

DIRECTORY

Who's in and who's out

Guest lists can be a minefield for couples

Many aspects of getting married are fun, but deciding which family member or friend is left off the guest list is more of a headache. Wedding planners Effie Mak and Sonya Yeung share their insights into this sensitive subject.

"Normally, the guest list depends on who is paying for the wedding," says Mak, director at Plus One Weddings (www.plusoneweddings.com). "If the groom's side is paying more they will have more say. But the families will normally negotiate how many tables they will need."

For Chinese weddings, Mak says, parents have more input on inviting family members and their own friends. For Western weddings, the couple decide who is invited. "Normally, the wedding is more for the [Chinese] parents to celebrate their happiness with their friends, while couples will have more say on decorations," Mak explains.

With limited space at venues and budget constraints, the guest list



inevitably causes tension. "It happens a lot because of the limited capacity. They have to kick out some guests on the list," she says. "I tell couples to have an open discussion with their parents. And if you are going to have a small venue, try to manage your parents' expectations."

To help organise the guest list, wedding website, WeddingWire.com has

an online guest list function. It allows couples to track RSVPs, group guests in different lists or divide them according to the bride's side, groom's side or colleagues. Other features include tracking gifts received and RSVPs for separate events, the ceremony, reception, bridal shower, rehearsal dinner and so forth.

"It's common to have two events," explains Yeung, creative director at Bliss Creations (www.blisscreations.net). "Parents want their friends at the wedding, and it's become more of a Western thing for the couple to want their friends and family there too. Having two events accommodates the various guest lists out there."

Deciding who is invited and who misses out can be a delicate balancing act for families and couples planning the guest list for weddings.

For guests with children, Yeung advises to check the wording on the invitation. Some couples explicitly state if children are welcome, by mentioning their names on the invitation. If the card is only addressed to the parents, it's a subtle hint to find a babysitter.

Other invitations take the direct approach: "We would appreciate it if you could leave your children at home." Yeung recommends guests do not invite anyone themselves. She says: "If you have a friend in town who wasn't invited, don't ask the couple if they can come. It's not fair on the couple since they will have to pay for that extra person's meal."

When it comes to colleagues at work, the creative director says: "We tend to advise couples to stick to people you socialise with. If you don't socialise with them, then don't feel the need to invite them. But if they are going to be offended they didn't get an invitation, then maybe you should invite them."

"Ultimately, finances dictate who is paying for what, and usually there is a compromise that gets worked out [for the guest list]."

"But parents need to understand it's the couple's wedding day, not just a day to show off your children."