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FROM THE PUBLISHERS
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IF THE COCKTAIL HOUR STARTS A GOSPEL CHOIR AND THE BRIDE IS CARRYING A MAGNOLIA BOUQUET, CHANCES ARE THE MARRIAGE WAS MADE IN DIXIE



LOCATIONS In the South, tradition is in. Which means former plantation estates, family-owned farmsteads, and historic Lowcountry resorts are increasingly popular wedding locales. All offer photo ops aplenty, with columned manors, old-style verandas, picturesque barns, and stately oak trees numbering among the sought-after backdrops. Some go the extra mile (and extra buck) to keep guests cool by air-conditioning reception tents.

FOOD AND DRINK Comfort food is king here during both cocktail hour (mac-and-cheese bars, shrimp and grits, country-ham biscuits) and dinner. The region's "meat and three" restaurants inspire rich entrées, like short ribs on dirty rice with collards and baked beans. Sweet tea—sugary iced tea to you Yankees—generally flows like water. For a twist, the brew is infused with peach, mint, or other local flavors. The latest craze to hit the cocktail scene? Firefly Sweet Tea vodka, distilled locally in Charleston, South Carolina, and served to best effect in Mason jars. As in Texas, the groom's cake is popular and mostly sports-themed; designs run the gamut from three-dimensional golf bags to college-football mascots, like the University of Georgia bulldog.

MUSIC Most hire conventional wedding bands for dancing and save that southern sound for the ceremony and cocktail hour. Guests sip champagne to the music of gospel choirs, bluegrass bands, and strolling banjo players, who often lead revelers from the vows to the party site. But even during the reception, you're sure to hear a country tune or two.

WEDDING PARTY In keeping with the trend toward tradition, vintage brooches are often used to embellish bouquets. Grooms and their attendants pair custom-made suits with ties from Southern Proper, a company known for below-the-Mason-Dixon motifs like cotton, marlins, and bird dogs. Proof that southerners love their pups: Dogs often walk down the aisle as ring bearers.

OTHER DETAILS Big, glitzy weddings still exist here, but the newest trend to hit the South is a more low-key celebration with vintage decor. Canning jars and Depression-era glass are common containers for blooms. Bouquets include sprigs of mint grown in Grandma's garden, and reception tables are set with mix-and-match place settings borrowed from grandmothers, aunts, and moms. With all the beautiful blooms and botanicals in the region—magnolia, peach, dogwood—it's easy to insert some southern style into centerpieces. Brides and grooms get to the church on time in trolleys, pickup trucks, and vintage cars; stationery is printed on cotton paper and decorated with oak-tree and wrought-iron motifs. Favors? Don't be surprised to see regional treats like peach truffles, roasted peanuts, or Krispy Kremes plucked from doughnut carts and served with chocolate milk or apple cider from local orchards.

SOURCES Jennifer Carroll, Afton, Virginia; jennifer.carrollevents.com. Jeannine Kennedy, Atlanta; favoratlanta.com. Ellen Cohn Robinson, Charleston, South Carolina; charlestonevent.com.

