



Wedding Essentials

Ready to head to the altar? Take this handy guide to make the most of your big day.

With the flurry of same-sex nuptials this year, you can bet queer-friendly retailers are salivating for your dollars. But if you want to eschew the tried-and-true traditions, where's a girl to start? Here are some of this year's lesbian wedding essentials.

RING AROUND ROSIE

Jewelry designer Udi Behr is a favorite of celebs ranging from Sharon Stone and Britney Spears to rapper Ludacris, thanks in part to Behr's post-9-11 Love+Peace+Hope line, which was a huge hit at the 2003 Oscars. Now the Israeli-born designer makes a bold statement for civil rights with Pride and Joy, the first major collection of designer wedding bands and other jewelry created especially for same-sex couples. Behr launched his line last spring at New York's landmark St. Bartholomew's Church with "A Walk Down the Aisle," a special press event that introduced the new collection, celebrated same-sex unions and raised money for Marriage Equality (the leading non-profit working to win our right to marry).

Unlike most jewelry launches, this one came with lesbian and gay couples as guests of honor, including Doris and Charo, who were registered as domestic partners, but publicly celebrated their union for the first time with their daughter Jennifer at the event; and Catherine and Sheila, who recently legally married in Massachusetts, but this year are also celebrating the anniversary of their church wedding 10 years ago.

Even Love and Pride's Web site (www.loveandpride.com) is more community center than retail shop, and the best part is, while you're shopping for the perfect ring to show her you love her (remember, two months' salary is standard), you can also help raise money for the legal cause (L&P is donating 10 percent of its sales to Marriage Equality).

Of course, Love and Pride isn't the only ring option for dykes these days. George Sawyer's amazing metalwork bands (www.georgesawyer.com) are made in the same way Japanese swords are created; lesbian designer Holly Riddel (www.hollyriddeldesigns.com) offers one-of-a-kind personal creations. Why just say "I do" when you can have your vows custom-printed inside your rings, to forever remind you of your commitment to each other, with Wedding Vow Rings (www.weddingvowrings.com)? Write your own vows or choose a Shakespeare sonnet. And if the diamond rings and wedding bands of tradition are so not

BY KATHY BELGE AND DIANE ANDERSON-MINSHALL

you, try a Forget-Me-Knot (www.significantothersjewelry.com) from Kathy Galin, a lesbian who originally designed the symbolic rings for her own partnership.

