

# why is this so expensive?

You might be surprised by the prices of many dresses, invitations, cakes and bouquets. But there are some elaborate and unique details that go into these items. Find out what's behind the price tags. **BY EUSTACIA HUEN**

## wedding dress

### handcrafted construction

Oftentimes every component of the gown—from the fitting to the draping and beading—is constructed by hand, resulting in a garment that fits like it's made-to-measure. Customization takes time—for example, the makers spent more than 115 hours creating this Pnina gown.

### dazzling jewels

Generally speaking, if a dress has a lot of beadwork, it costs more. It's not just the embellishments that are pricey (this one has all Swarovski crystals, imported from Austria), but also the labor involved in applying them. This alone can take almost as much time as constructing the dress. Even the pros devote more than 50 hours placing hundreds of crystals by hand in a perfect pattern.

### fancy fabric

The cost and labor of silk tulle and Chantilly lace add up quickly. Super-soft garments use only the highest quality French lace and are lined with silk tulle—that's more than 20 yards of fabric! You can imagine how much time and effort are involved in each step of hand-cutting and piecing together every single component.

### personalized service

The money spent on an expensive dress goes beyond the physical details of the gown itself. One of the main perks of getting a high-quality designer gown is the service that comes with it. We all know how wedding planning can change a bride's body; the size you originally buy may not necessarily match the size you eventually become. So having several fittings and a conscientious team working to make you look good are extra details that never hurt. >>





### wedding invitations

#### custom construction

With one-of-a-kind details, from packaging to foil stamping and die-cutting, this hand-painted design inspired by the bride herself took about three months to create.

#### lux paper

Thick stock oozes luxury. Elegant printing techniques, like letterpress, work best on thicker (read: more expensive) paper.

### elaborate packaging

The oversize gatefold folio opens to reveal unique foil elements like these custom pockets, which are worth the extra cost.

### printing technique

Letterpress printing requires extra labor, time (at least two weeks) and cost (about 20 percent more than flat printing). In the end, about 10 people will have a hand in the creation of this fabulous suite. >>

## wedding cake talented team

From start to finish, a skilled crew (sometimes as many as 17 people), including a baker, carpenter, icer, flower sculptor and decorator, is required to bring a creation like this to life.

## creative design

Having a beautiful wedding cake like this involves great skill and design. Everything from the flavor to the colors of the cake is carefully coordinated. Color is either premixed into the sugar or painstakingly hand-applied by a separate artist.

## intricate icing

There may be ongoing disputes about the virtues of fondant versus buttercream, but many top bakers use buttercream exclusively, which is trickier to work with than fondant and requires a steadier hand. But even fondant requires special techniques and logistics to make it work on a cake this size.

## artful flowers

One of the biggest costs in a custom cake is the flowers—it can take even the most skilled sugar sculptor up to a week to make 100. Real blooms can be a decent money-saver, but knowing that every element of your wedding cake is edible, even the flowers, is worth the extra dough. >>

*These roses are red, beautiful and deliciously sweet!*





### **bridal bouquet** **exquisite flowers**

There's a minimum amount of flowers to be purchased just to create an arrangement like this, which means you may leave a good amount on the side. The price depends on the flowers you pick—large cymbidium orchids cost up to \$25 a stem. Compare that with ranunculus, which go for \$1.00 to \$2.50 a stem, or the man-made Shenzhen Nongke orchid, which sold at auction for \$202,000.

### **capable hands**

This often takes a group of three people working together: a driver to pick up the flowers, a florist to condition them (namely, placing the plants in water and making sure they're alive and pretty) and a designer to create the look and put the bouquet together.

### **elegant ribbon**

Ribbons are typically the final touch to the bouquet. At \$20 to \$30 per spool, silk ribbon can easily add another 10 percent to the price.

### **sparkling gems**

There are no rules when it comes to a bridal bouquet. Some like to add ribbons; others, diamonds. One of the most expensive wedding bouquets in the world was created in 2007 in Vietnam and was valued at around \$125,000. It included nine 1-carat diamonds and a 21.6-carat star-shaped ruby, plus other lavish details.

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