

**STAY IN ONE PLACE** "Look for a spot that can accommodate both your ceremony and reception," says Bernadette Coveney Smith, owner of 14 Stories, an event company in New York City. "By doing so, you'll save on decorations and guest transportation costs, not to mention a second venue-rental fee."

**GO FOR THE ALL-IN** Booking a place that already owns the equipment you'll need—from flatware to tables—can knock off up to \$35 per guest from your bill, says Rebecca Feeney of Custom Event Group in Napa, California. One idea: your favorite restaurant (even better if they have a private room you can take over). "Not only does it completely eliminate the need for rentals, but once you meet the food and beverage minimum, there typically isn't a room fee," says Coveney Smith.

**LOOK PAST THE LOFT** Though they make a stunning first impression—those windows! that skyline!—they're essentially blank canvases that require lots of rentals, décor, and styling to turn wedding-worthy. Sites like libraries, art museums, and galleries come pre-decorated and can be just as striking.

**PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS** When it comes to linens, your first instinct may be to splurge on the tablecloths (they take up the most space, after all), but don't.



## Say "I Do" to a Backyard

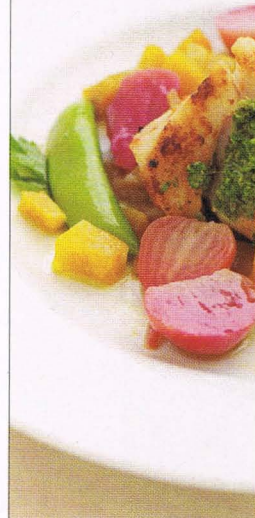
If you or a close friend or family member has an amazing lawn or garden, think about hosting your event there. You'll need rentals, bathrooms, and a backup plan, but Mother Nature can handle the decorating.

Considering serving wine and beer instead of an open bar? Do the math first. "A bottle of wine contains five drinks, whereas a liter of vodka has 25," says Richard Nix Jr. of Butler's Pantry in Saint Louis.

"Your guests will have much more contact with the napkins. As long as they feel luxurious, that's what matters," says Heather Barrie of Gathering Floral and Event Design in Charleston, South Carolina.

**HIRE STUDENTS** Rather than going with a pricey string quartet for your ceremony, call a music school and have them recommend an experienced student group.

**BREAK UP THE BAND** If you're set on a reception group that's out of your price range, ask them if they'll downsize. "Large bands with lots of members often offer a condensed version at a smaller price tag," says Barrie.



## FOOD & DRINK

These stealth cash strategies *don't* in sending guests h

**DO LUNCH OR BRUNCH** the food costs less, and drink as much midday," says director of catering and Little Nell in Aspen, Col

**SKIP THE BUFFET** "Plated dinners can be more aff vas. "Buffets and station and you need to pay per Try this hybrid: Have wa course, like soup or salad family-style entrées and table. The shared platte and create a communal

**GO FOR QUALITY STEMV** these words: Riedel Bora caterer can rent them fo stem," says Feeney. "The taste better, which frees less on wine. Plus, they f

**FAKE THE CAKE** Have yo rate a Styrofoam cake fo tier that you can cut int your guests sheet cake- the wiser, says Wendy Kr Wendy Kromer Confec Ohio, and a Martha Ste contributing editor.