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Closerie. Sea glass bottles holding white roses hung from chairs at the outdoor ceremony. This paper, cookie jar from Egg. The newlyweds took a special message in a bottle—their wedding vows—into the ocean. The petal girl tossed petals from a flower pot adorned in gingham to match her dress. The couple's white and Provencal blue color scheme lent a French feel to the day.

DAVID MCGRANE WAS IN THE WRONG PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME WHEN HE met Yasmine Ahmed in May 2004. They were each invited on separate rafting trips to the California Salmon River, but he was booked on the wrong carpool—the one Yasmine was on. After a weekend on the water, they connected on the seven-hour drive back to San Francisco. “I was listening to Yasmine chat with the driver,” says David. “That’s when I started to fall in love.”

love letters

After dating for about a year and a half, David surprised Yasmine with a three-day trip to Mendocino. “I’ve always wanted to go there,” she says. “It seems like a magical place.” They arrived on Christmas Eve, and Yasmine called it a night early. ❖



REAL WEDDINGS

Little did she know, David snuck out at 4 A.M., walked to an area called Irish Beach, and, in 10-foot tall letters, carved "Will you marry me?" When Yasmine awoke, David insisted on a walk on the beach. They got to the spot, and Yasmine saw the letters, not realizing they were for her—until she turned to see David on one knee holding a ring.

achieving a vision

Yasmine and David wanted their wedding to be a long, intimate weekend for their families, many of whom were traveling from Australia and London. "I wanted everyone to feel like they were spending a weekend in the countryside of Provence," says Yasmine, who owns Maison Réve, a French-inspired home and garden shop in Mill Valley.

The first step was finding the ceremony site. After getting engaged in Mendocino, it seemed like the perfect place to marry. They'd narrowed it down to three locations, but Yasmine was still undecided. "We were on a grassy meadow overlooking the bay and Mendocino," recalls David. "It was romantic, foggy and perfect. Suddenly, we saw a group of dolphins, which we later learned had not happened in a long time. That was the sign."

Yasmine decided to handle the flowers herself. A few days before the wedding, she went to the market and picked out roses, gerbera daisies, verbena and cherry blossom branches in shades of white and cream. That night, she had a flower arranging party with some of the early-arriving guests. "We trimmed thorns, drank wine and had a blast."

by the sea shore

On October 2, 2004, guests gathered atop the Mendocino Overlook and sat at chairs adorned with daisies in sea-glass bottles. Rather than flower girls, Yasmine's three nieces were given unique titles: ribbon cutter, petal girl and wish girl. The ceremony began with a ribbon cutting, a French tradition; then the petal girl sprinkled the aisle with flower petals. The wish girl passed out wishes that guests had written for the couple at the rehearsal. "We wanted the wishes to set a mood of laughter and joy," says Yasmine.

The maid of honor and three bridesmaids wore their own white dresses and held bouquets they'd created out of loose branches of cherry blossoms and verbena. Yasmine's bouquet was a cluster of white roses and cherry

blossom branches tied with a thick, white ribbon. She paired it with a strapless Jin Wang gown she helped design, featuring a thin ribbon tied like a corset down the back. She wore her hair down and attached a chapel-length veil with a white silk comb.

Both Yasmine and David's families participated in the ceremony. Yasmine's mother sang an Edith Piaf song about joy and David's brother spoke about humor. Yasmine's dogs, Aspen and Frisbee, served as ring bearers.

Before departing, Yasmine and David rolled up the vows they'd written for each other, placed them in a sea glass bottle and tossed it off the cliff and into the ocean.

unique touches

The reception was held on the lawn of the MacCallum House, the inn where all of the guests stayed for the weekend. Hors d'oeuvres included Pacific Rim oysters, salmon cakes, Belgian endive and a farmstead cheese and fruit station.

Guests took their seats at one long table for the main meal. "It was like hosting a dinner party with your closest friends," she says. For the entree, guests had their choice of duck breast, sea bass or acorn squash. Instead of wedding cake, the bride and groom served a selection of their favorite desserts—Yasmine's mother's plum pie, Pavlova (a meringue cake with fresh berries, one of David's favorites) and cheesecake cupcakes.

Both Yasmine and David agree that the best part of the day was a surprise David pulled off. Just after the toast, he stood up and spoke of a batch of butterflies that had been born three weeks earlier on a farm in Georgia. While he spoke, waiters handed out small envelopes that David asked everyone to carefully open. "The children went nuts," says Yasmine. "To be able to set a butterfly free was really special." Afterward, guests danced on the lawn, the perfect ending to a perfect day. "I wouldn't change a thing about our wedding," says Yasmine. ■

BEHIND THE SCENES

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