

Planning Weddings & Washing Dishes

Written by L.A. Plume
Tuesday, 12 July 2016 16:22

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Dear L. A. Plume,

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My daughter and I are planning her wedding and whenever her fiance's mother gets within range she says things like, "When my daughter got married it was the most wonderful wedding ever," or "she had the most beautiful flowers you can imagine," or "her invitations were engraved on really fine stock."

All of these comments seem designed to belittle this wedding, which, after all, is for her son as well as my daughter. I've suggested to my daughter that maybe her future mother-in-law is just hinting that she would like to be involved in helping us with the planning, but my daughter has drawn the line in the sand after all these hurtful comments and said no. How can I respond to her in a way that will ease this tension?

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Jill

Dear Jill,

Drawing a line in the sand with one's mother-in-law isn't good politics but it is your daughter's wedding and she has the right to have it just the way she wants, as do you. There are a few approaches you could try, and if the first one doesn't work, try another: "I'm sure the wedding you planned with your daughter was perfect in every way and this one will be as well" . . . "I'm sure you want everything to be just as special for your son as you did for your daughter, and you may rest assured that it will be" . . . I/we would appreciate it if you didn't continue to compare this wedding to your daughter's, this one is ours and we are planning it the way we want and think is best" . . . "This is our wedding to plan and it will be so far better than your daughter's because this one is for *your* son and *my* daughter" . . . "Butt out, you old biddy; we heard that wedding was a joke."

Take your pick and good luck!

L. A. Plume

Dear Ms. Plume,

What is the protocol for going to someone's house for dinner and helping with the dishes and general clean up? Do we or don't we? I'm happy to help but don't want to intrude.

T.

Dear T.,

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Come over here for dinner and intrude any old time; I love help in the kitchen. My friends always jump in and do whatever needs to be done or that I haven't gotten around to by the time they arrive – set the table, tend the bar, make the dessert, do the dishes, take out the trash, etc. By the time the host/ess has planned a menu, made the grocery list, shopped for the items, paid for them, brought them home and put them away, gotten them out again and prepared them, set the table, plated and presented the food, it's enough already. Although people occasionally protest, because you're the guest, I've never had anyone chase me out of the kitchen while doing their dishes. You need to just jump in and do it though if you are sincere, because sitting at the table and squeaking out a little "Can I help with the dishes?" is almost always going to elicit a "No, but thanks." There *are* things to be careful of and some of those are that really good knives shouldn't go in the dishwasher, and if the silverware is silver, those knives shouldn't go in the dishwasher either, so ask about that. Certain china and glassware needs to be washed by hand but the host can direct you if you aren't sure. If the host seems insistent that you not help, then sit back down quietly. And if you are the host in question here, people generally do want to help in some way because it allows them to have contributed. Just put aside your ideas of how, exactly, it should be done because if you invite my friends for dinner, a few of them can put three times as many dishes as you know will fit, into your dishwasher, along with all 72 of the wine glasses you used for dinner . . . and it all works out perfectly.

L.A.Plume