

LUXURY WEDDING WEEKEND IN SONOMA

BY MARY DANN-McNAMEE



Coupling her therapy degree and extensive experience in the wedding industry, **Mary Dann-McNamee** offers advice and guidance to wedding planners throughout the country through career counseling and a 3-day mentorship program (a chance to shadow Mary as she produces a fabulous celebration). In January 2008 Mary launched gifts and stationery on her website which includes The Mary Dann Collection. These items can be purchased on her website along with her inspirational DVD's: "The Path of the Wedding Planner" and the "The Balanced Planner". Mary published her first book "Wedding Wisdom" in Spring 2009, filled with tips, insights, forms and photographs for planning a perfect wedding for yourself or clients. www.info@marydann.com

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have an exclusive Ranch wedding in France or a luxurious Villa wedding in Tuscany with all your favorite people for a whole weekend? You can and the beautiful thing is that you don't even need a passport. I have been planning weddings for over 20+ years all over the United States and Canada and most recently I traveled to Sonoma County, California (to be exact: Glen Ellen and Kenwood) for a family wedding I was so pleasantly transported to many fond memories of Italy and France.

It all started with a "save the date" card that came in the mail, then it was followed up by an email that requested that I join the Bride and Grooms wedding group on facebook. I am not a huge fan of digital communication; I do it only to stay connected and current. At heart, I am an old fashion "hand written card kind-of-gal". I "confirmed" my facebook request and it was so wonderful to see who was coming, who was driving or flying and who wanted to share a room or catch a cab together from the conveniently located airports. Most guests came in from New York and Los Angeles, so the convenient airports were: The San Francisco, Oakland and Sacramento airports are within a two-hour drive to Sonoma Valley. My favorite was Santa Rosa Airport, which was a mere 30 minute door to door experience to paradise.

One of the first things I noticed as I got off the plane into my waiting car was the smell of the ocean air mixed with fresh flowers and fruit blossoms. Dreamy to say the least! I stayed in a secluded cottage at the Landmark Vineyard, which was nestled in between the rows of growing vines and glorious hillsides. Since wine flows like bottled water, all the guests, wher-

ever they stayed, received a lovely bottle of wine as you checked in to your room, suite or cottage.

The Friday Night welcome party was at the Kenwood Inn and Spa pool side, up against the mountains, filled with blooming flowers, service staff that could not have been more helpful or kind, romantic music piped in throughout the exclusive resort, waterfalls and architecture that allows you to feel like you have arrived in Tuscany without ever leaving the U.S.A. The food was incredible, thanks to

Chef Andrea Di Loreto and the General Manager, hotel seasoned, born and raised in Chicago, Karl Bruno.

Once Saturday morning arrived the festivities began. At the Kenwood Inn and Spa it was an all-organic spa treatment with the finest of skin care products and luxuriating massages. Other guests lounged by their hotel pool or went exploring in local parks, mountain or villages. Nothing was planned for family or friends, we all had a chance to enjoy at our own pace. I love when time is set aside for the guests to

enjoy some private time and explore as they wish.

The wedding ceremony and reception was at the Beltane Ranch, which is 105 acres filled with fruit trees, vegetable gardens flower gardens, a vineyard and an olive orchard. This family owned Ranch with a full year round staff has seven beautifully appointed guest rooms, cottages with a pool, horses, rose gardens and miles of vineyards. The scenery could not have been anymore romantic, unique or breathtaking.

Upon arriving we were greeted with a beverage and had time to mingle before the ceremony. After the ceremony we sat on a ledge overlooking the green hillsides, vineyards and gardens. We were not in any hurry for anything at this point; the music started and what felt like a romantic movie unfolded. The wedding garden was charming, the ambience was created with long family style tables, rustic elegance décor, abundant scrumptious food and spectacular music. The music began with a string quartet,

which was followed up with an eight piece, fully clad, mariachi band and a DJ that spun the best of the best tunes for this eclectic crowd. One of the most memorable experiences of he evening was the food from world renowned chef, Sondra Bernstein author of Plats du Jour and owner of Estate and Girl and The Fig Restaurants. The Latin-Mexican inspired dishes, served family style, accompanied by wines from the valley, lifted your spirit to a crescendo of bliss. The party didn't end there, all the guests

were then shuttled to an after hours party complete with an authentic taco truck. All of this took place at The Jack London Lodge, 5 minutes away from the ranch in down town Glen Ellen.

The next day, was another matchless day in Sonoma. All the guests were invited back to The Beltane Ranch for a Brunch Barbeque Pool Party. It was a perfect "fond farewell" gathering where guests continued to share their unforgettable experiences of the wedding. **EL**



BELTANE RANCH AT SUNSET



KENWOOD INN & SPA

For more information please contact Sonoma County Tourism Bureau, www.sonomacounty.com. They offer couples up to \$1,500 if they contact Sonoma County Tourism Bureau's complimentary service, before getting the lodging reserved.

Beltane Ranch
www.beltaneranch.com
11775 Sonoma Highway
Glen Ellen, CA 95442
707.996.6501

Kenwood Inn and Spa
www.kenwoodinn.com
10400 Sonoma Highway
Kenwood, CA 95452
707.833.1293

Landmark Vineyard
www.landmarkwine.com
101 Adobe Canyon Road
Kenwood, CA
707.833.0216

Vintners Inn
www.vintnersinn.com
4350 Barnes Road, Santa Rosa
CA 95403
707.575.7350

The key must haves were: Shuttles that picked up and dropped off guests at the local downtown Sonoma and Glen Ellen main town area. Welcome notes to each guest that was received as they arrived to their destination. Most people want to swoon when they step foot into Sonoma, the scenery and smells are intoxicating! Greeting guests with a beverage as they arrive for the ceremony. Breathtaking scenery and a famous chef to prepare food as if you were in their private kitchen.