

The Traditional Wedding

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OF THE WEDDING LIBRARY



The Carlyle, 35 E. 76th St., at Madison Ave.; 212-744-1600; thecarlyle.com

LOCATION

If you're flexible with times, days, and seasons, you can still afford the venue of your dreams. Instead of the standard Saturday night, sit-down dinner, celebrate with a Sunday-afternoon cocktail reception at a classic hotel like **The Carlyle**. Choose between the **Trianon** and **Versailles** suites, both of which have French-inspired furnishings like Louis XVI-style chairs and pier tables. Or, close off the first and second levels of the **Gallery**, designed to look like the Turkish palace's dining room, with hand-painted wallpaper and velvet chairs. There is no separate site fee for the Carlyle; pricing is per guest (making it even more attractive to brides on a budget).

CATERING

For about \$110 per person, you can treat your guests to butlered hors d'oeuvre and a full bar. The catering staff will help you select four hot and four cold appetizers from the Carlyle's reception menu, which could include smoked-salmon napoleons and chicken salad on Belgian endive. Choose your favorite bubbly from the hotel's list of champagnes (from \$50 per bottle). For the dessert, have **Cheryl Kleinman Cakes** (718-237-2271) whip up a classic ivory fondant confection (from \$9 per slice). Borrow your mother's own wedding-cake topper to finish the look. If she can't find hers, there are tons of beautiful vintage toppers on eBay for under \$10.

MUSIC

A string quartet provides the perfect ambience. Hanlin and Zabinski like the musicians from **Venus Ensembles** (877-888-3687). They can progress seamlessly from classical music to jazz to contemporary and thus can stay with you from the ceremony through the reception. **Jessica Meyer**, who runs Venus, was trained at Juilliard and founded this company so that other brides could have the same "concert-quality music" she enjoyed at her own wedding. Even without sheet music to work from, Venus can put together a custom arrangement of your favorite tunes. Each musician receives \$250 for the first hour; \$150 each additional hour.

FLOWERS & DÉCOR

To keep costs down, use all the same flowers—white roses can be a less-expensive option because of their ubiquity—in antiqued silver bud vases artfully arranged to look like family heirlooms. Most stationery stores offer table, escort, and place cards with gold beveling that look more expensive than they are, and party stores usually have good-quality paper napkins. Stick with colors like gold, cream, and champagne; use computer calligraphy in an elegant script like Copperplate Gothic on signage. Maximize your venue: Ask the Carlyle if they have ecru linens or gold-rimmed plates, and request that they dim the lighting to a soft amber hue.