



MEAGAN LYNCH marries JIM MESSER

June 17, 2006 | The bride's parents' home | Prospect Heights

Vibrant flowers and summer-green colors were the perfect backdrop for this playful yet meaningful backyard wedding.

After trying on several gowns at Belle Vie Bridal Couture (312-751-2222, belleviebridalcouture.com), Meagan chose this Elizabeth Fillmore strapless frock. "I put it on and knew right away it was the one—a perfect fit for our casual summer wedding," says Meagan. To complement her chic look, Meagan selected a couture veil, also from Belle Vie.



The couple worked with wedding coordinators Brooke Bandik and Christine Stone of Tying the Knot (630-243-1001, tyingtheknot.biz) to design this elegant and modern custom invite. "It was clean and classic," says the bride.



As a surprise, the bride's father arranged for traditional Irish bagpipers to sound the dinner call. "I'm of Irish descent," the bride says, "so it was perfect. They walked in just before dinner and we were totally shocked!"

Inside the tent provided by Party Time Productions (partytimeproductions.com) was a collection of round and square tables adorned with vases of various sizes filled with different arrangements. Paper lanterns hung from the tent's rafters for a romantic touch. All flowers by Bukiety (312-733-4580, bukiety.com).

As guests entered the backyard, they found escort cards, designed by Tying the Knot, arranged in alphabetical order. Each card was attached to a river cane pole sprouting from the ground.



For their first dance, the couple selected David Gray's "Sail Away," performed by the Drew Lane Orchestra (312-397-0700, drewlaneorchestra.com). "They fit the bill," says Meagan, "mixing it up the entire evening with both old and new favorites."



A photo charm of her late mother was attached to the stems of Meagan's bouquet. Luscious white peonies were arranged atop a collar of cymbidium orchids. "Peonies are my favorite flower," Meagan says. "They remind me of my mom and the beginning of a new spring."



Meagan and Jim's menu (*middle*) began with summer greens and chilled green pea and mint soup (*bottom*). For the main course, there were three themed buffet stations: Steakhouse, Caribbean, and Mediterranean, all catered by **Entertaining Company** (312-829-2800, entertainingcompany.com).

Some Like It Hot Pleasing All Palates

These days, couples with sophisticated tastes want to spice up their menus with ethnic flavors, such as Indian curry and Mexican chilies. Doing so gives a traditional meal of meat and potatoes an extra kick, and lets you show off how worldly and adventurous you two have become. But while offering ethnic cuisine may be fashionable, it also has the potential to scare away guests with more timid tastes. So, we asked Chicago's premier ethnic caterer, **Wendy Pashman** of the **Entertaining Company** (312-829-2800, entertainingcompany.com), how to turn up the exotic, ethnic heat without turning off guests.

"Passed hors d'oeuvres are an easy and effective way to introduce a bit of ethnic flavor into a wedding menu," notes Pashman. "The advantage is that guests are offered one or two 'exotic' items along with traditional fare." Pashman suggests infusing ethnicity into hors d'oeuvres that guests are already familiar with such as crab cakes with coconut and tamarind.

"Buffet stations offer the most flexibility," Pashman says, because they make it easy to sneak in "the new with the expected." Here, Pashman set up a mild yet flavorful Indian buffet (*right*) of chicken skewers (seasoned with tandoori sesame), vegetable curry (no scary vegetables here, just potatoes, peas, carrots, and tomatoes), as well as basmati rice and an assortment of ethnic but "safe" sides guests see all the time at local supermarkets, such as olives and hummus.



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