

at your SERVICE

A DIRECTORY TO GENERAL SERVICES

Thursday, July 1, 2010

South China Morning Post

Respect someone else's big day

Whether you consider attending a wedding banquet as a celebration or an obligation, weddings here are complicated matters involving friendship, familial duty and face.

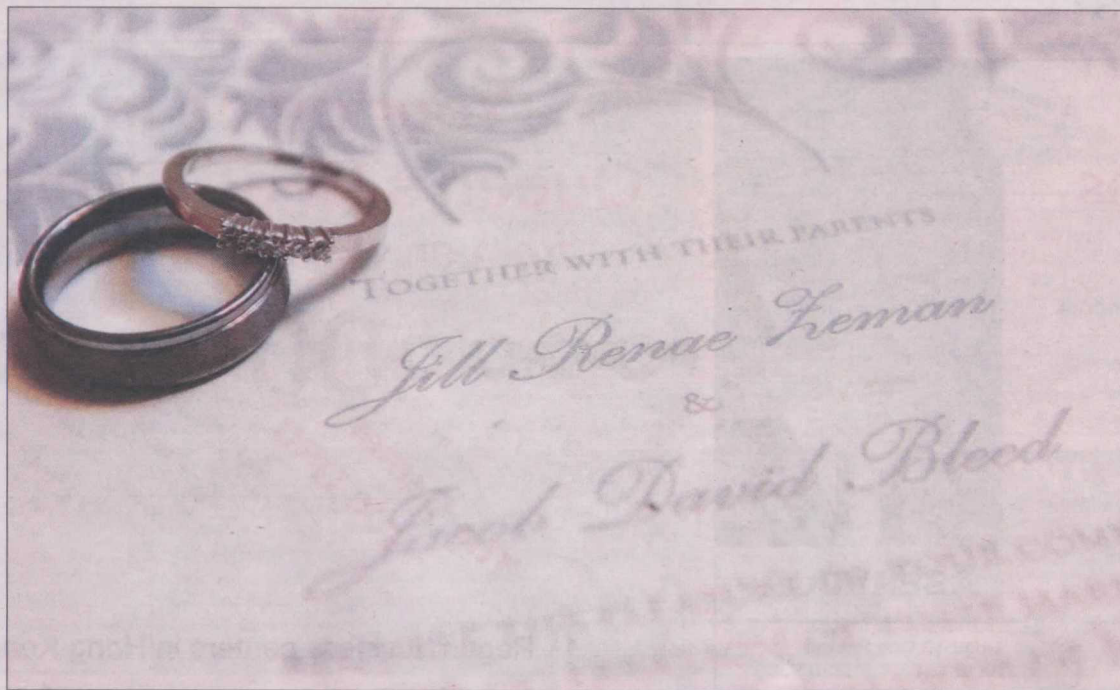
Although Chinese wedding banquets are steeped in tradition, they are slowly evolving and require a fresh look at guest etiquette.

It begins with invitations. Remember to RSVP. "If the couple has made the effort to send you an invitation, you should make an effort to RSVP," says Evelyn Mills, founder of luxury wedding planner Marriage Maestros. "It is helpful to see how many people are coming in order to determine the size of the venue, table arrangements, transportation requirements, as well as how much extra food and beverage to budget for."

Do not assume the invite includes your partner and children. Read between the lines, Mills says. "Unless it says, 'and partner' or 'and family', do not assume you can bring them. If you want to include them, it is polite to ask."

Be honest. Ticking "yes" on the reply card when you don't intend to go creates problems. Typically, 5 to 10 per cent of people on the confirmed guest list don't turn up.

Think twice about dietary requests. The RSVP may have a box to tick for vegetarians. But, it stops there. If you do



Guests should remember to RSVP to invitations to make the wedding planning easier. Photo: Associated Press

not eat pork, for example, it is impossible to accommodate in a very large wedding. "If there is unusual food, be respectful and accept the serving. Certain types of food are served for luck, so accept that it is being served for a

reason," says Sonya Yeung, creative director at Bliss Creations, a luxury destination wedding company.

The dress code. Don't wear red, blue, white, or in some cases, black. Blue,

white and black are traditional funeral colours. Usually, modern couples are not bothered, except in the case of red. Red is the bride's colour. Don't upstage her.

The present. Lai see is a perfect

wedding gift, unless the invitation says they are registered somewhere.

The truly traditional will avoid odd numbered amounts as it implies being alone. Even numbers are equated with togetherness. However, the number four should be avoided, because the word for four in Cantonese sounds like death.

"In China, it would be very important to get that right. In Hong Kong, people are not even aware of that superstition and, of that, only a small number follow it," says Conway Lau, planning and business development director at local wedding planner Pink Wedding.

So, these days, if you are single, giving HK\$500 is OK; double that for a couple. At a hotel wedding, the starting point is closer to HK\$800 per person and more if you are a very close friend.

At the wedding. Be on time. Arrive roughly one hour before dinner to have your photo taken with the happy couple. Ask what drinks are available. Typical wedding packages limit the drinks menu and special requests are expensive. Don't harass the DJ or band to play the music you want.

Resist moving to a different table as much thought has gone into seating arrangements.

Perhaps Yeung put it best: "Respect the fact that you are at someone else's very important day."