

come fly with me

THEY SAY BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER, AND FOR THESE TWO WEDDING-INDUSTRY INSIDERS, THAT MEANT MIGRATING TO A CALIFORNIA VINEYARD TO CELEBRATE WITH THEIR FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND A BEVY OF SYMBOLIC SWANS.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEN HUANG TEXT BY LINDSY VAN GELDER



a vine romance

Newlyweds Bryan Ball and Summer Watkins walked around Sunstone Vineyards & Winery in Santa Ynez, California, a location they decided on the minute they saw it. Opposite: A striped aisle runner led to the ceremony space, which was decorated with a garland and wreath, both made of lemon leaves, olive branches, and seeded eucalyptus.



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hen you're a wedding blogger, true love is your day job. Which can be kind of ironic if you're single. Just ask Summer Watkins. In 2005, Summer, who lived in Orange County, California, was in an always-a-bridesmaid funk after the nuptials of one of her best friends. She couldn't lose herself in her work, because she's the founder and stylist of Grey Likes Weddings (her nom de plume is Lady Grey), a website with a click-crazy array of smiling couples and Pinterest-ready inspiration. Just a week post-best friend's wedding, Summer accepted a pal's invitation to a rooftop cookout in downtown San Diego.

When she arrived and met Bryan Ball, who was manning the grill, her first move was to start playfully "making fun of his barbecue skills," she says. Meanwhile, his buddy began talking to Summer, and Bryan admits, "I wasn't paying that much attention to her." But the thing about true love is that it can't be stopped by prickly maidens or clueless dudes. Somehow, as the fire died down and the sun set, "we started chatting and ended up talking late into the night," says Bryan. The pair realized that they were both O.C.-based, and beyond that, practically neighbors. They became a couple, and soon Bryan, a professional poker player who was looking for a career change, got on board her blog as the business manager.

Given their day jobs, when Bryan proposed on Summer's birthday in the fall of 2012 and it was time to plan a bash of their own, they had an all-star team of high-powered wedding-vendor friends, everyone wanting to help. (Proof: Honeymoon planner Katie Frederick and paper designer Megan Gonzalez were bridesmaids.) The first step was to pick a venue, and the duo decided on Sunstone Vineyards & Winery, whose limestone buildings and rolling vineyards reflected the French countryside feel they wanted. Then they chose a mascot: swans, a symbol of lasting love. The pair incorporated a flock of them into all the details—from

invites to ice cubes to planters. Finally, they asked a few close relatives and friends to help with the details. Summer's brother devised drinks for the cocktail hour, and the night before the Thursday ceremony (the only day many of their industry-pro guests would be able to attend), loved ones rolled up their sleeves to juice hundreds of cucumbers and melons for cocktails. They also constructed a 15-foot tissue-paper chandelier that hung over the villa's entryway. As a stylist, Summer says, "I saw how much pressure brides feel to have everything be perfect and lovely and beautiful—the best wedding ever. But at the end of the day, it always exceeds that." So with a team of event-savvy friends around her, what could go wrong?


The cake, that's what. Three days before the I do's, their baker fell through, and it was too late to order a new one.

Instead of panicking, the couple thought outside the cake box: "I said, 'I like doughnuts better, anyway,'" Summer recalls. They ended up ordering 260 of the hole-in-the-center pastries from their favorite local hole-in-the-wall bakery.

With the dessert problem solved, Summer and Bryan were set for their July 11, 2013, wedding. They exchanged Old English vows in a Christian ceremony officiated by her uncle before 130 black-tie-clad guests. Then everyone gathered in a tent for a dinner of Bibb lettuce salad, Jidori chicken confit with veg-

etables, ravioli, and ratatouille. Not a single guest seemed to miss the traditional cutting of the gâteau. "The only bad thing was that 260 doughnuts weren't enough," Summer says. "Why didn't I think to order more?"

Lesson learned: Everyone loves doughnuts. But surviving the Colossal Cake Crisis also made Summer realize that bridal anxiety is easily alleviated by the presence of loved ones—and feathered friends. "Something like not having a cake, you'll get over," she says. "All in all, it was a great party."


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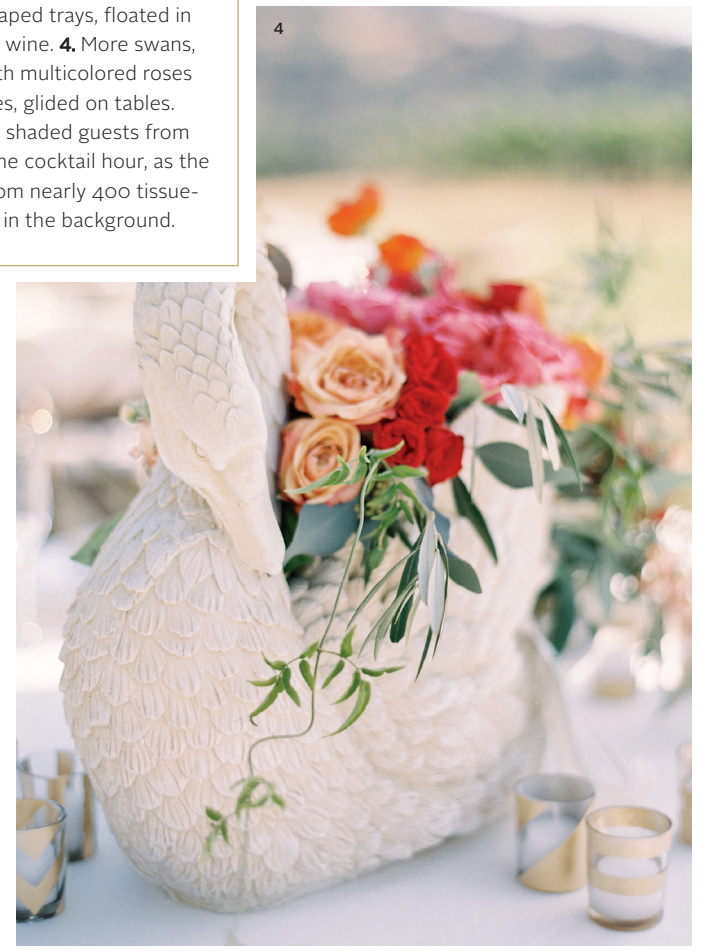
Opposite: Peonies, Summer's favorite flowers, were out of season, so her florist, Lauryl Lane, concentrated on roses, poppies, tulips, ranunculus, and sweet peas bunched with olive branches. At the last minute, Lane flew in some peonies, and upon the presentation of the bouquet, both women burst into tears.

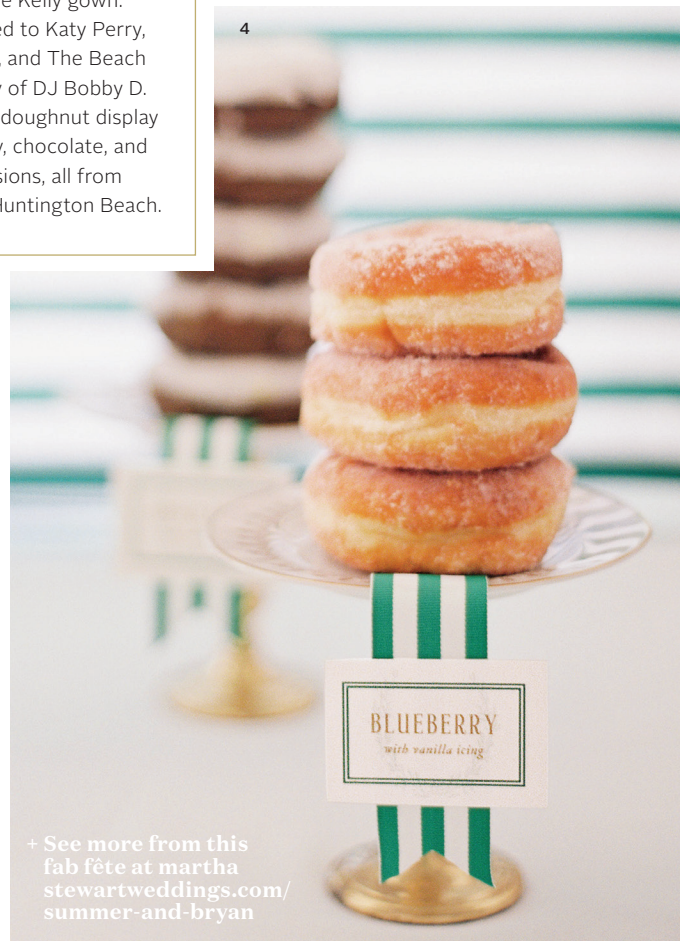


flock to it

1. Summer's sisters, each in a blush-tone dress of her own choosing, shared matron-of-honor duties; seven of her friends were bridesmaids. **2.** The letterpressed invites displayed a custom crest as well as lions, swans, olives, and green stripes. **3.** Mango-, grapefruit-, and cranberry-juice ice cubes, molded in swan-shaped trays, floated in glasses of sparkling wine. **4.** More swans, these brimming with multicolored roses and olive branches, glided on tables.

Opposite: Parasols shaded guests from the July sun during the cocktail hour, as the chandelier, made from nearly 400 tissue-paper bells, hung in the background.





lovebirds

1. Instead of signing a guest book, revelers filled out swan Mad Libs-style cards printed with such prompts as "In 15 years, the Balls will likely be..."
2. Bryan chose a Hugo Boss tuxedo, and Summer wore a custom strapless Kirstie Kelly gown.
3. Friends grooved to Katy Perry, Pharrell Williams, and The Beach Boys, all courtesy of DJ Bobby D.
4. The wow-finish doughnut display offered blueberry, chocolate, and red-velvet versions, all from The Donuttery in Huntington Beach.

+ See more from this fab fête at marthastewartweddings.com/summer-and-bryan

SUMMER + BRYAN'S BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

By the Numbers

- 6½** Years between first date and proposal
- 10** Months between engagement and wedding
- 3** Traditions covered by the vintage aquamarine ring Summer borrowed from her mom
- 400** Yards of emerald-and-white striped grosgrain ribbon used for the celebration
- 1,200** Twinkle lights strung through the paper chandelier that hung over the entryway
- 5** Types of mac and cheese guests sampled during the cocktail hour: classic, lobster, Philly steak, BLT, and fontina with grilled rapini
- 100** Meals for hungry children that OneHope provided as a matching gift for the four cases of sparkling wine purchased and sipped throughout the night
- 8** Massages (four each) the pair indulged in during their honeymoon

THE VOWS

For their I do's, the couple borrowed from royal pair Will and Kate, reciting their Old English declarations and adding this Bible verse, which the two spoke in unison: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to return from following after you, for where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. And where you die, I will die and there I will be buried. May the Lord do so with me and more if anything but death parts you from me."

During the father-daughter dance, I almost tripped on my dress, but my dad made it look like a dip!

SUMMER, ON HER FATHER'S SWIFT MOVES AS THEY SWAYED TO RAY CHARLES'S "AIN'T THAT LOVE."

Honeymoon Dispatch

Summer and Bryan wanted to chill, but they also like variety, so their honeymoon in St. Lucia, planned by **Ever After Honeymoons** (everafterhoneymoons.com), was a grazing menu of several days each in three very different resorts: **Cap Maison**, a boutique beach hotel known for its food and wine (capmaison.com); **The BodyHoliday**, an activity-focused resort with a piano bar and sailing lessons (thebodyholiday.com); and **Jade Mountain**, a sanctuary where three-walled rooms are open to the outdoors and each has a private majordomo (jademountain.com).

FLAVORFUL FAVORS

Attached to each menu was a vial of pink Himalayan sea salt, "an inside joke for our friends and family because they all know I love salt," says Summer. As guests left the party, they grabbed one of two treats: assorted teas for women and wooden pipes for men.

THE RING WARMING

Preceding the vows, the rings were passed along a few yards of green-striped ribbon so that everyone assembled could touch and bless them before they reached the bride and groom. "Our guests really loved it and said it made them feel like part of the ceremony," Summer says. "And it meant so much to us to feel their support and love."

SOURCES

Location Sunstone Vineyards & Winery **Event design** Courtne Purdy Fausner **Event coordination** LVL Weddings & Events **Catering** Roomforty (food); Straight Up Cocktail Service (cocktail service) **Flowers** Lauryl Lane **Photography** Jen Huang **Videography** Elysium Productions **Stationery** MaeMae & Co. (design); Gus & Ruby Letterpress (letterpress printing) **Calligraphy** Victoria Hoke Lane **Rentals** Borrowed Blu; Found Vintage Rentals; Napa Valley Linens; Signature Party Rentals

See The Guide for more vendor sources