

The In Crowd

There's not a wedding challenge they haven't met—and conquered. Five experienced industry leaders take time out to tell it like it is. Here, their best tips for throwing a spectacular affair.

TEXT BY *Liesa Goins*



Mitchell came to appreciate the grand entertaining traditions of India after traveling the world with his diplomat family. "The name Raj Tents conjures up the days when outdoor entertaining was an art form," he says. His dramatic tents, often Indian inspired, can use up to 3,000 yards of fabric.

view, a tent can add focus and help enhance the emotional tone of the day.

What makes your tents different?

Our tents go beyond the utilitarian and functional and actually turn spaces into beautiful, luxurious settings. They're handmade by artisans in India and can include woodblock prints, embroidery, and mirrors as part of the design. Right away, the fabric stands out, but we also have scalloped brackets that frame the edges and creative décor for the poles. The effect is palatial and opulent. Our Ottoman pavilion is especially outstanding—it's red with mirror-encrusted gold stars!

Are there creative ways to set up tents rather than having one giant big top?

I prefer several small tents, actually. This offers more architectural interest. I like to set them up in a U shape with a common space in the middle designed as a lounge area or dance floor.

TOP TIP "Tents aren't just for outdoor events anymore. We've done many ballroom transformations. We can hang fabric wall treatments, drape the windows, and design lighting to remove that impersonal and institutional feel. And there are also smaller tents, pergolas, and canopies in our inventory that can dress up a room just beautifully. Creating these vignettes with the different sight lines adds elevation to a room and can bring in color."

TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA

DOMINIC MITCHELL

Tent Supplier/Designer

KNOWN FOR A wide range of colorful, luxurious tents with bold, exotic flair; customized lighting; and unique furniture rentals

WHERE TO FIND HIM Raj Tents, 2908 Oregon Court, 1-5, Torrance, CA 90503; rajtents.com

If you were to describe the type of bride your business attracts...

Brides who seek out our tents tend to be well traveled and have been exposed to other cultures, and they want their wedding to reflect that. They crave something different from the norm, and they also tend to be more creative.

Aside from the obvious, why should one consider renting a tent?

The right tent frames the scenery and brings people together under one roof. Even if you're celebrating in a great setting with a beautiful

Any tips to create atmosphere?

Lighting isn't to be underestimated and is a great way to change the mood as the evening progresses. As you transition from speeches to dinner to dancing, the lighting helps set the tone.

What's your favorite outdoor venue?

Gardens offer inspiring backdrops, but I have found beach venues sublime. I've set up on some of the private properties along the Southern California bluffs overlooking the Pacific—it is stunning there. If I could choose a wedding to do next weekend, I'd do one of those.