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# UNIQUE PLACES TO GET MARRIED LOCATIONS»

## MAKE IT YOUR OWN

HERE ARE SIMPLE WAYS TO CUSTOMIZE YOUR TENT AND SHOWCASE YOUR STYLE:

- ❖ Bring in nature. One of the best things about a tented reception is the view of the great outdoors. Why not add some greenery? Think tall potted plants or topiaries, bonsai trees, hanging plants, and vines hanging from the ceiling or tent poles.
- ❖ Add dramatic lighting. Some tents are equipped with chandeliers and white lights, but you can still pepper the room with colorful Japanese lanterns, candles, and tiki torches.
- ❖ Play with tables and chairs. Depending on the tent size you choose, you might be able to go with an array of table sizes and shapes, giving the space a more personal feel. Think about decorating guest chairs with fabric, flowers, or greenery.
- ❖ Hang some fabric. Boring tent poles can be draped in colorful fabric, which can also be strewn from the ceiling.—L.D.



A festive tent created by Branches in West Long Branch.

## A Tented Affair

MANY BRIDES AND GROOMS FANTASIZE about a tent wedding at home, but when it comes time for the actual planning, they find that pulling off this type of affair is complicated—not to mention expensive. With that in mind, many reception venues are now offering tents set up directly on their grounds. "It really is the best of both worlds," says Katherine Rodriguez, owner of Crossed Keys Inn in Andover (973-829-9922; [crossedkeys.com](http://crossedkeys.com)). "Many couples envision their dream wedding under a tent,

but they soon find out that it's cost-prohibitive because everything must be brought to the site. By setting up the tent at the venue, you eliminate paying for the transport of silverware, tables and chairs, wait staff, etc."

What makes the tent wedding so appealing? Many couples like the idea that their guests won't be confined to one room for the entire reception. Instead, they have the freedom to wander in and out of the party, while still enjoying the festivities. "Guests can go smoke

by  
LINDA  
DI PROPERZIO

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## BRIDAL NOTEBOOK



## Hip, New Hotels in Atlantic City

CHANGE IS HAPPENING IN AC, and chic hotels are popping up that have nothing to do with gambling. But they more than make up for the missing sound of clinking slots in the way of sophistication, entertainment, luxurious accommoda-



tions, and fine dining. It's a sharp contrast to the days of old, with busses full of day-trippers betting it all. Today's Atlantic City is transforming into a resort

destination worthy of a younger, hipper crowd. And what better place to host your wedding or rehearsal dinner? The **Water Club** (800-800-8817; [thewaterclubhotel.com](http://thewaterclubhotel.com)), an 800-room luxury hotel next to the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, boasts endless marble, a spa, five pools, dining by Bobby Flay and Wolfgang Puck, and a \$400 million construction budget. You'll feel like you've hit the jackpot here. Choose from a gorgeous ballroom, a party under the stars, poolside fun, or chic cocktail fare.

Then there's the **Chelsea** (800-548-3030; [thechelsea-ac.com](http://thechelsea-ac.com)), which is equally hip but in a Fifties-retro way. With 303 guest

rooms, a modern event space that holds up to 270, and the use of the trendy 5th Floor, with its rooftop pool and cabana, game room, and Terrace lounge, you really can have fun here. And if you're still craving the lure of gambling, it's just steps outside either hotel's front door.

—Molly Tully



The tent at Crossed Keys Inn in Andover.

a cigar under the stars, but they are still close enough to watch people dance and listen to the music," adds Rodriguez.

And while reception halls already come with a set décor, tents are a blank canvas where brides and grooms can easily incorporate their theme and personal style. The ivory tent at **Crossed Keys Inn** is draped in white fabric and white lights inside, allowing couples to add in any color bursts or decorative elements that suit their fancy. With a beautiful view of the mountains, the tent already comes equipped with a bluestone floor, seats up to 250 guests, and is available from May 1 to mid-November.

Couples that wed at the **Ocean Place Resort & Spa in Long Branch** (732-571-4000; [oceanplaceresort.com](http://oceanplaceresort.com)) usually opt to have their ceremony right on the beach, then host their reception in a tent set up on one of the property's two open-air patios (weather permitting). "It allows our guests to continue that outdoor feel into the reception," says Leah Monastra, senior catering sales manager.

And **Oakeside Mansion in Bloomfield** (973-256-9380; [frungillo.com](http://frungillo.com)) has a 200-guest tent located right off of the venue's wraparound porch so guests can easily utilize both areas. It offers car-

peted floors, a crystal chandelier, side-walls in case of inclement weather, and is available from April to November.

Some other venues that offer on-site tents include:

**Branches in West Long Branch** (732-542-5050; [branchescatering.com](http://branchescatering.com)), which will rent a tent to be set up at their locale, and only hosts one wedding at a time.

**Park Avenue Club in Florham Park** (973-301-8233; [parkavenueclub.com](http://parkavenueclub.com)) offers two tent-like pavilions on its property. The larger one seats up to 270 guests and features an air-conditioning and heating system, so it is available year-round. Its neutral décor allows couples to play up their own personal color style and theme.

**Knoll Country Club in Parsippany** (973-257-0122; [knollcc.com](http://knollcc.com)) offers a tented facility for the cocktail hour that is connected to the east ballroom. It can hold up to 250 guests and is available from late March until late November (weather permitting).

**The Madison Hotel in Convent Station** (973-285-1800; [madisonhotel-weddings.com](http://madisonhotel-weddings.com)) will also rent a tent for weddings, although they prefer to host only tented cocktail hours because of