



# Southern.

COMFORT

A BROOKLYN COUPLE WITH *Georgia* ON THEIR MINDS—  
AND NEW YORK STYLE TO SPARE—THROW A WEDDING  
THAT PUTS A CREATIVE SPIN ON SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY *Tara Donne* TEXT BY *Kristina Grish*



Newlyweds Aaron Coles and Grace Bonney share a sweet kiss under an old oak tree in Savannah's Orleans Square. **Opposite:** Grace's sophisticated but breezy bouquet, by Garden on the Square, contains 'Polo' roses, lilacs, scabiosa, sweetpeas, jasmine vine, ornithogalum, snowberries, button ferns (painted gold), and ring-necked pheasant plumage.

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# She

MAY HAVE A NEW YORK ZIP CODE, BUT THIS PAST APRIL, GRACE BONNEY FOLLOWED HER HEART SOUTH OF THE MASON-DIXON LINE TO THROW THE WEDDING OF HER DREAMS. "I WANTED OUR CELEBRATION

to be very 'Brooklyn meets the Deep South,'" says the Virginia native, who met her now husband, Aaron Coles, shortly after she moved to New York City. After four and a half years of what the bride describes as "one never-ending date," the couple decided to have their wedding in Savannah, Georgia. "The city is a really saturated and dialed-up version of the South, and it was one of our top picks for a wedding destination," says Grace. "We absolutely love it there."

Grace writes about home design for her enormously popular blog, Design\*Sponge, building an enviable career out of magnanimously sharing her stylish and charming finds with her loyal base of similarly obsessed readers. So it's only fitting that in planning her wedding, she'd care most about making her guests feel at home—and that she'd solicit a committee of crafty friends and professionals to make it happen. "I've always been someone who spends more time worrying about how others feel," she says, explaining how she began organizing the day with her guests in mind. She says she focused on "the big four—people, food, music, and venue" and asked for help from bridesmaids, friends, and readers of our magazine's own Bride's Guide blog (on [marthastewartweddings.com](http://marthastewartweddings.com)). She also fussed over more details than she'd like to admit.

Grace's network of Northern and Southern pals served her well. Brooklyn friends helped with fans, paper garlands, and napkin rings made from vintage wallpaper. In Savannah she tapped local artists, designers, and vendors to contribute their talents (the cake, flowers, and food) and wares (vintage chandeliers, bottles, and an antique petticoat drier she used to hold escort cards).

As for the groom, he was tasked with helping assemble the invitations, made from

vintage and family heirloom handkerchiefs, and downloading music for the garden reception. Fortunately, he was never put on craft duty. "I have no useful ideas about decorating," Aaron laughs. "It was better for everyone that Grace handled it." Grace, too, preferred that each of them stay on his or her own turf. "I'm a bit of a control freak," she admits. "So the idea of standing over Aaron and asking him to cut straighter—well, I just didn't want to go down that road."

After eight months of projects big and small, Grace and Aaron couldn't have been happier with the results. They were especially delighted that their guests, few of whom were from the Savannah area, so enjoyed their big day. Family cried as Aaron's childhood friend Joel Baden led the ceremony under an oak tree dripping with Spanish moss and draped with a long sash of vintage tea cloths that had been sewn together. (See page 160 to read his thoughts on officiating at the wedding.) Guests mingled to live bluegrass during cocktail hour and relished the biscuits and peach cobbler that dotted a buffet of down-home fare. Later, as the sun set behind the Harper Fowlkes House, a mid-19th-century mansion where the reception was held, revelers danced to Aaron's playlist (go to our website to see his selections). And throughout the night, a photo booth gave guests a good reason to ham it up, as well as a visual reminder of the day. "If someone's taking a trip for your wedding," Grace says, "they should have memories of their time together and the people they met, and not just memories of the bride and groom."

As for how the couple will remember the wedding? "I spent the entire day smiling and squealing," says the bride. "Every 10 minutes, I looked around and thought, 'Mental picture, mental picture—take it in.'"





Clockwise from top left: Light-blue delphinium, lisianthus buds, geranium foliage, veronica tips, and button ferns make up the boutonnières. Grace, wearing a Junko Yoshioka dress, takes the arm of her father, Chris Bonney. Silhouettes of the couple and their two cats adorn the fans. A Llubav ring pillow echoes the gardenia in Grace's hair. Invitations were screen-printed by Bird & Banner on vintage linens; some handkerchiefs were bought in Savannah, and others belonged to family ("I was obsessed with matching the right invitation to the right person," says Grace). At the event, the bride was surprised to see that many of the men wore the invitations as pocket squares. The Corduroy Road plays bluegrass. Bridesmaids' bouquets feature scabiosa, ornithogalum, snowberries, lisianthus flowers, and guinea plumage. The women chose their own dresses in shades of spring green.



Clockwise from top left: Napkin rings are made from Belgian wallpaper, wooden buttons, and twine. Sheets of paper, printed with the same motif as the napkin rings, stand in for a formal guest book. Glasses of sweet tea with banner-bearing straws greet guests at the ceremony. Iced-tea tables at the ceremony are dressed with beige linen and paper flowers made by friend Erin Heath. Bridesmaid Julia Rothman helped create escort cards by printing the wallpaper pattern onto fabric and affixing it to the sides of a tag. The cards are clipped to a vintage petticoat drier with tiny clothespins. The new family, from left: Leslie Coles, Ruth Coles, Aaron, Grace, and Elaine and Chris Bonney. **Opposite:** Vintage perfume bottles and Mason jars hold daffodils, lilacs, pink Scotch broom, scabiosa, ranunculus, sea holly, rosemary, and maidenhair ferns. Table numbers were screenprinted onto old family handkerchiefs and tied around bottles of sparkling water.

"A friend made the escort tags. Another made the napkin rings. And yet another printed the table numbers. *It took a village.*"



“Neither of us is from *Savannah*, but Aaron said, ‘It seems like you—traditional, nice.’ I wanted it to be a *big, happy*, welcome-to-Georgia wedding.”



**GENERAL OGLETHORPE'S SHRIMP AND GRITS**  
Serves 6

**FOR THE SHRIMP**

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup onion, preferably white
- 1/2 cup celery, preferably white
- 1/2 cup bell pepper, preferably green
- 1/2 cup carrot, preferably orange
- 1/2 cup mushroom, preferably white
- 1/2 cup shrimp, preferably large
- 1/2 cup grits, preferably stone-ground
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup cheddar cheese

**FOR THE GRITS**

- 2 1/2 cups stone-ground grits
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 cup salt
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 cup cheddar cheese

**FOR THE SAUCE**

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup flour
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@ GRACE AND AARON, PART II Much, much more about their event, from his playlist to her dream team of vendors, at [MARTHASTEWARTWEDDINGS.COM](http://MARTHASTEWARTWEDDINGS.COM)



Clockwise from top: Guests enjoy dancing alfresco. Grace and Aaron take their first turn as a married couple to Sam Cooke's "Bring It On Home to Me." Vintage French chandeliers, hung from a tent frame, cast a warm glow onto the garden patio; says Grace, "everything was so romantic." A chocolate cake with buttercream icing from Back in the Day Bakery features 1920s bride-and-groom paper figurines found on eBay; artist Katie Runnels fashioned them into a cake topper. Opposite: A recipe for General Oglethorpe's shrimp and grits (he was the founder of Savannah) is paired with grits from a local farm, and fastened with a custom-made button by Busy Beaver Button Company.

## SOURCES

**LOCATION** Ceremony, Orleans Square in Savannah, Georgia; reception, Harper Fowlkes House

**EVENT PLANNING** Tricia Huddas & Co. Weddings and Events

**CATERING** Chef Nick Mueller & Co.

**BAR** Whitmarsh Beverage

**FLOWERS** Garden on the Square

**CAKE** Back in the Day Bakery; topper by Katie Runnels

**STATIONERY** Bird & Banner

**CALLIGRAPHY** Betsy Dunlap Calligraphy

**MUSIC** The Corduroy Road; Ian Thomas

**RENTALS** Savannah Special Events by Ranco

**WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY** Belathée Photography

**GOWN** Junko Yoshioka

**BRIDE'S SHOES** Manolo Blahnik

**SUIT** John Varvatos

**HAIR** Joan Mills at HotHeadz Salon

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