

# Down the aisle with Epic Expo: Old, new, borrowed, blue . . . and green

BY VIVIAN LUK, VANCOUVER SUN MAY 26, 2010



A wedding cake made by Sweet Naturally Bakery in North Vancouver. They use entirely organic and local flour, eggs and dairy products in their baking, as well as compostable baking paper and cupcake liners. They will feature a dessert buffet at EPIC this weekend.

**Photograph by:** Handout, Jamie Delaine

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VANCOUVER -- Every bride-to-be knows that a dream wedding outfit, aside from being figure flattering and drop-dead gorgeous, should contain several components: something old, something new, something borrowed, and — something green?

Well, perhaps not. While the age-old saying isn't about to change anytime soon, the way people think about extravagant fairy tale weddings and their impact on the environment is shifting.

That is why Caroline Calvert, a local wedding gown designer, created an eco-couture line in January.

"A lot of brides actually want something sustainable or reusable because they don't want to spend money on something they will never wear again," said Calvert, who does the designing, sewing, lacing and beading at Caroline Calvert Couture in Vancouver.

At Calvert's, women have the option of buying eco-friendly, customized gowns made of natural silk and cotton, rather than polyester. While these sustainable dresses will cost nearly twice as much as those made of man-made fibres, they can be brought back to be altered and dyed so they can be worn again as regular evening or summer dresses. Calvert frequently scours the Internet, second-hand stores and vintage stores for old wedding gowns so she can reuse the lace and fabric for purses and embroidery.

Calvert says the decision to launch a green line stems from her own life choices and concern for her twin babies.

"I've always recycled everything, I buy old furniture and fix them up, I try not to print things," she said. "I look at my kids and I think, if we don't change the way we buy things or live our lives, they're going to be burdened by all the things that we've done to the planet."

Calvert is one of a dozen vendors who will be showcasing eco-conscious wedding products at EPIC Sustainable Living Expo at this weekend the new Vancouver Convention Centre. The exhibition will teach people how to "green up" their special day by printing wedding invitations on recycled paper, using compostable packaging and serving local and organic wine and cakes.

Organic bakery Sweet Naturally will be displaying a dessert buffet, featuring a three-tiered cake, macaroons, cupcakes and cookies made from local and organic flour, eggs and dairy products. Even their baking papers and cupcake liners are unbleached and 100 per cent compostable, according to owner Frances Tsai.

Similarly, Luscious Creations, a custom cake shop based in Port Coquitlam, will be offering cupcake samples at EPIC. Co-owner and cake designer Nathalie Escudero believes that every bride should have her wedding cake and eat it too.

That's because she didn't get an opportunity to do that when she got married. The 38-year-old is allergic to eggs and nuts, as well as shellfish, beef and turkey. Growing up with all kinds of food restrictions has made her more conscious of people's life choices and special diets.

"I just think whatever people want at their wedding, they should have it," she said. "So whether it's completely organic, preservative-free, gluten-free, vegan-friendly, nut-free — we'll do it."

Escudero is also out to prove that vegan wedding cakes can taste and look just as good as regular ones.

"People think vegan cakes must taste like tofu," she said. "But we use butter substitutes for our cream icings, we substitute dairy products with rice or soy milk and the taste is just as rich."

And we still encourage people to come into our shop with ideas, pictures, concepts, or anything they hold dear to them, and we figure out how to translate them into a cake design."

Certainly no eco-friendly wedding would be complete without organic, fair trade or local flowers. Onyx Harris, owner and designer of Amoda Flowers will present a flower display that showcases "high-style esthetics that still lives up to high environmental and social standards."

"A lot of people tend to think that plants are automatically natural," said Harris, who grew up in Gibsons. "They don't realize that the plant industry is just like any other, and along with that comes concern about how they're grown and how they affect the environment."

Harris will use local or imported tulips, cow lilies, peonies and chrysanthemums, as long as they are cultivated without pesticides or chemical preservatives. She also uses vases and tea light candle holders made with recycled glass, cellophane made with tree cellulose instead of plastic, and biodegradable bags and ribbons.

For Harris, the decision to go green just came, well, naturally.

"I've always recycled, I compost my food and plant waste, I eat organically, and I was studying floral design," she said. "So when I started my own business, it just made sense that it would be in flowers, and it would be eco-friendly."

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