



All things
bright &
beautiful



For Tori Eaton and Michael Parkinson, fabulously colourful flowers, a beautiful country setting and relaxed games on the lawn resulted in the perfect autumnal wedding day

Love at first sight? “I met Michael during a trip to the Dominican Republic that my mum had organised as a surprise for my 18th birthday,” says Tori. “On the first evening at dinner I saw Michael across the restaurant, then a few days later he swam over to me in the pool and asked my name, the answer to which I momentarily forgot!” The couple spent the next few days together and arranged to meet again once they got home.

The question: Three years later, Michael proposed under a weeping willow tree by the lake in Regent’s Park on Tori’s 21st birthday. “I was in a really bad mood because I thought everyone had forgotten my birthday so when Michael suddenly arrived to take me for lunch I wasn’t the most delightful company. I’m surprised he even had the courage to go through with it after I’d ranted about my bad day!” says Tori. “I don’t think I actually said yes, I just welled up with tears while trying to nod in agreement. Then I had the most fabulous evening at a surprise birthday/engagement party with all my close friends and family!”

Where and when: “Our wedding was brought forward when we were surprised in the summer to discover I was pregnant,” says Tori. “Michael and I both felt strongly about being married before having a family so my mum was roped in as wedding coordinator, as I was suffering dreadfully with morning sickness, and the wedding was planned in just three months.” The couple decided to arrange the reception at Tori’s grandfather’s oast house in the Kent countryside. “The church in the village was also where my mum was married 30 years ago,” says Tori.

The look: The look was Old Colonial meets English autumn countryside with lots of burnt oranges, golds and reds, and loads of candles to create the rich but rustic look of a harvest festival celebration. “My mum was a brilliant planner,” says Tori. “She researched everything, then came to me for the final decisions. We wanted a happy, casual and informal celebration so we tried to keep the day simple with very few formalities. The dress code was smart casual but we did ask people to wear hats as Mum and I love them!”

The outfits: “My dress was a beautiful limited edition ivory design with embroidery and crystal beading by Maggie Sottero (maggiesottero.com),” says Tori. “As I was going to be three and a half months pregnant at my wedding, it was essential my dress would work with my changing figure, so it was gathered across the waist with an A-line skirt to accommodate a bump. I also wore ▶



The church was dressed with hurricane lamps filled with candles and surrounded by fruit



Autumn flower tips

Florist Mathew Dickinson (mathewdickinsonflowers.com) shares his inspiration for the amazing flowers: “Tori wanted a very ‘country’ feel for her wedding. On our first consultation, Tori fell in love with an image of a copper vase overflowing with orange autumnal flowers and the rest of the theme stemmed from this. It’s a great idea to keep a scrapbook of favourite images as the whole colour scheme can stem from a single picture. For a really autumnal, country feel, I’d recommend choosing flowers such as physalis, autumn eucalyptus, chrysanthemum and nerines.”



Tori's mum decorated the cake with 'Shrek and Fiona' models – an in-joke that was explained in the speeches



The sky at night

“As a treat my mum had bought some Thai lanterns. When it got dark, we all went outside and let off the huge fire lanterns that floated off into the sky. As the lanterns reached the distance, a firework display by the same company went off as a finale (fireworksarcade.com). After that, guests continued partying until the small hours, although we made our excuses at about 10:30pm as we were both shattered!”

◀ a beautiful hand-embroidered net bolero that my grandmother made me.” Michael and his groomsmen wore deep chocolate brown morning suits with a taupe-coloured waistcoat and cravat from Moss Bros. “While the day was quite relaxed, we wanted fairly traditional outfits. Michael looked gorgeous, just like melted chocolate!” says Tori. The four bridesmaids wore chocolate brown tops from Next and Tori’s grandmother made their skirts in coffee-coloured organza. “My bouquet was made from ‘Juliet’, ‘Polyanti’ and ‘Majolika’ roses with diamanté Swarovski crystals, heather, lily of the valley, myrtle foliage, hypericum berries, stephanotis and ivy by David Austin (davidaustrinroses.com),” says Tori.

The ceremony: “As the church was so tiny the whole service felt very intimate,” Tori says. “We wanted the decoration to add colour but keep the country feel. The church has no electricity so it was lit solely by candles, which created a fabulously romantic setting.” Florist Mathew Dickinson (mathewdickinsonflowers.com) created a stunning garland around the entrance to the church, studded with tiny bunches of roses and filled with scented herbs. “The most fabulous features were the 5ft tall columns that lined the aisle made from rosemary – my favourite herb – then exploded at the top with more luscious autumn flowers and filled the church with a heavenly scent,” says Tori. “Our vicar allowed us to personalise the ceremony by including readings, hymns and music that signified how Michael and I

feel about each other. During the ceremony I was really excited,” says Tori. “But halfway through, I had a fit of giggles, which nearly turned to tears during our vows after looking at my watery-eyed husband-to-be. The only other thing I felt was relief that, given all the tea lights, I made it down the aisle without setting fire to myself!”

Let’s party! Following the ceremony, guests headed to Tori’s grandfather’s house, where a Capri marquee (themainevent.co.uk) had been erected. Caterers Jalapeno (jalapenolondon.co.uk) served canapés, mini sandwiches and tiny scones while live musician Moss (mossmid@yahoo.co.uk) serenaded everyone. The marquee was filled with groups of wicker seats around small tables, which created a colonial, Raffles Hotel style. On the low coffee tables were bowls filled with pomegranates, figs, grapes, strawberries and, Tori’s favourite, physalis. On each side of the marquee there were tea service areas with a bar at the far end, and a chill

out area scattered with beanbags and cushions. “In the afternoon we gathered everyone on the lawn for a game of rounders and we had sets of giant jenga and connect four, which really broke the ice,” says Tori. “Anyone who didn’t want to play cheered from the sidelines or wandered through the orchards, which had been beautifully-decorated with Japanese lanterns.” At 6pm, guests were called into the marquee for the speeches and the toasts, after which the party continued with a DJ, free-flowing drinks and a delicious hog roast buffet.

The best day of our lives? “We’ve had lots of comments from guests about how great the day was and how refreshingly different we made it,” says Tori. “On the day I felt happy, relaxed and excited but also calm knowing it was the best day of my life!”

Photography:
Richard Sena (richardsena.co.uk)



