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THE WIFE

"My favourite moment was walking down the aisle – I had such a rush of emotion as I saw Evan at the altar, I couldn't hold back the tears!"



The rehearsal dinner:



"Our rehearsal dinner was held the night before the wedding at Bentley's on 27, a beautiful restaurant on the 27th floor of the Charlotte Plaza, with amazing views over the city," says Amy.

"Rehearsal dinners are traditional in the US and are a great way to bring together both families as well as being a fun start to your wedding weekend."

The couple had a rehearsal at the church before heading to the restaurant with the guests. Dinner was a buffet meal followed a few speeches and then a slide show, including pictures of the couple growing up and more recent pictures of them together all set to music. "Then Evan's mother showed a video of him when he was seven, dancing to Billie Jean by Michael Jackson. She'd sworn years ago that when he got married she'd show it at the reception – it was hilarious!" says Amy (top). "At the actual wedding, the band played the same song and everyone gathered round to watch Evan dance again. It was very funny!"



◀ white gold chain with two added diamonds. I wear it every day now. The bow on the back of my dress was also the bow that was on my mother's wedding dress. I knew I wanted something from her dress added to mine, and when my step-mother brought the bow with her to my dress fitting, the fabric matched perfectly. It was very sentimental to be wearing it on the day." Amy's bouquet was made up of orchids and roses in beautiful shades of white and lavender. The florist, Todd Crawford (001 704 523 8474, crawfordandcompanyflorist.com) added blue hydrangea to the bridesmaids' bouquets and table settings.

The groom and maids: Evan wore a tuxedo by designer Canali (canali.it) with custom-made cuff links. Amy's eight bridesmaids each wore a dress by Thread (threaddesign.com). They also wore the same deep purple colour and silk/chiffon fabric, but in different designs.

The finishing touches: Amy bought her bridesmaids a silver-plated jewellery box from Pottery Barn with their monogram engraved on it as well as a canvas tote from LL Bean, also featuring a monogram. "We bought each of our parents a beautiful silver-plated picture frame from Bergdorf Goodman, so that they could put a picture from the wedding in it," says Amy.

The ceremony: The ceremony took place at Belk Chapel. "We had traditional music and vows," says Amy. "The organist, soloist and trumpeter were fantastic and I came in to Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* followed by the *Trumpet Voluntary* by Jeremiah Clarke. The minister who officiated the ceremony was the minister from my grandparents' church. We had floating candles on the altar to represent the people who couldn't be with us, and the florist decorated the chapel with purple, white and magenta flowers. When the doors opened and the trumpet started playing with the organ, the music was just so emotional I couldn't hold back the tears. My father escorted me down the aisle and I was looking at Evan and crying the whole way – and so was my dad! Once we got to the altar, Evan was wiping away tears too – we were both just so happy and excited. The wedding ceremony was by far our favourite part of the whole day, it was the most elated I've ever felt in my life."

Let's party! The reception was held in the grand ballroom at The Ballantyne Resort in Charlotte (ballantyneresort.com). "We chose the Ballantyne because it has a huge elegant ballroom that was perfect for the reception and just 20 minutes from the church," says Amy. "We wanted everything to be really easy for our guests and provided buses to the hotel so no-one had to worry about directions or drinking and driving." Each of the 29 tables in the ballroom was decorated with a deep purple tablecloth with a sheer white overlay and the tables were named after places in New York, such as 'Grand Central Station' and 'Rockefeller Plaza'. "Instead of favours, Evan and I made a donation to the American Cancer Society, in memory of my mother," says Amy. "We had a special card printed for each place setting and a single orchid on each plate."

The food: The couple had a four-course dinner that included Carolina she-crab soup en croute and chicken breast stuffed with cheese mousse served with pomme frites. In addition to their cake, they had a dessert station offering Bananas Foster (a New Orleans dessert including vanilla ice cream, sugar, cinnamon, rum and banana liqueur) and Bananas Flambé. The wedding cake was a five-tier chocolate fudge cake with raspberry jam filling from Cake Expressions by Lisa (cake-expressions.com). It was decorated to look just like gift boxes and even had edible ribbons. For entertainment, a band called GT Allstars from Atlanta (danielentertainment.com) played everything from 70s disco to current pop music. "Our first dance was to *Shining Star* by The Manhattan as Evan always calls me his 'shining star'. At 11pm we had Chick-fil-A sandwiches (a local sandwich chain), as a late night snack," says Amy. "It was a great decision and gave everyone enough energy to keep dancing all night long!"

The best day of our lives? "I can't really describe in words how I felt on the day – I've never felt so much joy and love," says Amy. "We brought together people from 10 different states so just having all of our friends and family together was very special. We wanted to create a memorable weekend, and I know we succeeded."

Photography: Critsey Rowe (critseyrowe.com)

Amy's top tips:

• "One of the best decisions we made was to send out 'save the date' cards – as we had so many guests coming from all over the US, it was a great way to make sure the date was in everyone's diary."

"We also created our own website, amyandevan.com, through Wedding Window (weddingwindow.com), which was really easy and fun, and a good way to include all the information about the weekend."

"We tried to spread the planning between the two of us and chose jobs that we could each do – I was in charge of stationery, the cake, décor and gift list, while Evan took charge of the band, reception details, transportation and the honeymoon. This stopped us being overwhelmed with organising everything. We chose the music and flowers together."

"Evan made a budget spreadsheet for each supplier to keep track of our spending, and created a 'master book' of information as we went along – he's very organised, which really helped!" Register free today at youandyourwedding.co.uk to use our brilliant budgeter.

And another thing... "My parents and Evan's parents did a tremendous job of helping us prepare for the day. My parents brought so much from home, including food, drinks, decorations for the reception and all 150 of the gift bags for the guests who were staying in the hotel," says Amy. "I just don't know how we could have done it without their help!"

