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SPRING BRIDAL

3 WINE COUNTRY WEDDINGS, 37 GOWNS AND THE IDEAL HUSB

7 SAN FRANCISCO 7



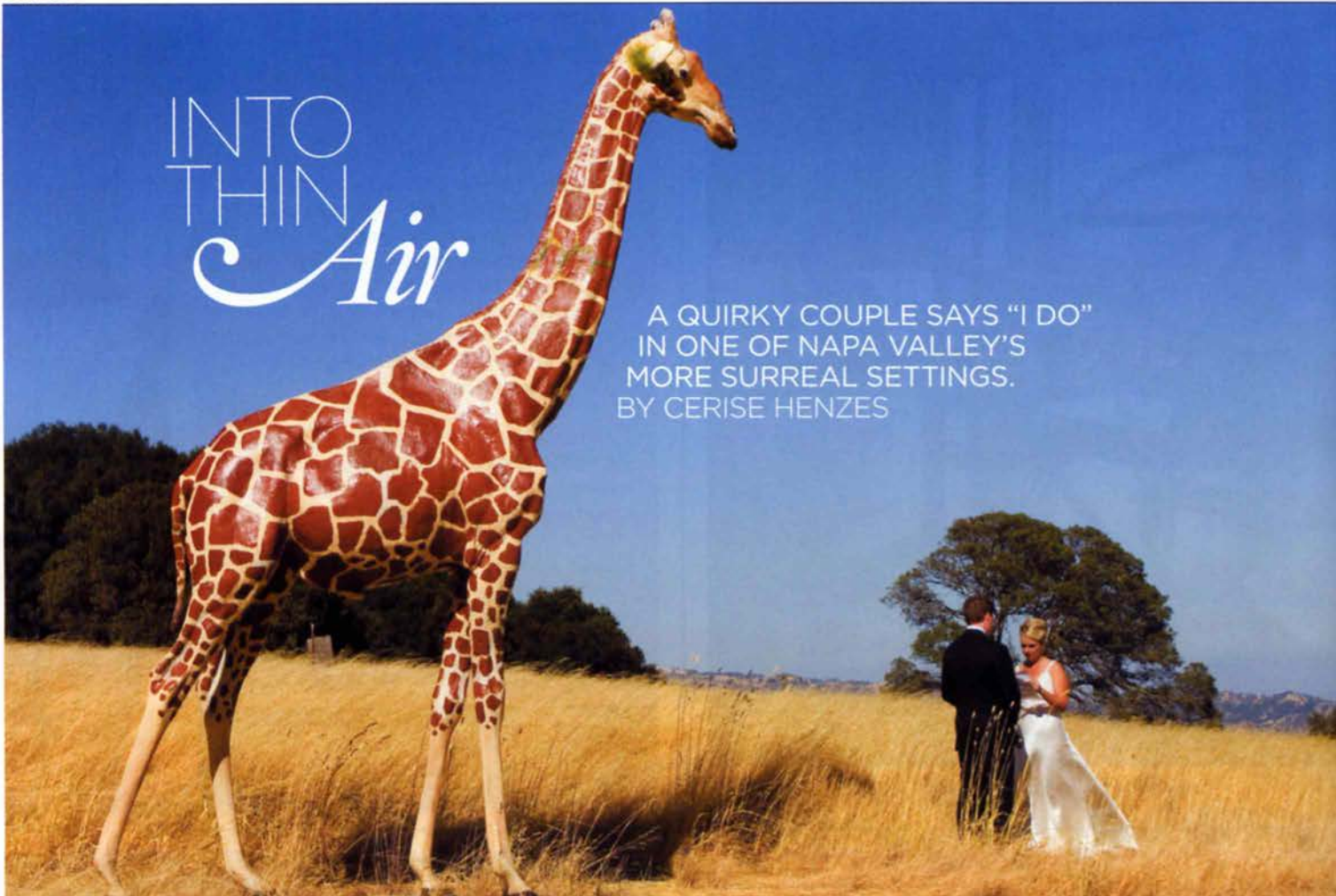
“I WANTED SOMETHING *that would fit our style— something eccentric, a little weird.*”

—Wine Country bride Charity Tucker

CHARITY TUCKER AND JEFF BECHTEL TIE THE KNOT AT THE AERIE ABOVE NAPA VALLEY (P. 11)

INTO THIN *Air*

A QUIRKY COUPLE SAYS "I DO" IN ONE OF NAPA VALLEY'S MORE SURREAL SETTINGS.
BY CERISE HENZES



Compromise is a delicate art form. Renegotiating a woman's wedding-day dreams, however, can be a feat of Sistine Chapel proportions. Charity Tucker, an analytical chemist, had always planned to elope. But when beau Jeff Bechtel, an investment banker with hopes for more conventional nuptials, proposed after an eight-year courtship that had zigzagged across the country—originally from Ohio, the couple moved to Detroit and then Chicago before settling in SF in 2002—the bride-to-be agreed to compromise. But if she was going to give up her dream, Charity needed an amazing spot to tie the knot. "I wanted something that would fit our style—something eccentric, a little weird," she recalls.

Charity found her answer at the Aerie, a modern hilltop mansion 2,200 feet above Napa Valley in the Vaca Mountains. "I had thought of having a destination wedding," she says, "but it seemed too difficult. Then I stumbled across this crazy house with [fake] zebras and a giraffe, and I realized it was the next-best thing." The couple set the date for August 12.

On the big day, Charity wore an ivory silk charmeuse sheath with a wisp of chartreuse silk trailing behind, and she carried a bouquet of pale-green cymbidium orchids and flame-colored miniature calla lilies. The ceremony was conducted in two parts: Charity and Jeff read their handwritten vows alone in a golden field, with only the officiant, Lisa Francesca, and the fiberglass menagerie to hear them. Then the newlyweds joined their guests around the infinity pool for three ancient marriage rituals: First, they fed



ANIMAL KINGDOM: (TOP, LEFT) WITH ONLY A LIFE-SIZE (BUT FAUX) GIRAFFE AND ZEBRA AS AN AUDIENCE, CHARITY TUCKER AND JEFF BECHTEL READ THEIR VOWS. ONE END OF THE AERIE'S POOL IS UNDER COVER (ABOVE LEFT); THE REST OF IT IS OUTSIDE (ABOVE RIGHT)—THERE THE GUESTS GATHER TO WITNESS PART TWO OF THE CEREMONY. NOTE THAT JEFF'S TIE MATCHES CHARITY'S SASH, WHICH IN TURN MATCHES THE CYMBIDIUM ORCHIDS PEPPERING THE SITE.

each other tastes of honey as a symbol of their commitment to nurture and speak sweetly to each other. Next, they sipped wine from each other's cups, and then

drank from a single glass, to express both individuality and the bond between them. Lastly, Jeff and Charity exchanged rings. Afterwards, the whole party headed inside the Aerie, where a sushi bar and endless Champagne made for a seriously decadent celebration. x



WEDDING NONPAREIL

WHERE THE DARE-TO-BE-DIFFERENT BRIDE AND GROOM
TURN FOR THE BEST CATERERS, CAKES AND COUTURE.
BY CERISE HENZES



Rings

What woman doesn't light up at the sight of a little blue box? Jeff certainly proved this theory to be true. And with timeless looks like the sparkling Lucida diamond on offer, it's easy to see why **Tiffany & Co.** (350 Post St., 415-781-7000, tiffany.com) never goes out of fashion. If her style is more contemporary, check out the sleek designs at **John Atencio** (1957 Union St., 415-674-7750, and in the Westfield SF Centre, johnatencio.com).



Honeymoon

Looking for a sultry, exotic getaway? Pack your bags and head to Jeff and Charity's choice destination on one of French Polynesia's most romantic isles. On the island of Motu Tautau, **Le Taha'a Private Island and Spa** (letahaa.com) features bungalows that extend like long arms over the turquoise waters. If you'd rather chase that post-marital high in Bali, head to **Alila Hotels** (alilahotels.com). With two design-conscious resorts on the island, both offering honeymooner-friendly packages, you and your beloved will be set to experience the dual faces of this Indonesian beauty: temple-trekking and antiquing in the



WILD AT HEART: (TOP) THE AERIE COMBINES TOP-OF-THE-LINE LUXE AND TRUE QUIRKINESS. (ABOVE) JEFF AND CHARITY CHOSE CORNETS OF AHI TUNA TARTARE NESTLED IN BLACK SESAME SEEDS, FROM SAGE CATERING.

culture-rich northern hill villages (Alila Ubud), and sunbathing on the white sands of the island's southeastern shores (Alila Manggis).



Venue

For Halston-clad brides who dream of dwelling in a *Vogue Living*-caliber home with views of vineyards, the **Aerie** (800-495-9961, beautiful-places.com), a modern mansion on a hill overlooking Napa Valley, is the place. For \$10,000 per event for up to 150 guests, newlyweds can live the dream—for a night, at least. (It's an additional \$4,500 if the couple plans to sleep there.) On the other hand, the **Falkirk Cultural Center** (415-485-3328, falkirkculturalcenter.org) is the picture of Victorian opulence. The

wisteria-covered Queen Anne mansion with its tufted velvet settees will take you and your guests on a trip back to a more belle époque.



Hotel

If your ceremony site doesn't offer overnight accommodations, head to the **Silverado Resort** (1600 Atlas Peak Rd., Napa, 707-257-0200, silveradoresort.com). With spa services, golf and plenty of wine to go around, this plantation-style refuge is a Wine Country classic. For minimalist chic, look to **Hotel Duchamp** (421 Foss St., Healdsburg, 707-431-1300, duchamphotel.com). A boutique hotel with only six villas, all arranged around a swimming pool, Duchamp is the most stylish jetsetters.



Florist

Husband-and-wife team Neil Hunt and Trina Littlefield, of **Hunt Littlefield** (415-738-2360, huntlittlefield.com), have perfected floral design with an adventurous spirit. Sculptural, yet surprisingly simple—see the oversized floral spheres for the Aerie's reflecting pool—their work regularly wins praise from design-savvy brides. With a reputation for creating arrangements for the

likes of Chez Panisse, floral designer **Max Gill** (510-459-5831, maxgillflowers@earthlink.net) has cultivated a fan base that is (selfishly) hoping to keep his talents an insider secret.



Invitations

Why are invitations so important? Aside from the obvious practical purpose, they are the first hint at the style of your celebration. **Ragina Johnson** (415-440-0519, ragina@mac.com) works with each bride to design invitations that will mirror her aesthetic, all on the highest quality cardstock. Petaluma-based **Dauphine Press** (119 Kentucky St., Petaluma, 707-775-4200, dauphinepress.com) understands our love of letterpress, offering clean designs and vintage-style botanical motifs.



Caterer

When most of your guests hail from the Bay Area, finding the right caterer can be intimidating. Charity and Jeff turned to San Rafael-based **Sage Catering** (415-491-2222, sage-catering.com), to dazzle the palates of their loved ones with eclectic offerings that range from summer chanterelles with brie and crostini to green-

papaya spring rolls. For rustic homegrown fare, book the **Girl and the Fig** (110 W. Spain St., Sonoma, 707-938-3634, thegirlandthefig.com), a Wine Country favorite known for such succulent dishes as pork tenderloin with dried fig compote.



Cake

Elizabeth Falkner is to cake what Willy Wonka was to chocolate: the source of the most fantastical confections a sweet freak could dream of. The go-to place for artful and delectable cakes, her **Citizen Cake** (399 Grove St., 415-861-2228, citizencake.com) made 150 miniature cakes in three different flavor combinations. More-traditional brides are taking advice from Oprah, who counts Napa's **Perfect Endings** (707-259-0500, perfectendings.com) among her favorite things. Known for intricate work, this bakery is combating the old canard that nobody eats wedding cake.



Hair and Makeup

The "bad hair day" baseball cap has its moments, but your wedding day isn't one of them. Entrust your tresses to Napa's David Magna of **David Magna Workshops**, who specializes in styles

that are dressed up and still all you—Charity's upswept 'do had her looking chic, not plastered and prim (davidmagnaworkshop@yahoo.com). Having styled countless shoots for commercials, print and film and tamed the manes of rock legends, **Debbie Czerwinski** (dczdesign@lycos.com) can transform the girl next door into a silver-screen stunner. The SF-based Czerwinski can create looks that range from Clara Bow vamp to Grace Kelly class.



Photographer/ Videographer

Much of a couple's post-matrimony time could be spent compiling the all-important, yet tedious-to-produce, wedding album. Instead, Charity and Jeff hired **Angie Silvy** (angiesilvyphotography.com), an Australian-born, SF-based photo dynamo, to shoot and produce the album, which was ready for them to email out upon their return from the honeymoon. The greeting of guests, the cutting of cake and the kissing every time a glass clinks can turn the night into a blur for the couple. **Reel Love Studios** (415-409-2643, reellovestudios.com) has perfected the art of both videography and photography to ensure that your big day or weekend is captured from every angle. x