

GIFTS FOR YOUR *Guests*

Beautiful bomboniere gifts are the perfect final touch to any wedding, writes Elisa Scarton.

Bomboniere might not be the first thing to pop into your head after he's popped the question, but these traditional wedding favours are quickly becoming an important part of every wedding reception.

Traditionally, bomboniere were seen as a chance for the happy couple to pass a bit of their love, blissfulness and good fortune onto their guests. Even today, a carefully chosen bomboniere can be a surprisingly gratifying way to thank your loved ones for their presence and support. And with so many gift options available, there's no reason to settle for tulle and chocolates. Bomboniere can now be tailored to suit any theme and budget, making them the perfect keepsake long after your big day has come and gone.

THE PERFECT GIFT

Finding the perfect bomboniere to suit your theme and your budget can be a challenge. Kathy Tsoucalas from Melbourne's Cherish Bomboniere encourages couples to set a budget first and then give some thought to the number and types of guests attending.

"Having one gift per person is nice, but it's also more expensive and might force you into making the biggest bomboniere blunder, choosing quantity over quality," she says.

"If budget is an issue, consider having one gift per couple or family instead. That way you can spend more per gift. And while silver frames, crystal bottle stoppers and delicate tea-light holders are as popular as ever, they won't suit everyone or every wedding."

If you're inviting a mix of older or younger guests, Kathy suggests

sugared almonds to symbolise love, health, wealth, happiness and prosperity, while Chinese characters inscribed on a key ring or a bold red lantern will symbolise the traditions of Chinese culture.

If you do choose something that is part of your or your husband's family background, Kathy suggests including a small explanatory note. That way guests will know what the bomboniere symbolises and how much it means to you.

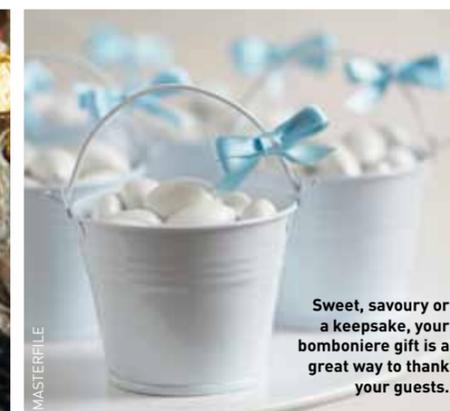
BEAUTIFUL ON THE OUTSIDE

Like the gift hidden inside, a bomboniere's packaging can be anything and everything, and how the gift is presented is just as important as the gift itself.

"Flick through magazines and websites and decide whether you want a box, a bag or neither. Obviously your choice of bomboniere will dictate what you can have, but at least you've narrowed down your options," says Nikita Chen from Sydney's Wedding Blossom.

For a traditional, understated and more affordable look, Nikita says stick to a silk or organza bag or elegant tulle wrapping. But to truly make a statement, consider a box shaped like a flower, a bird house, a miniature dress and tuxedo.

Once you have a shape in mind, work around your colours. Companies like Wedding Blossom can tailor your choice to perfectly match your wedding palette and offer custom design services if you have something specific in mind. For that final touch, Nikita suggests personalising the gift with your names, the date of your wedding and maybe even a sweet message that plays on the theme of the bomboniere.



Sweet, savoury or a keepsake, your bomboniere gift is a great way to thank your guests.

selecting different options that will cater to both groups. The same can apply to the different sexes. Vintage perfume bottles are great for women or couples, while young single guys might prefer a nice pen.

A PERSONAL TOUCH

Keeping your guests in mind when choosing bomboniere, doesn't mean you can't incorporate your own tastes and style. Bomboniere is essentially an extension of your wedding, and should reflect the theme and style of your big day.

"Don't go for something strictly classic and crystal if that's not you," Kathy says. "You want your guests to look at these and immediately think of you and the things that you hold dear. The best way to do this is to jot down what interests you both share and then try to incorporate them into your bomboniere," she says.

If you consider yourselves master chefs, give your guests matching lovebird salt and pepper shakers. If you're eco-warriors, hand out seeded place cards or beautifully wrapped bulbs that will grow into wild flowers when planted. Or, if you're both hopeless romantics, get everyone a copy of your favourite love sonnets or songs.

Including elements of your, or your husband-to-be's, nationality can also be a nice touch. Most Southern European bomboniere have five

MADE WITH LOVE

While having someone else take care of the little details can reduce your pre-wedding stress levels, there's no reason why you can't do it yourself.

"Making your own bomboniere can be a great way to really personalise your gift," says Antonella Seminara from Elegant Bomboniere.

If you're not the Martha Stewart type, Antonella suggests sticking to something as simple as a clear PVC box or organza bag filled with personalised candies, homemade jams or freshly baked biscuits.

"The best part about doing it yourself is that you can choose whichever combination of colour, container, label and ribbon you like, fill it with whatever you like, and put it together exactly how you want it to look," Antonella says.

But before you settle on making your own, really think about whether you have the time to do them properly. Depending on the number of guests, the entire process could take one night, a week, or even a month, and if you're a perfectionist, the little details will become your obsession.

"A bomboniere is your way of saying how much your guests mean to you. It doesn't have to be extravagant or expensive, but it does have to be thoughtfully chosen and presented. Leave your guests with something they'll cherish," Antonella says. ◌