

> **PLANNING:** From abstract conception to flawless execution Bryan Rafanelli is The King of Romance.



Transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary comes naturally to designer Bryan Rafanelli. You could say it's in his blood. "I come from a big family and every day my mother would find a reason to celebrate," says the owner of Rafanelli Events.

He has fond childhood memories of him and his four siblings watching old films of her biggest celebration: her wedding day. There were men in morning coats and top hats, 14 bridesmaids, four flower girls, two dresses for the bride, and 400 guests at a black-tie reception.

"It was," he says, "like a royal wedding. Extraordinary."

It's those same feelings that Rafanelli delivers to his clients. Having produced an extensive amount of weddings in his



Location: **Mandarin Oriental** Boston, MA; Event Design and Décor: **Rafanelli Events** Boston, MA; China: **Louis Boston** Boston, MA; Silver and Glassware: **Be Our Guest** Boston, MA; Stationery: **RedBliss** Epping, NH; Photography: **Brian Phillips Photography** Boston, MA



career—he jokes that he marries 10 to 12 times a year—his first was in 1996.

At the time Rafanelli had yet to venture into wedding planning, keeping busy with corporate and fundraising events. But when a client asked him to plan her daughter's wedding, he dove right in, and even grew white orchids—the client's favorite flower. They dripped from chandeliers and sconces and 60 stems adorned each table.

While the basic script of a wedding remains the same, he knows clients want theirs to be different. By capturing each couple's style—he's built his company on the ability to bond with clients, often knowing what they want before they do—he keeps each original.

"I do believe these extraordinary weddings we get to do are a reflection of our

clients," he says. "The best is when friends and family say 'you really got them.'"

A wedding, says Rafanelli, should reflect the "essence of who you are." Passionate about service and execution, he finds inspiration everywhere, with examples including such places as Newport, R.I.'s Astors' Beechwood Mansion where a butler stands at every doorway.

"That inspires me, but would you expect that in a tent?" he adds, a nod to his love of adding surprise elements. Think rose petals dropped from a vintage helicopter. What about a wedding cake for each table? Imagine 35 waiters with 35 cakes circling the bride. Picture a unique antique place setting for each of 390 guests. Or 14 children in the processional—some riding in on white tricycles, baby carriages and wagons.

"It was a beautiful baby parade. And was what that family is all about," he recalls. "Yet it surprised people."

"Our point of difference is that we're *imagineers* and we really know how to execute it," he adds. "Not just build it, but produce it and make it happen."

He loves the "reveal"—that moment of awe when the couple sees the transformed space. But being a bit of a romantic, it's watching the processional that gets him every time. "When it all comes together and when the father says goodbye to his daughter, this amazing thing happens," he says. "People right in front of you grow up and change. It's indescribable."

> [Written by April Miller](#)
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TOP LEFT AND TOP RIGHT:
Location: **The Breakers** Palm Beach, FL;
Event Design: **Rafanelli Events** West Palm Beach, FL; Floral Design: **Design Studio at The Breakers**; Photography: **Susan Stripling Photography** Tallahassee, FL

RIGHT:
Location: **The Ritz-Carlton Boston Common** Boston, MA; Table Design: **Rafanelli Events** Boston, MA; Floral Design: **Spruce Floral** Boston, MA; Linen: **Nüage Designs** Miami, FL; Table Setting and Chairs: **Be Our Guest, Inc.** Boston, MA; Stationery: **No Regrets** Tampa, FL; Photography: **Corinne Schippert Photography** Arlington, MA

