

# 5 Ways Your Future Mother-in-Law Can Make You Miserable When You're Wedding Planning—and How to Stay Sane

BY

KIM FUSARO

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Wedding planning can turn pretty much anyone crazy. There are crazy grooms, crazy mothers-of-the-bride, and certainly batsh\*t crazy brides. But last week I was chatting with my friend Julie Sabatino, the over-the-top chic bridal stylist behind The Stylish Bride, and she said the brand of crazy she most often encounters is crazy mothers-of-the-groom. Interesting.

Here are the five ways your future mother-in-law might make you miserable as you're planning your wedding, and how to combat the crazy. (Or, if you are the mother-of-the-groom, here's a primer on how NOT to behave in the months leading up to your son's wedding.)



**She has a different vision for your wedding.** You want a loft wedding, she wants a church wedding. Or you're envisioning a winery wedding and she says, "You don't REALLY want to get married outside, do you?" (That was my MIL.) Weddings have changed a LOT in the past decade. Traditions are being skipped over and formality sometimes falls by the wayside. Your wedding will likely be VERY different from your parents' and your in-laws'—and that might take some getting used to by all parties. Whether you want your groom to wear sneakers or you're planning on skipping the cake-cutting ceremony, let your future MIL say her piece, and then smile and say, "You might be right. We'll totally take that into consideration." If she keeps harping after that, get back to smiling and say, "This is what [GROOM] and I have decided to do. We'd love your support." And walk away. If she hates the idea of handmade paper-flower centerpieces

or a flash mob, you're not going to be able to change her mind, so do yourself a favor and disengage.

**She wants you to wear her wedding dress. (Or ANY wedding dress but they one you've picked.)** I think this probably happens when you're marrying a guy who has only brothers. As a mom, helping your daughter pick her wedding dress (or asking her to wear your wedding dress) is a big deal. If you don't have a daughter, helping your future daughter-in-law is the next best thing. If your future MIL the type to offer loads of (unwanted) opinions, don't ask her to come on every dress-shopping trip; you'll both just wind up feeling frustrated. Either invite her to see the three dresses you're choosing from at a final appointment, or ask her to come to a fitting after you've made your pick. Hopefully when she has a better idea of your style (or when you've already bought a dress) she won't start harping about how you need a dress with a longer train or a higher neckline.

**She wants to put every Tom, Dick, and second cousin—plus, her entire office staff—on the guest list.** Your wedding is probably the last chance your FMIL will have to show off her baby boy to a crowd—plus, who doesn't want to be surrounded by friends at a big party? Nip the insane guest list in the bud by giving her a guest-list cap and laying out a few rules up front. ("You can invite 30 people to the wedding, max, and only people who have met both of us can be on your list.") Avoid, at all costs, asking your groom's parents (or your own) for their exhaustive potential guest list early on. (Once they've thought about the 100 people they each COULD invite, it will be that much harder to cut the fantasy list.) Figure out the numbers that work for you, and then ask everyone to work within those parameters.

**She thinks that chipping in for the wedding gives her the right to call the shots.** When parents are kicking in to your wedding fund, sometimes the gift comes with strings attached. To help rein in their expectations, show them your budget breakdown early on. ("We have \$30,000, total, so \$1,500 will go for flowers, \$2,400 will go the the DJ," and so on.) If your FMIL sees you only have \$X for something, it will be harder for her to argue for a more-expensive option. If it's a matter of taste—she hates black for the bridesmaids and keep saying they should wear yellow—revert to smiling and your wedding catchphrase: "This is what [GROOM] and I have decided to do. We'd love your support." And of course if you don't want her strings-attached contribution (and the opinions that come with it) you can always opt to pay for the wedding yourselves.

**She's just generally panicking about everything.** She hates the invitations. She hates her dress. She doesn't understand why anyone would get married in December, ever. If **EVERYTHING** wedding-related sends her into a tizzy, there's probably something bigger-picture going on. Like, she's coming to terms with "losing" her baby to another women—as silly as that sounds—or she's starting to feel supremely old. (I mean, I feel ancient with a son on the verge of kindergarten. I'll probably attend his wedding cryogenically frozen.) If every conversation about the wedding sets her off on a tailspin, talk to your future husband about spending some one-on-one time with his mom. Maybe

he could take her to dinner and let her vent for an hour or two. If the drama persists, consider giving her a wedding project to put her energy into: Ask her to assemble the bags for the out-of-town guests or determine the best restaurant for the morning-after brunch. Distraction is a powerful tool—and if she feels like she "owns" a little part of your wedding, she's less likely to bug you about the rest of it.

**How's your groom's mother behaving as you plan your wedding?** I'm going to keep my mouth shut for once, since my MIL has been an absolute saint in the babysitting department during Bridal Market.