

## WEDDINGS

## How Gen Z Is Shaking Up Millennial Wedding Conventions

BY REBECCA DOLAN  
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Photo: James Morris

Gen Z may be the first generation to grow up with social media, but millennials were the first to get married on it. Over the past 15 years, as these '80s and '90s kids tied the knot, they participated in the total transformation of [wedding days](#) into [#weddingcontent](#). It's not easy to be first. The archetypal millennial bride feels pressure to execute a Fortune 500-level marketing campaign, complete with couples' hashtags, branded bathing suits for [extravagant bachelorettes](#), and painfully long bridal party photo sessions. Over on TikTok, "cringe millennial wedding" has racked up over 200 million videos.

Now, Gen Z is starting to rewrite the modern wedding script. As these young couples head to the altar (the oldest members of this cohort are now 27), they're bringing their generation's uncurated, unfiltered, random-photo-dump vibe to the big day. Hold the punny hashtags, please.

"I tend to find that my Gen Z clients are—and this is going to sound contradictory—a little more private online," says Lauren Ladouceur, a 27-year-old New York-based content creator who is part of the growing business of social media buffs who capture content for brides on the day. (She typically tries to embed herself organically into weddings, blending in with just a phone camera.) "We find that our millennial couples will get their photos back and say, 'Oh my god, your stuff is amazing,' and put up six back-to-back posts," Ladouceur adds. "Whereas our Gen Z couples might do one here, another two weeks later."

The millennial impulse to generously share wedding content jibes with the generation's first forays into social media, in its earliest, more naïve days. Back then, it was acceptable to take a digital camera to a party and upload, say, 400 photos in a Facebook album. Now, it's cooler to give followers only a hint: Think of the actor Millie Bobby Brown, 20, who announced earlier this summer that she married Jake Bongiovi in a small family wedding but has yet to share any evidence of the big day.

Jennifer Taylor, who runs A Taylored Affair, has also identified a growing ideal of nonchalance among her younger clients. "Gen Z in particular want their wedding day to feel, not quite messy, but like 'I didn't care that much,'" she said. "We're seeing some loose strands with our Gen Z couples."

"It's almost curated to be so uncurated-looking," agrees Sophia Pav, owner of PAV Weddings. "It's definitely them in a wedding dress, but in a selfie mirror that they took themselves. It's not the one they're going to print and put on their wall or make a book out of, but it's definitely the one for Instagram."

The shift ties into Gen Z's love for TikTok, where messy, funny, authentic-feeling content is king. The younger generation continues to define what's cool in the TikTok age, and the wedding world has quickly taken note. You can see this most visibly in wedding photography's wider pivot away from a fine art, editorial look toward more candid, direct flash, and film photos.

But being creative or different—social media holy grails in 2024—also demands more conscious effort from younger couples, especially in a now-saturated digital wedding



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landscape. Taylor said her own Gen Z clients are often more drawn to venues that have never hosted a wedding before (rather than, for example, the Plaza Hotel). "They're having a lot more fun with different types of vendors," she explains. "I had someone bring in a haiku poet. There's less side-eye about individuality from other people, but it can make things more competitive, because everyone wants to be more creative than the next person."

Millennial influencers like [Alex Cooper](#) and Tinx have recently raised the alarm bells on bad bridal etiquette—namely, asking bridesmaids to move heaven and earth or go into bankruptcy to satisfy a bride's bachelorette or wedding day dreams. Perhaps in reaction to this, or because they entered the workforce during a cost-of-living crisis, planners note that Gen Z couples seem more anxious about limiting the costs and logistical burdens for guests. (Also, miserable wedding parties make for miserable content.) "For millennial brides, the big flex was to have this pulled-from-Pinterest aesthetic," says Kristen Gregor, a wedding photographer based on the East Coast. "With Gen Z, their big flex is to show off the amazing time that they had, and how effortless they looked doing it."

Alexa McClurg, a 24-year-old stylist and personal shopper, got married in 2023 at the Madonna Inn, an old-school, quirky hotel in San Luis Obispo, California. "I wanted to do something a little different. I just like the kitschy pink vibe of the Madonna Inn. I really don't see myself getting married in all the other weddings that I see online, it just didn't feel very me." McClurg thrifted her dress from Depop and worked with a local seamstress to redesign parts. "I do think weddings have kind of gotten out of hand in my opinion," she adds. "To each their own, but that just wasn't us. I was so stressed in those three months I can't imagine dealing with that for a year or more."

According to Tinx, influencer and author of *The Shift*, it's this rejection of the pressures the previous generation faced around weddings that marks a true turning of the tide. Ultimately, it's about making your own peace and happiness a priority on your wedding day, rather than bending over backwards to accommodate the needs of others. "One marker of a truly millennial wedding is the pressure that the brides feel, in terms of how it's going to look on Instagram, what their bodies look like, and just in general what people are going to say about their weddings," she says. "I hate that some of my friends have gotten so stressed out over something that is supposed to be joyful."

But it can also, somewhat paradoxically, be draining to pull off the laissez-faire look on your big day. Taken too far, you can end up with a kind of performed authenticity—potentially even more taxing than simply looking a bit posy. "Being on the other side of the camera, to get that kind of result that seems so effortless actually involves a lot more direction than people understand," says Pav. Taylor has also seen the relaxed look translate into glam requests. "They want the hair to look like they just threw it up and it's effortless, whereas 10 years ago it was more of a knotted, updo situation. So they're paying these hairstylists lots of money to make their hair a little bit messy."

Perhaps the best example of this tension is Sofia Richie Grainge, a Gen Z bride who [threw 2023's "royal wedding"](#). Just days before she got married, the 25-year-old model and influencer joined TikTok. There, she posted makeup-free videos in her bathrobe and shared blooper-style content where she trips after tossing the bouquet. But on Instagram, Grainge's wedding photos were flawless, with not a loose strand to be seen. "All of that boho, rustic, pretending-type thing has completely died," said Jamie Simon, who runs Banana Split, the London-based planner behind Grainge's wedding. (Boho, woodsy themes were peak 2010s-wedding-core, now skewered on TikToks ribbing millennial weddings). "People are really into the aesthetic now, making sure it's beautiful all the way through."

While Grainge has a strikingly zen air throughout her wedding photos, she also had the support of wedding planners, a five-star venue, the Chanel couture team, a glam crew, and more. For the rest of us, the chilled-bride ethos might not always translate into flawless shots. But Gen Z couples have expanded the norms around wedding content, making it cool to share an honest, personalized take on your big day, whether it's at Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc or your backyard. With the season now in full swing, it's a great time to embrace the trendiness of the unfiltered look on social—reaching a fever pitch this brat summer—and give weddings their fun back.

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