying to reach—where everyone is happy." ■