

Small scale, Big impact

**Restaurant
setting serves
up intimate
affairs**

By Sally Friedman
Special to The Star-Ledger

You want your wedding to be special and, yes, spectacular. But you also may want it to feel warm, intimate and entirely personal.

The solution may be as close as the fine restaurant where you've enjoyed great food, warmth, and less momentous special occasions and celebrations. Free-standing restaurants and those at inns are becoming increasingly popular as additional options for brides and grooms who want something a bit different—and customized to their own tastes.

"We're definitely seeing more and more couples who want the charm and warmth of a smaller venue, and one with great character," said Tracey Mancini, catering sales manager of the *Bernards Inn* in Bernardsville, where

weddings can be arranged for 10—or for 200—but are consistently personalized. "We have wedding specialists who see to it that the wedding has the 'signature' of the bride and groom, and is tailored to their special requests."

The inn, which has a long and lustrous history, is definitely part of the attraction for couples seeking that personal look and feel. Begun in 1905 by brothers Fred and Frank Ballantine, members of a well-known brewery family, it became a landmark not just in Bernardsville, but throughout the country, attracting society guests and celebrities. Silent film star Mary Pickford was a guest, along with a supporting staff, during the filming of 1915's "Madame Butterfly." Governors and presidential candidates have stopped there and the site has weathered var-

ious storms, but today, stands as a proud reminder of a bygone age.

Brides and grooms have choices of wedding sites within the inn, including the recently completed spaces for smaller weddings known as the Wine Pantry, where the handsome space includes built-in wine cabinetry, and the unusual Silver Vault, with its elegant display of the inn's beautiful silver pieces and a capacity for up to 40 guests. The Wine Pantry is suitable for 25 to 50 guests.

The Bernards Inn offers numerous wedding food and beverage options. The more traditional sit-down dinner menus that begin with champagne toasts include *Intermezzo*, a choice of entrée and a wedding cake prepared on the premises by Pastry Chef Duane Hendershot.

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Photo courtesy of the Bernards Inn