

5 quirky spots to tie the knot

Getting married at the beach or an alpaca farm? So yesterday. Wawa gas stations and convenience stores are popular places to exchange nuptials. A Maryland couple held their wedding at one in 2008 and a Philadelphia couple exchanged vows at one in March of this year.

More and more of today's couples are seeking out venues that express their uniqueness.

In Florida, all you need to plan a one-of-a-kind wedding are an ordained minister, Florida notary public, Clerk of Circuit Court or deputy and a marriage license issued by a Florida county clerk.

1 WEDDING TOASTS ON TAP

If your favorite pub is special to you, you can reserve a table for your guests and get hitched during happy hour. This correspondent and her husband gathered with friends at Port Charlotte's Chubbyz AUCE Fish Fry one Friday night and were married by a notary who also happened to have sold them a home.

Tommy Villani hosted a wedding at Venice's Off The Wagon Brewery & Kitchen last spring.

"We did the ceremony in the brewery, with cocktails, and the reception in the dining room," he said.

This happy couple can forever after tell each other, "Tanks for the memories."

More brewery weddings

Here are just a few of the other local brewers who'd be happy to tap that bubbly toast at your reception or wedding:

Alligator Bay Distillers, Punta Gorda, 941-347-8419

Fat Point Brewing, Punta Gorda, 941-347-7208

Millennial Brewing Company, Fort Myers, 239-271-2255

Peace River Beer Company, Punta Gorda, 941-655-8352

Point Ybel Brewing Company, Fort Myers, 239-603-6535



SUE WADE
The Scene

2 BOOK A BOOKSTORE

Abigail and Deondré Lucas courted online through sharing their own poetry, and dreamed of a bookshop setting for their wedding.

After an online search all the way from San Francisco, they booked Punta Gorda's Sandman Book Company and its famous recycled-book arch, where they were wed in December.

The local independent bookstore is currently scheduling a future wedding for a bookseller from Sarasota.



SUN PHOTO BY SUE WADE

Abigail (pictured) and Deondré Lucas were the second couple to be wed under the arch at Sandman Book Company in Punta Gorda.

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WEDDINGS

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3 TACO BELLS ARE RINGING

If you care to mix gambling and gorditas with your garter, Taco Bell's there to help, in its two-year-old Cantina on the Las Vegas Strip.

For a mere \$600, "Couples can come right in and order a wedding off of our menu," chief marketing officer Marisa Thalberg said in a 2017 statement.

The blowout wedding package for each saucy couple and up to 25 guests includes a fully officiated ceremony, "Just Married" T-shirts, a Taco Bell bow tie and garter, Taco Bell champagne flutes, a Cinnabon Delights wedding cake and a borrowed wedding bouquet made of sauce packets.

The wedding dinner is a Taco 12-Pack.

4 COUNTY HAS AN APP FOR THAT

The local courthouse might be a traditional, if unromantic, place to be wed, but Charlotte County recently made it a state-of-the-art experience.

In 2017, the Charlotte County Clerk of Courts office introduced a new Marriage Scheduling app for iPhone and Android.

With its online marriage-scheduling system, couples can apply for a marriage license and schedule a block of time for their ceremony to be held in a newly designed marriage room in Punta Gorda's Charlotte County Justice Center.

"Since instituting this system, more than 200 couples have married in our office," said the county department.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE CLERK OF COURT

The Charlotte County Justice Center offers a newly renovated ceremony room for couples to get married at the courthouse.

5 A GARDEN GALA

The most unusual request that Port Charlotte wedding planner Amanda Crews, of Amanda Lee Events, ever received was for a wedding at a garden shop.

In March 2020, Becky Copenhaver will host a wedding for over 150 people in the back garden of her Becky's Garden Shoppe in Punta Gorda, with a reception overlooking the Powell's Nursery pond.

"They wanted to do something a little more bohemian," said Copenhaver. "So they started looking at farm and barn weddings. What people were asking for those venues was just incredible. But because I know the family, and this is my first foray into this size thing, I just needed to get my feet wet."