



AN ECO WEDDING *TO REMEMBER*

***Ecozine's* editor in chief shows how to bring sustainable thinking and concern for the environment to a wedding and still make it a fun, heartwarming celebration**

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W

hen the Co-founder of *Ecozine* marries a marine conservationist, you might expect there to be more than a passing nod to environmental awareness at the wedding. Setting the bar for memorable nuptials with an eco spirit, Hong Kong residents Andy and Nissa Cornish – affectionately called “Hong Kong’s eco power couple” by their closest friends – aspired for a wedding that was as low-impact and respectful of the natural environment as it was celebratory of their love.

One of the first priorities was the engagement ring. Rather than buying in a store, Andy sought out one of the city’s finest jewellery designers, Nathalie Melville of Melville Fine Jewellery. Nathalie worked with the couple to custom-design a ring that reflects their aesthetic, their history, and their shared love of the ocean. And, most importantly for this couple, Nathalie works only with sustainably and ethically sourced stones and metals from reliable suppliers.

No less care went into the selection of Andy’s wedding ring. The work of fine art jeweller Christopher Timberlake, it was custom-made from recycled precious metals in a style known as *mokume-gane*, a 17th-century Japanese technique that creates a pattern resembling wood grain.

With the rings sorted, the couple looked to planning their day. They designed their own invitations, which were printed locally on FSC paper, and used a wedding website in lieu of reply cards, minimising paper and effort for guests. Nissa chose a locally-made dress that she later upcycled into gifts and mementos made from its fabric. Andy busied himself crafting handmade touches for the day, including vintage-inspired lighting for the head table.

The couple put an enormous amount of thought into selecting the wedding venues, knowing that they wanted to wed in Hong Kong, but didn't want a typical Chinese banquet or hotel wedding. They settled on WWF's Island House Conservation Studies Centre in Tai Po for the ceremony – a stunning and little-known location featuring a 110-year-old colonial house and a wide garden overlooking Tolo Harbour. The couple made a donation to WWF on behalf of their guests as a thank-you for hosting their special day.

For the reception, Zen Organic Farm in Fanling proved a perfect setting. A working farm, Zen Organic does not normally host events as large as a wedding, but a little vision and a lot of help from the owners and the couple's expert wedding planner, Bliss Creations, allowed Nissa and Andy to achieve their vision of a magical, fairy-lit venue for the occasion.

On the big day, preparations began at the nearby Hyatt Regency Sha Tin hotel, then a sleek Tesla Model S provided zero-emissions transportation to Island House and throughout the day.

At the ceremony venue, a simple and thoughtful décor reigned: leaves hand-picked in the forest by the wedding couple decorated the aisles, while the altar's sole decoration consisted of a pair of potted trees that the couple will nurture and cherish for years to come.

Local, rather than exotic, wildflowers proliferated at both venues in an array of milk bottles and tin cans collected by friends over the month leading up to the event, creating a playfully rustic vibe that

was also inexpensive and completely recyclable. After a touching ceremony, guests toasted the nuptials in the garden with glasses of champagne and homemade lemonade.

Post-ceremony, guests were shuttled to the reception venue, where they spent the magic sunset hour roaming the farm and enjoying cocktails, locally-brewed beer, and organic wines from La Cabane, before moving to the open-air barn for the main festivities.

The venue transformation had been a labour of love, from removing vats of fertilizer and farming equipment to finding eco-friendly ways to create the warm, rustic vibe the couple sought. Highlights included vintage film posters from Andy's personal collection, handmade chalkboard signs, and custom wood tabletops crafted from wine cases. Lengths of colourful upcycled fabric bunting, handmade by an accommodating Etsy seller, anchored the festive feel, complemented with vintage mirrors found at the barn and hundreds of soy candles and wildflowers. Hay bales, blankets and a projector with black and white romance films turned an unsightly, immovable white shipping container into a relaxed chilling-out area. Another Etsy find – a framed 'guestbook' of reclaimed and sustainable wood – now hangs on the couple's wall as a permanent reminder of the day.

Setting the tone of romance and fun, a talented local busking trio that the bride had discovered on Youtube provided live music. Children at the wedding played with washable sidewalk chalk and soap bubbles, and made their own pizzas in the farm's clay oven.

As evening fell, guests sat down at tables graced with reusable glasses, flatware, tablecloths and linen napkins rented from Pyjama, a company that provides everything you could possibly need for an event, making disposables unnecessary. In lieu of place cards, guests found at their seats personalized favours, caringly handmade by a friend, consisting of chrysanthemum flower tea in unbleached fabric sachets for a relaxing next-day recovery treat.

SUSTAINABLY SPECIAL

Clockwise from top left: ethical rings; a forest-floor aisle; local wildflowers in upcycled containers





NO COMPROMISES

The couple chose a Tesla Model S for their wedding car, and filled the venue with natural, vintage and handmade decorations



And, of course, the pièce de résistance at any celebration: the food. Aiming for a casual, relaxed vibe, the couple worked with Homegrown Foods, who source their own organic produce from the very same farm, to prepare a meal that satisfied all the senses. The hearty farm feast included a local organic roast pig, vegetarian pasta, and seafood dishes, served buffet-style, with a selection of fresh homemade ‘wedding pies’ instead of a fussy cake. A nice touch was the salad and soup provided by the farm itself, made from veggies picked that very morning in their fields.

For after dinner, the bride – a notorious sweet tooth – organised a candy bar loaded with sweets from her childhood days, using bamboo steamer baskets. As well as being a nod to her Asian heritage, the reusable, sustainable baskets had lids to help keep bugs away from the sweets. These were complemented by a popcorn bar from Sote Popcorn, a local artisanal popcorn company that pops non-GMO corn in organic virgin coconut oil without additives, in flavours like spicy chili-lime and Hong Kong milk tea!

As guests departed into the night, the couple realised they had achieved what some said was impossible: a sustainable, beautiful, memorable farm wedding in Hong Kong. Look below for their tips on how you can, too!

FIVE WAYS TO GREEN YOUR WEDDING

1. Choose local, organic and vegetarian options for your food – and, of course, avoid unsustainable choices like shark fin and red-listed seafood. If 100% vegetarian doesn’t work for your crowd, try to avoid the highest-carbon proteins such as beef and lamb, and select free-range, small-farm or locally raised animals.
2. Flowers are not only one of the biggest cash expenses in wedding décor, they can also have a high carbon footprint. Rather than flying in exotic flowers for a single day’s event, start by asking your florist what blooms they can offer that grow within 100km; there are loads of beautiful options, and this is likely to save cost as well. (Which means more to spend on champagne!)
3. Many modern couples already live together when they decide to wed, and don’t need traditional wedding gifts for the home. Consider asking guests to donate to a charity of your choice, or contribute to a honeymoon or adventure fund to kick off your new life together. This way you won’t end up with products you don’t need.
4. Get creative with décor. Using things that you already own, or can borrow from friends, is a lovely way to keep things personal and avoid buying new decorations that may not get reused. Alternately, rent from a professional supplies company or ask your venue what they have available for your use.
5. There are many ways to have your dream wedding dress without being wasteful. Consider buying a preloved or vintage dress... you can always adjust it to your unique style and fit, and it’ll save you money to spend on the honeymoon! Afterward, selling or donating it for another bride to enjoy is a generous gesture.

Love this wedding? Find Andy and Nissa’s favourite vendors online:

Handmade upcycled bunting: A Fete Beckons | etsy.com

Local, organic catering: Homegrown Foods | homegrownfoods.com.hk

Organic and natural wines: La Cabane | lacabane.hk

Décor and furniture rental: Pyjama | pyjamahk.com

Gourmet popcorn bar: Sote Popcorn | sotehk.com

Tesla Model S: Tesla Motors | teslamotors.com

Accommodations: Hyatt Regency Sha Tin | hongkong.shatin.hyatt.com

