

WEDDING DESIGNER

LYNN EASTON

intro CHANDARA K. PHANACHONE / words KATHLEEN KRUEGER

On the streets of Mazatlán, Mexico, the jubilant sounds of guests cheerfully being led through the town by the beats of a local mariachi band permeates the air just as they head to a festive rehearsal dinner paired with locally crafted agave-laden elixirs. On another side of the world, the sweet scent of fruiting dogwood mixed with the earthiness of cinnamon basil sets the tone for an intimate wedding on a secluded ranch as guests are serenaded by the strumming of a guitar amidst the pristine grandeur of an aspen grove, while wild elks and moose roam the pastoral landscape. These special moments that have been personally crafted to capture the unique joy of the newly married couple celebrating their love are the hallmark of Easton Events, an award-winning wedding and social events planning company. Led by the talents of founder and creative visionary, Lynn Easton, whose attention to detail is only matched by her timeless design aesthetic, Easton Events epitomizes the true meaning of hospitality.



photography ELISA BRICKER



photography JOSE VILLA



Before there was Easton Events, there was Lynn Easton, a television producer for CNN living in New York City. Easton never set her sights on becoming one of the top wedding planners in the nation; it just happened. Easton's best friend had just gotten engaged and asked her if there were any wedding planners in the area that could help her create the wedding of her dreams. Unable to recommend anyone else, Easton took it upon herself to create a celebration that was both meaningful and stunning, and in the process, also fell in love with the art of wedding design & planning. Since then, Easton has planned hundreds of weddings and executed events for major Fortune 500 corporations. Easton's expertise is in orchestrating "high-touch" events that require the maximum attention to detail. While Easton's event designs are always inspired by what's in vogue, her timeless classic design is at the heart of all her events. Easton's heightened attention to texture and patina by layering details to create a one-of-a-kind experience her brides and their guests has earned her considerable praise; she was recently named *Vogue's* Top 5 Wedding Planners for 2014.

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For newly engaged couples who are just beginning their wedding planning process, the designations of wedding planner, wedding designer, or wedding stylist can be a bit confusing, but Easton breaks it down for us. A planner focuses primarily on logistics, making sure that a timeline is followed and the entire event runs smoothly. A wedding designer or stylist, oftentimes used interchangeably, maintains a stronger focus on the overall look and feel of the wedding that the couple is trying to achieve. For destination weddings, often times the venue will have their own exclusive planner(s) for the couple to work with, while the wedding stylist would partner with them to ensure the couple's vision is carried out.

Easton Events is a high touch wedding production and design firm; Easton sees their services more akin to that of an executive producer whereby her team manages everything for their clients. "On behalf of [our] clients, we hire the most talented vendors to achieve [their] vision," Easton explains. She goes on to clarify that the floral designer is one of the key partners in an extraordinary wedding design. Easton Events' four in-house wedding planners work very closely with the selected floral designers for each event, a common scenario for most wedding designers and planners.

With a goal of 14 weddings each year, Easton believes it is the unique way that Easton Events masterfully weaves together the logistics and creativity with a sense of effortless flow that garners their continual flow of referrals. At the top of her team's list is to ensure that her clients, especially brides, feel pampered throughout the process. A bride that can relax and be completely present in the moment means that she can be her best self throughout the entire range of wedding activities, from the rehearsal to the final send off for the night.

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"I put myself in the guests' place," Easton shares. "What is the first thing they are going to see, smell and hear? What will come next?" Naturally, Easton's attentiveness to understanding the needs of her clients extends nicely to her hospitality enterprise, Easton & Porter Group. The success of Easton Events has enabled Easton to leverage her expertise in the wedding industry into other segments of the luxury hospitality industry. Prized for its distinct focus on high-quality hospitality, food, and wine, Easton & Porter Group also manages Zero George, a luxury boutique hotel in Charleston, South Carolina that was lauded by *Condé Nast Traveler* as one of the 'Best Hotels in the World' for 2014; Zero Café & Bar, a *Condé Nast* favorite foodie destination; and Red Pump Kitchen in Charlottesville, Virginia, a contemporary European café-style restaurant; along with its two exclusive wedding venues: Pippin Hill Farm & Vineyard and Cannon Green.

Each of these venues carries a unique charm befitting of its setting. For a wine country experience, Pippin Hill is considered the darling of the East Coast with panoramic views of rolling vineyards and lush hillsides reflective of its agrarian roots. As a boutique winery and vineyard located in Charlottesville at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Pippin Hill boasts its own sustainable viticulture program. Its aged, traditional architecture belies the fact that the construction took place less than five years ago. Comprised of four distinct event spaces including the Granary, a barn-inspired architectural gem, couples have a plethora of options to select from including an impressive artisan catering team that sources seasonal ingredients for a vineyard-to-table dining experience. Unlike the traditional banquet halls wherein the blueprint was probably the vision of an architectural design firm, the exclusive properties of Easton & Porter Group were designed based on Easton's extensive experience as a wedding planner, thereby providing invaluable insight into how the property would actually work for a couple getting married, such as bridal loft with a gorgeous backdrop for portraits.

Cannon Green provides a juxtaposition of old and new with its urban setting in the historic city of Charleston, South Carolina. Never seeming fully indoors or outdoors, the sleek modern décor gives way to the eighteenth century façade of a classic Southern home. The famous Trolley Room boasts a sense of historic elegance with its soaring two-story vaulted ceiling and original King trusses, while a balcony that overlooks the courtyard provides a perfect aerial view of the ceremony.

Although Easton Events serves as the master design team that pulls together all the details, Easton knows that the success of each event is highly dependent on her team of hand-selected creative partners that work with them to create the experience that her clients envision. When it comes to selecting a team of vendors, or creative partners, Easton believes that aside from having the utmost level of professionalism, they must have a genuinely caring personality. Whether you are a new or seasoned wedding planner, the key, according to Easton, is to "treat your vendors right." As such, those who work with her team at Easton Events are always provided a delicious, hot meal. Easton notes, "Hospitality, in our mind, is providing intentional care for people in a very genuine and generous way." Those who are closest to Easton know that her sense of caring and passion for providing an unparalleled level of service extends deeper than her business; it is clearly a part of who she is as a person. After all, "Hospitality has to start in the heart; it has to be part of who you are."

