

lown&Country

# WEDDINGS

OUR SPECIAL


## PLANNING YOUR PERFECT DAY

**A GUIDE TO:**  
**DREAM  
GOWNS**  
**DAZZLING  
DIAMONDS**  
**GIFT AND  
HONEYMOON  
IDEAS**

SPRING/SUMMER 2006  
U.S. \$4.95; CANADA \$5.95  
FOREIGN \$5.95



The  
Moni

A full-page photograph of a wedding couple. The groom, on the left, is wearing a dark suit and glasses, smiling at the camera. The bride, on the right, is wearing a light-colored, short-sleeved, peplum-style dress and is kissing the groom on the cheek. She is also lifting her right leg in a playful pose. They are standing on a brick-paved path in front of a castle with a large, ornate wrought-iron gate. The background shows a stone building with arched windows.

Elated and just married, the couple posed after exchanging vows in a morning civil ceremony at a castle in Fiano Romano, just outside Rome. Opposite: The bride chose simple, dramatic flower arrangements for the reception, held later that day in Rome's 17th-century Villa Aurelia.

# The Italian Way

ERIN COUSAR WEDS PIETRO GIANNI

*May 8, 2004*

BY JAMIE MARSHALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY MEG SMITH



After meeting in August 2001 at a mutual friend's birthday party in Gstaad, Switzerland, Erin Coasar and Pietro Gianni were delighted when their paths unexpectedly crossed again in Monaco a week later. Pietro, a real estate developer in Rome, promptly invited Erin, an American who was studying journalism in London, to join him and a group of friends for a weeklong trip to Portugal. It was there, recalls Pietro, that "we realized we were made for each other."

Maybe so, but even Erin was surprised when Pietro asked her to move to Rome only a few weeks after they'd met. "I thought it was just a wildly romantic gesture," she says. "I didn't think he was serious." She discovered just how serious he was when she agreed to come for a weekend visit. "I walked into his apartment and saw that he'd emptied half of it out for me. That was it. I never left."

When they were planning their wedding three years later, the couple naturally thought about having it in Gstaad. But when Erin found out she was pregnant, they decided to move the celebration closer to home. Eager to spend a lot of time with their guests, most of whom would be coming from outside Italy, the couple







Clockwise from above: The bouquet toss; wedding guests at the ornate Villa Aurelia; Erin in a Peter Langer gown at the reception. Opposite, clockwise from top: Erin and Pietro with the groom's father, Alessandro Gianni; red and pink bouquets; a shower of rose petals and rice.





envisioned an intimate gathering spread over a weekend. For help in overseeing preparations, they hired Vista Weddings & Events, a company based in Rome that is headed by Sandra Maffey, an American planner.

As is customary in Italy, Erin and Pietro exchanged vows in a nondenominational civil ceremony. Instead of going to a magistrate's office in downtown Rome, however, they arranged to have the nuptials at an abandoned medieval castle outside the city in Fiano Romano. The town's vicemayor officiated; a traditional Italian folk group provided the music. "It was particularly meaningful to be in front of our friends and our family as we were celebrating our union," explains Erin.

The festivities continued later that day when 130 guests gathered at the elegant 17th-century Villa Aurelia, part of the American Academy in Rome. "It looked like a period set from a Merchant-Ivory movie," Erin remembers. "The long driveway lined with pine trees, a lovely cobblestoned courtyard, potted lemon trees."

Originally, cocktails were to be served outside in the formal garden, but when the day dawned rainy and cold, the wedding planners made last-minute arrangements to move the party to a concert room inside. "In a way the weather was a blessing," says Erin. "The room had a real Jazz Age feel: the band was playing Louis Armstrong, and the women all looked so beautiful in bright dresses." The mood held through the night as the guests sat down to a sumptuous four-course dinner in the grand ballroom.

Afterward everyone flocked to an adjacent room that had been set up like a nightclub, with candles and plump white couches. There was a vodka bar with several hard-to-get brands flown in from Switzerland, and the DJ, from Monaco, spun an eclectic assortment of tunes. For Erin, the wedding was everything she'd dreamed about: "We were focused on being together and celebrating with our friends and family. It was joyous and fun and relaxed." ✕

## Those Special Touches

**THE FAVORS** In their hotel rooms, out-of-town guests found welcome packages with city maps, information about suggested activities and scented candles. When it was time to leave the reception, everyone received white silk cones filled with candy-coated almonds (said to bring good luck); there were tiny bouquets of lily of the valley for the ladies.


**THE DRESSES** For the morning civil ceremony, Erin wore a lilac silk Chanel dress with a gray silk jacket. *chanel.com*. In the evening she changed into a cream-colored gown by Peter Langner, a German designer who is based in Rome. *peterlangner.com*.

**THE FOOD** The dinner was prepared by Rome's Relais Le Jardin caterer, owned by the proprietors of the Hotel Lord Byron, where the couple spent their first night as husband and wife. *lordbyronhotel.com*.

**THE FLOWERS** Noosheen Noel-Tabeizi, a friend of Erin's who worked for Tearose at the time, arranged great bunches of spring blooms: peonies, sweet peas, hydrangeas and roses. *011-39-06-9727-4806*.

**GOOD ADVICE** When the nuptials are not in the bride's or groom's native language, find a translator for the civil ceremony. Even Erin, who is fluent, didn't understand all the idiosyncrasies of the Italian vows. "For such an important moment, it would have been nice to really get it," she says.





Candles lit the way for the newlyweds on the path to the Villa Agrippa. Opposite, from top: The all-white wedding cake was prepared by Rome's Relais Le Jardin caterer; treats for the guests included canny-coated almonds.