

ANYTHING BUT

Ordinary



Who says the only Hong Kong wedding venues are hotels and seafood restaurants? We caught up with three Hong Kong couples to chat about their unconventional weddings - and why they chose to go against the grain.
By **Susie Riza**



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NISSA and ANDY CORNISH

Nissa and Andy met while both were working at environmental NGOs. In 2015, the pair celebrated their marriage on an organic farm in Fanling.



Q When you started planning, which details were most important to you?

Nissa Cornish: It was important that our wedding be not just a beautiful event, but a reflection of who we are. We considered a destination wedding, but quickly realized that with many of our friends and family living far away, Hong Kong is a destination... and a great one! So we decided to do right it here, where our story is. We knew we didn't want a typical Hong Kong wedding, in a hotel or restaurant. We also wanted to do it as sustainably as possible, and incorporate the outdoors if possible.

Q Which venues did you settle on?

NC: We had our ceremony at WWF's Island House Conservation Studies Centre, in Tai Po. It's a beautiful colonial-style heritage building built in 1905, and has an enormous private garden overlooking the sea. Our reception was at Zen Organic Farms in Fanling. I loved the idea of a rustic barn wedding. At first we didn't think it would be possible, but then we visited Zen and discovered this open-air shed overlooking the fields... and something in our imaginations just said, "YES."

Q How did you discover them?

NC: At the time, the Island House wasn't open to the public [though it's now open for event bookings], so very few people knew of it. Because Andy worked for WWF, we were able to make a special request to book it. As for Zen, we knew that the farm supplied organic produce to one of my favourite restaurants, Posto Pubblico. So we asked the kind folks at Posto (who also ended up being our caterers) to connect us.

Q Did you encounter any complications?

NC: At first, Zen flat-out refused because they had never hosted anything like a wedding. It took a lot of coaxing from us and our amazing wedding planner to get them on board. But once they agreed, they were super kind and helpful all the way.

Q What else was special about your wedding?

NC: We enjoyed adding a lot of homemade touches. I designed the invitations, and found a woman who hand-made amazing fabric bunting to decorate the barn. Andy designed and built custom lighting for the head table, which went perfectly with the vintage mirrors we used as a backdrop.

Q How were your personalities reflected?

NC: Our ceremony "altar" was decorated simply with two potted banyan trees, which now live on our roof as a memento. Andy hung vintage Hong Kong romantic-film posters from his personal collection in the barn, and selected organic wines and locally-brewed beers to serve.

Q What other details did your guests love?

NC: The kids' area seemed to go over well! We had fun things like a teepee, wedding-themed colouring books, games, sidewalk chalk, and bubbles. Guests also made their own pizzas in a wood-burning oven.

In hindsight...

Glad I spent on: A wedding planner. Sonya from Bliss Creations took care of all the boring details, which left us free to do the fun stuff.

Glad I saved on: The dress. It was a simple, classic dress by a local designer, and that's all I needed.

Wish I spent on: Live music all night. We hired an amazing live trio to serenade us during sunset, then switched to a DJ after dinner.

Wish I saved on: Nothing I can think of!

WHO HELPED THEM:

WEDDING PLANNER: Bliss Creations, blissweddings.asia

CATERER: Posto Pubblico, www.postopubblico.com

PHOTOGRAPHER: Sean Creamer, facebook.com/SeanCreamerPhotography

TRANSPORT: Tesla Motors, tesla.com

BOUQUET FLOWERS: Tiffany Flowers, www.tiffanyflowers.com.hk

VENUE DECOR: DIY

MAKEUP: Liz Bohan, bit.ly/2krm855

HAIR: Catherine Law

ENTERTAINMENT: Cecilia Tang, facebook.com/CeciliaTangMorgana

RINGS: Nathalie Melville Fine Jewellery, melvillejewellery.com



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BERNICE and RAY WONG

A classic Hong Kong love story, Bernice and Ray met over dim sum. The two were dining with their parents, hit it off - and the rest is history.



Q How did you stumble upon The Secret Kitchen by The Butchers Club?

Bernice Wong: It actually took us a while to find the perfect venue. We wanted to have about 160-190 guests there for a late afternoon cocktail session, followed by dinner - all in the same place. Plus, we were getting married during the rainy season, so we needed a Plan B. At first, our parents thought the venue, which is located in an industrial building, was a bit avant-garde, but they warmed to the idea!

Q Why didn't you go with the usual banquet hall?

BW: We wanted the day to be a party rather than a formal affair for our guests - and for us. In the end, it was perfect: fun, energetic, simple and refreshingly atypical.

Q Did you incorporate any Chinese elements?

BW: We didn't spend time or energy on the usual Chinese games and ceremonies, which we didn't find meaningful. That being said, we ended up doing the Chinese tea ceremony, which was very important for our parents and grandparent. I also thought it would be fun to be in a traditional Chinese wedding gown, and I was very glad that Ray agreed to play along - not a lot of Hong Kong guys do!

Q How were your personalities reflected?

BW: We both like things to be simple and not too stressful, so I would say, as far as wedding planning goes, we aced on both fronts! As for the decor, it was more of a woody, natural theme with very simple

colours, such as white and green on wood. The signage was accentuated in neon pink. Ray was also very excited about the pick-up truck, which was provided by the venue - the back was filled with ice-cold beers to welcome our guests.

Q Any advice for other couples?

Take it easy, and enjoy the planning. You are supposed to do this once in your life, so make it fun!

In hindsight...

Glad I spent on: Portable fans and air conditioning for the alfresco area. It turned out to be a very hot day!

Glad I saved on: Simple decorations. Our decorator knew how much was "just right."

WHO HELPED THEM:

VENUE & CATERER: The Secret Kitchen by The Butchers Club, thebutchers.club/wong-chuk-hang

DECORATOR: The Wooden Fox, instagram.com/thewoodenfox.co

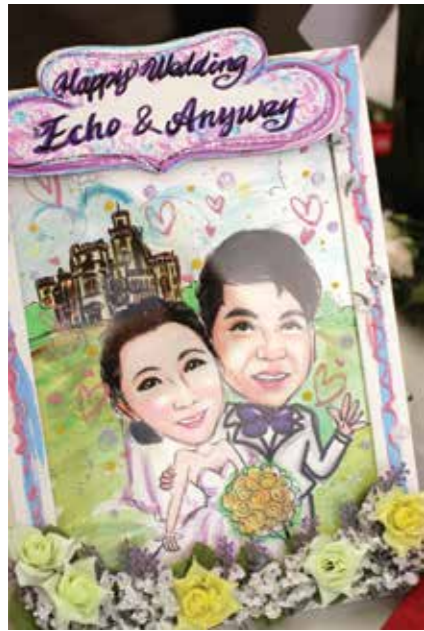
PHOTOGRAPHER: KC Professional Photography, www.chankichun.com

CAKE: Sift, www.siftdesserts.com

WEDDING DRESS: Spring Wedding, www.springwedding.com.hk

HAIRSTYLIST & MAKEUP: Bart Ko, www.beaute.com.hk





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**ECHO
 CHAN**
and
**ANYWAY
 NGAN**

Echo and Anyway met at the Jao Tsung-I Academy in Lai Chi Kok, where they clicked over their passion for history and heritage buildings. It's where they met, fell in love... and eventually got married.

Q Why did you choose Jao Tsung-I Academy?

EC: Our wedding venue has so much sentimental value for us: Jao Tsung-I Academy is where we met and fell in love. The Academy is a heritage building that was recently revitalised into a cultural hub. I work here, and I met Anyway when he worked for the building conservation project several years ago.

Q What else did you have in common, other than history?

EC: We are both backpackers and travel addicts. We fell deeper in love on a trip to Russia and the Baltic Sea in 2012. Since that trip was so special to us, we returned to Eastern Europe to take pre-wedding photographs on our honeymoon.

Q So the honeymoon was before the wedding?

EC: Yes! We travelled and took our honeymoon before we actually got married. After that we travelled around the world to India, Cambodia, Iran, China, Taiwan, Turkey and along the Trans-Siberian Railway.

Q And when did you get married?

EC: We came back from our pre-wedding trip just a few days before our wedding. Then we organised everything and decorated the venue - the Skylight Atrium in the Jao Tsung-I Academy. We chose this place because it has lovely natural light spilling into it. The atmosphere and surroundings are beautiful with an outstanding red-brick heritage building.

Q What else was unconventional?

EC: Our parents wanted us to have a grand wedding party, but sometimes the focus of those large banquets aren't on the bride and groom, but rather on what everyone thinks of the party, how much money was spent, and superficial things like that. We knew that wasn't how we wanted to celebrate. We wanted to have an intimate party that represented us with all of our most treasured guests there.

Q How would you describe your wedding decor?

EC: Simple, beautiful, impressive and meaningful. We invited our best friends to participate in the party - we planned, designed and decorated the venue with their

help. The result was gorgeous: they put up a display of our photos from the honeymoon trip, which was very special to us.

Q What else did you do a little differently?

EC: Actually, our best friends did most of the work! The banquet, reception flowers, settings, MC, photography - they were all prepared and provided by our best friends. In addition, a son of our colleague played the violin.

Q How did your wedding reflect your personalities?

EC: We are spontaneous people, and we wanted to have a wedding that was casual but meaningful as well. The venue had limited seating, so we only had our nearest and dearest around. It was quiet, open, natural and has real Hong Kong culture - our guests loved the atmosphere.

In hindsight...

Glad I spent on: Venue booking, decorations and wedding cards

Glad I saved on: Everything else! Our friends made this a truly memorable day



WHO HELPED THEM:

VENUE: Jao Tsung-I Academy

VENUE DESIGN: Trashure Design Limited, trashuredesign.com

VENUE DECOR: DIY by our best friends

PHOTOGRAPHER: Our friends Dragon Wong, Will Chan, Jenny Leung and Jacky Lam

FOOD: We provided snacks and fruit tarts

WEDDING DRESS: Tailored in Guangzhou, China
 Wedding tux: H&M

FLOWERS: Our friends Karen Ma and Jenny Leung

MC: Our best friend Armie Ma

BACKGROUND MUSIC: Violin by Alvin Lau