

Garden Magic

A sunny day at eclectic Cornerstone Gardens created a vibrant setting for Ali and David's nuptials. by Elena Donovan Mauer

When Ali Litrownik and David Stone sent out their wedding invitations, they used these words: "We will celebrate under the warm Sonoma sun, amid bursting grapevines, whimsical sculpture, waving grasses and blooming flora." The setting that inspired the sentiment? Cornerstone Gardens, a unique property in the California wine country. "It's a fantastic, interesting, artsy space—a gallery of gardens," says Ali.

"Some of them are more traditional with roses and such, while others are Asian-inspired. There are some that are avant-garde, too, like one with rows of spinning pinwheels set on an expanse of lawn."

Once they chose Cornerstone, Ali and David's plans moved quickly. "I wanted to use the property as a jumping-off point for the look of the entire wedding," says Ali, an interior decorator and professional organizer. "It's ➔

Our Favorite Memories

✿ "At the end of the ceremony, instead of stomping on the wineglass, which is customary in Jewish weddings, David decided to jump in the air and land on it with both feet!"
✿ "We'd choreographed some first-dance moves ahead of time. I was really nervous before we started the dance, but once we got into it, it was fun—and we didn't mess anything up! Guests clapped every time we did a spin."
✿ "We danced the hora, another Jewish tradition. Then Dave and I sat in chairs and were hoisted up by friends and family. It was a great time, but kind of scary to be up in the air!"
✿ "At one point during the reception, I looked across the barn and everyone was dancing to a hip-hop song—even my parents' friends. It looked like a scene out of a club! It was so touching to see everyone enjoying themselves."

PHOTOGRAPHY: LEAH MCCORMICK@LEAH.COM



OPPOSITE PAGE: Ali and David exchange their vows against a beautiful vineyard backdrop. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Guests chat as they await the ceremony's start; Ali's vibrant bouquet of

calla lilies, roses, orchids and fiddlehead ferns by Hunt Littlefield; whimsical pinwheels add an exuberant touch to the scene; a little male bonding among groomsmen before the wedding kicks off.





really modern, but at the same time it's a natural, outdoor setting, so I went for something contemporary and lush." She chose a color scheme of green, chocolate-brown and orange, which would be used in different ways throughout the day's events. She and David also hired Alison Events, an event-planning company, to help them choose the right vendors and coordinate the wedding logistics.

The bride then began her very long search for a simple gown with clean lines. "I think I tried on 85 to 95 dresses," she says. Finally, on a shopping trip with her mother, she chose a strapless, modified mermaid-style gown by Vera Wang. "We both knew it was the one." Ali asked each of her six bridesmaids to select her own style from a collection of mocha-brown dresses by Jim Hjelm to complete the bridal party look.

On the sunny, breezy August afternoon of the wedding, the couple's guests arrived and dropped off their kids with on-site babysitters. "The children were accommodated in a house that's a five-minute walk from the festivities, so parents could check on them at any time," says Ali. Then the guests gathered on a lawn overlooking the grapevines on a neighboring property and sipped melon agua frescas and lemonade. Soon, they took their seats facing the wooden chuppah, decorated with vases of orange Asian-style flowers. The bride describes the ceremony as "mostly Jewish with an eco-human-social-consciousness flair." A rabbi officiated, and friends and family members participated with readings the couple had chosen: *The Couple's Tao Te Ching: Ancient Advice for Modern Lovers*, the Seven Blessings (a Jewish tradition) and three stanzas from "The Wedding Song" by Bob Dylan.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The new husband and wife share a kiss in a field of grass; a chic dessert buffet, which included chocolate soufflés and mini berry and peach tarts, took the place of a cake;

the wooden chuppah featured bold, Asian orchids and small, hanging vases of roses; cutlery was laid across the menu-pocket napkins to keep them from blowing away in the breeze.



The Feast Starter

Crisp Quail Salad
with Corn, Tomatoes, Field Greens,
Pancetta and Thyme-Shallot Vinaigrette

Main Courses

Filet of Beef
with Chive Potatoes and Beets

Grilled Wild Salmon
with Italian Couscous, Grilled
Asparagus and Herb Relish

Provençal Vegetable Tian
Layered with Fresh Herbs and Grana with
Rustic Pearl Couscous and Baby Arugula

Dessert Buffet

Peach and Blueberry Crostada, Fallen
Chocolate Soufflé, Miniature Ice Cream
Cones, Almond Toffee with Chocolates
and Dipped Strawberries



Afterward, the couple observed *yichud*, a Jewish tradition in which the new husband and wife spend some time alone together. Meanwhile, the cocktail hour got started near the property's barn, with guests enjoying passed appetizers and music played by a string trio: two acoustic guitarists and a bassist. Some guests took the opportunity to stroll around the property and explore its garden installations.

Finally, it was time to adjourn to the tent for dinner and dancing. The tablecloths, napkins and Asian-style lanterns were all in shades of green: lime, leaf and sage. Low centerpieces of orchids, hydrangeas, millet and leaves added more gorgeous color. The bride's parents welcomed guests to the celebration and introduced the couple's first dance, to a recording of a love song from one of the couple's favorite groups, Camper Van Beethoven. Guests then joined the newlyweds on the floor, dancing to the band's original music and covers of 60s and 70s tunes. Dinner was a choice of either beef filet, wild salmon or a gratin of summer vegetables—with dancing filling the time between courses.

After the meal, guests joined the bride and groom in the barn, where instead of a traditional wedding cake, the couple provided a dessert buffet for everyone to enjoy. "I felt that we'd get better-tasting sweets that way," says the bride. "Plus, I'm not a huge fan of frosting." A DJ entertained the crowd, playing "songs that I thought would be fun to dance to, like those of Mary J. Blige, Black Eyed Peas and Outkast," says Ali, who stayed on the dance floor until the end of the reception, which came all too quickly. "It was such a gorgeous, vivid, joyous event!" ■

TOP TO BOTTOM: The bride and her 'maids in their elegant attire; mango-hued parasols sheltered guests from the sun and added color accents; the tent is all alight for dinner and dancing; Asian lanterns, in varying shades of green, decorated the space.

