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Thinking Outside the Gift Box for Wedding Presents

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It used to be that bridal showers and wedding gifts were a way to help a newly married couple set up a household. That's not so much the case anymore, which creates new challenges for gift-buying.

"What you're gifting for couples for their wedding is definitely changing," says Jamie Miles, managing editor of TheKnot.com, a multiplatform wedding site. "The couple may be doing a traditional registry for a couple of household essentials they don't have yet, but they are also embracing untraditional registries."

That's mostly because many people are delaying marriage or are living together before marrying—meaning they have already set up their households. They're older, too. The average age of a bride is 29 and for the groom it's 31, according to a 2014 study of 16,000 couples conducted by TheKnot.com. Some 75% of these couples cohabited before walking down the aisle.

As a result, they pretty much already have what they need. The gift-giving dilemma then becomes what to get the couple who has everything.

Think Outside the Home, Too

Many choices turn out to be big-ticket items the couple might not have been able to afford, like a KitchenAid stand mixer. The popular KitchenAid Pro Line Series (<http://www.kitchenaid.com/shop/countertop-appliances-1/countertop-appliances-2/stand-mixers-3/-%5bKSM7586PCA%5d-401694/KSM7586PCA/>) seven-quart Bowl Lift Stand Mixer is a whopping \$699.99. Barbeque grills, lawn equipment, or other outdoor gift registry requests are hot, says Miles. A particularly high-end grill is the Big Green Egg XXL, which will set you back \$4,000 (<http://bbq.about.com/od/kamadogrills/fl/Big-Green-Egg-Prices.htm>).

Forget crystal stemware, according to TheKnot.com's analysis of gift registries. Only 26% of couples included glasses on their registries last year, a marked drop compared to 2013, when they were requested 40% of the time. The casual trend is manifesting itself in china, too, with only about 26% asking for fine china compared with 65% requesting something more informal.

The Gift of Travel—or More Giving

One of the untraditional registries is a honeymoon registry, Miles says, and one of the most popular websites for it is Honeyfund (<http://www.honeyfund.com/>).



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"It allows guest of the couple to purchase some sort of event or offering that they're going to be using for the honeymoon," she says. "This way you're contributing to an experience for the couple and not a second set of steak knives."

Increasingly, couples are asking for cold, hard cash in lieu of gifts. Of course, money is always the right color and size, but Miles says sometimes guests—particularly those with more traditional viewpoints—are put off by that request.

"If you are hoping for cash, still register for a few items, but maybe on your wedding website say cash preferred, or you can pass that word-of-mouth to your wedding party," she advises.

Some couples who are remarrying or truly don't want gifts may establish a way for guests to make charitable donations instead, Miles says.

April Masini, author of the "Ask April (<http://www.askapril.com/>)" advice column, likes this trend.

"Charity donations to a meaningful charity that the bride and/or groom feels strongly about is always a great idea," she says. That's especially true when the marriage is a second, third, or fourth, the children are grown, and there's already wealth in the marriage.

A Good Match?

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