

inside the world  
*of*

# DAVID TUTERA

While David Tutera—celebrity event planner, gown designer, book author, television star, and wedding god to thousands of brides—lives and works in Manhattan, he has made New Jersey his workroom of sorts. The Garden State provides him with locations, favors, and the finishing touches needed to transform a bride's wedding vision (sometimes an outright disaster when solely left in her own hands) into a magical fantasy. That's the premise of his hit show *My Fair Wedding* on WEtv.

New Jersey, it turns out, is a microcosm of the bridal world offering everything from budget-friendly low-cost options to blinged-out over-the-top luxury products and locations. It's a dream environment for brides who live in the state and are familiar with its riches and for celebrity planners with their own hit television shows.

But in today's *Jersey Shore* world of reality television, there's an authenticity about Tutera that can't be replicated. He actually cares about planning weddings, and more importantly, he cares about

the brides. "It's the most rewarding experience I've had in my entire career," Tutera says. "These girls need someone to help them with great ideas, and they can't get there without me."

Tutera, who started out at the age of 19 creating balloon bouquets for bar mitzvahs, has certainly come a long way. This celebrity A-list planner has created events for Jennifer Lopez, Barbara Walters, Elton John, the Rolling Stones, the Grammy Awards, and Vice President Al Gore. But weddings are closest to his heart.

"Weddings are so emotional, so once in a lifetime, so special," he says. "Doing weddings is the one consistent thing that I love to do. The girls, the brides, the fans are so adorable. And weddings have breathed a whole new life into me personally and my career.

I love helping them."

But David is not just choosing the right color palette or the perfect seasonal menu. Instead, he's getting inside of the bride's mind and giving her what she didn't even realize she wanted. "I'm a



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basic stranger that comes into their lives, and in three weeks we're best friends," he says. He listens to their sometimes misguided visions of their dream wedding and transforms them into the perfect event. "I'm a sponge, and they help me understand what they want."

And he really is as nice as he seems on television. At a recent appearance at the Morris Museum in Morristown spreading his tips and tricks with a large following of brides hanging on his every word, he was genuinely interested in each and every girl. They lined up at the end, with moms and fiancés in tow, to shake his hand, take a picture, and get a quick tip on how to pull off the perfect fall wedding. Or they were just there—*not yet engaged*—excited to meet their favorite reality television star. Tutera took time with every girl, making each feel like she was the only one in the room. One by one, he offered advice until there was no one left.

This is not typical behavior of a celebrity planner, one who has planes to catch, deals to make, and collaborations to work on. He's busy designing ball gowns for the fall, shooting episodes for the third season of *My Fair Wedding*, appearing in commercials, and even has a new television program in the works.

But those pressures don't come between Tutera and his fans.

So how is he able to stay so grounded? "My parents raised me the right way," Tutera says. "It's very easy to be on TV and not be approachable, but that's just not me." In fact, he still rides the subways in Manhattan and jogs through the city. He is recognized by little girls who dream about their weddings all the way up to 75-year-old grandmothers—and they're all interested in sharing their stories with David. Even for our photo shoot, he personally chose the best dress, jewelry, and veil for each shot. He truly cares about making every bride—even our model who was pretending to be one for the day—look her best. And this is why they line up for autographs, why they want to tell him their story, why they are asking for his advice, and why they're all clamoring to get onto his show.

He's modest, too. "I'm not a miracle worker, I'm just the messenger," Tutera says. "I'm honored to be in their lives." He stays in touch with 75 percent of his brides and loves hearing about life after the wedding. "You make relationships with these girls," he says. "They send me cannolis and let me know when they're having a baby."

So what's the best part of the planning for this wedding

## David Tutera's Go-To Sources *in* NEW JERSEY:

*David Tutera and his design team are often scouting New Jersey for the perfect details for both his television show and event-planning company. He let us in on his secret spots and favorite sources. Enjoy!*

**Aisle runners:** The Original Runner Company, Montclair, 973-744-7070; originalrunners.com

**Cakes:** Pink Cake Box, Denville, 973-998-4445; pinkcakebox.com; Wildflowers by Lori, 856-459-3515; wildflowersbylori.com

**Chocolate favors:** Enjou Chocolat, Morristown, 973-993-9090; enjouchocolat.com

**Cupcakes:** Stuffed Cupcakes, Nutley, 973-667-7778; stuffedcupcakes.com

**Entertainment:** Craig Scott Entertainment, Rochelle Park, 866-587-1066; craigscott.com

**Event drapes:** Drape Kings, North Bergen, 201-770-9950; drapekings.com

**Gelato:** Ciao Bella, Florham Park, 800-435-2863; ciaobellagelato.com

**Gown designers:** David Tutera by Faviana (of course!), Amsale, Coren Moore, Faviana, Gabriella, Jenny Yoo, JLM, Kirstie Kelly for Disney, Priscilla of Boston, Pronovias, Two Birds Bridesmaids

**Gown shops:** I Do...I Do, Morristown, 973-998-6215; idoidonj.com; Designer Loft, South Orange, 973-821-5316; designerloftnj.com



## Ordinary *to* EXTRAORDINARY

*That's what David Tutera does. He takes a wedding and adds his magic, transforming a nice event into an unforgettable experience, all while adding personal details that tell the story of the bride and groom. Here are some of his tips on how to achieve the "extraordinary" at your own wedding:*

- Do great things with your bouquet. Add beading, crystals, ribbons, pearls, or your grandmother's rosary beads. Wrap the stems, and add buckles, fabric, ribbon, or faux diamonds to give it the look of your gown.
- Use candles, candles, candles! Lots of candles always make a great (and inexpensive) statement and lend a romantic ambience.
- Don't spend a lot of money on cocktail hour décor, which people won't remember. Instead, concentrate on wowing everyone as they enter the ballroom.
- Select one or two colors, and use them in abundance.
- Use both tall and low floral arrangements.
- Upgrade your seating to custom or Chiavari chairs to enhance the look of the room.
- Add something special to the napkins: an orchid head, napkin ring, or ribbon tie.
- Combine florals with fruit or vegetables.
- Add small details like rose petals, strands of ribbon, or faux jewelry to the table.
- Wedding lighting can transform your room from drab to fab. Light your entertainment, dance floor, and tables. You can even project your monogram onto the dance floor.
- Serve a specialty cocktail, along with the name and definition posted at the bar.
- Add an expensive look to favors by including a nicely printed tag and message with your monogram or logo.

For more tips, see *The Big White Book of Weddings* (St. Martin's Griffin/2009).

superstar, who has orchestrated weddings for both Star Jones and Antonio Pierce of the New York Giants? "People would assume it's the décor," says Tutera. "But it's telling the story of the bride and groom. People forget that *they* are a story to be told, which doesn't cost any money. And with budgets these days, telling the story is even more crucial." From the invites to the table names to the cake to the favors, Tutera customizes the details to reflect each love story, allowing guests to become emotionally involved. He takes the guests on a journey that's not the same boring formula.

It's these personal touches that have made Tutera so popular. He's hit a nerve by being genuine and being able to create the storybook wedding that each bride has tucked away in her mind. He's more than just a wedding planner, he's a dream maker. That's what keeps us watching, and dreaming, and wanting more. And we can't wait to see what he dreams up next.

**Hair & makeup:** The Pink Comb, Nutley, 973-320-5650; pinkcombsalon.com

**Invitations & paper goods:** Paper Works & Events, Englewood, 201-569-4418; paperworksandmore.com  
Robin Beth Designs, Haworth; 201-694-8282; robinbeth.com

**Prop rentals:** Regal Candelabra, Passaic; 973-249-6300; regalcandelabra.com

**Reception locations:** Borgata Resort and Casino, Atlantic City, 866-692-6742; theborgata.com

Liberty House Restaurant, Jersey City, 201-395-0300; libertyhouserestaurant.com

The Palace at Somerset Park, Somerset, 732-302-9922; palacesomersetpark.com

Pleasantdale Château, West Orange, 973-731-5600; pleasantdale.com

W Hoboken, 201-253-2400; starwoodhotels.com/whotels/property/hoboken

The Water Club, Atlantic City, 609-317-8888; thewaterclubhotel.com

Women's Club of Glen Ridge, Glen Ridge, 973-748-5459; womensclubglenridge.com

The Westin Jersey City Newport, 201-626-2900; starwoodhotels.com/westin/jersecity