

# Weddings INSIDE AND OUT

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So, you're pining for a place where you can say your al fresco vows surrounded by views, and celebrate after, in the grandeur of a beautiful ballroom? Or perhaps you're yearning for a location where you can treat guests to cocktails on the terrace, a formal dinner in a fine dining room, and postprandial cigars on the patio? We've got just what you're seeking, no matter how you decide to divvy up your indoor-outdoor nuptial event!

*writer* MAGGIE MARTON ~ *photo* D. JONES PHOTOGRAPHY



location THE HOUSTONIAN HOTEL, CLUB & SPA

**RAVENEUX COUNTRY CLUB**

9415 Cypresswood Drive  
Spring, Texas 77379

**Outside:** Emily Fate, special events coordinator at Raveneaux Country Club, says her favorite outdoor space is the Terrace, which “has a breathtaking view overlooking our championship golf course, the perfect backdrop to any event. This beautiful area is a full open-air space with nothing to block the 180-degree view, but can easily be tented for any inclement weather that is foreseen.”

**Inside:** “Our Grand Ballroom is one of the most beautiful locations we have here at Raveneaux Country Club and is by far my favorite indoor space,” Fate says. “It features a magnificent chandelier that was inspired by the chandelier in Napoleon’s Raveneaux House, plus a

wall of windows reaching over 20 feet high that overlook the lush greens of the golf course, and a stunning floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace. Every time I walk into the Grand Ballroom I feel like I am stepping into my own personal fairytale.”

**Hot for 2015:** Fate reports that she’s seeing an increase in personalization. Trends include “sign-in books that break away from the traditional book,” and take on more modern forms. “We have brides who are planning on using artwork, photo guestbooks, guitars, mannequin dress forms, wood heart messages dropped into a shadow box, and maps marked with shared-journey pins,” she says. Couples also crave outdoor elements later in the evening, including s’mores stations on the balcony, fireworks over the golf course,

and hot cocoa and warm spiced cider on the Terrace.

**DUKESSA**

2840 Chimney Rock Road  
Houston, Texas 77056

**Outside:** Dukessa owner Sara Bhatti says that the venue’s coveted courtyard is especially stunning after nightfall: “We have a really nice waterfall fountain in our courtyard that can be used as a backdrop for the ceremony or for the cocktail hour, and LED lights in the fountain.” In the middle of the courtyard, an oak tree offers an opportunity for unique decor. Bhatti says couples have dressed it up with lanterns, lights, birdcages and more.

**Inside:** “Our indoor space, the Royal Hall, has a really lovely balcony terrace that you can have access to if you





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just want to take your drinks out. It overlooks the courtyard—perfect if you want to go out for a moment and relax, or get a breath of fresh air,” Bhatti says. She notes that couples who select this venue are looking for a specific feel: Mediterranean, vintage and elegant. “Black-crystal chandeliers, hand-carved iron, wrought-iron gates, premier furnishings, distressed mirrors, distressed wood—clients who choose our place are looking for elegant, but not flashy,” she says.

**Hot for 2015:** In the year ahead, Bhatti says that lighting will be big, along with unique touches. “I think dressing the outside is in,” she notes, explaining that she has couples asking to hang globe lights, string lights and decor items around the courtyard.

#### LAS VELAS

5714 Fairdale Lane  
Houston, Texas 77057

**Outside:** The architecture of Las Velas evokes European villas and South American styling. The small courtyards include elegant fountains and lush gardens, and “make you feel like you’re in a faraway place,” says venue director Elmira Frias. Designed as a complement, rather than an alternative, to the venue’s indoor space, the courtyards add a romantic element for indoor events to spill outside into the “paradise” of the site’s natural setting, Frias adds. This flow allows couples and their guests “to have an experience—to feel like they are having a destination wedding.”

**Inside:** The outdoor elements that make Las Velas so unique are echoed in the venue’s interior, as well. “Our main indoor space has an outdoor feel,” Frias says, describing the space’s “indoor courtyard,” which features skylights and a fountain, though the entire

area is covered and air-conditioned for comfort.

**Hot for 2015:** Frias sees brides thinking outside the box, and using inspiration from online image-sharing sites. She says brides are incorporating their own elements—for example, centerpieces made with mementos from romantic travels, or meaningful wine bottles—which enables them to spend more of their budget on food, bar and music.

**PINE FOREST COUNTRY CLUB**

18003 Clay Road  
Houston, Texas 77084

**Outside:** At Pine Forest Country Club, couples love to unite the venue's distinct indoor and outdoor spaces, according to Stella Haral, director of catering. "Right now, the rustic, the

barn-inspired, the outdoor, are very big," she says. "We have beautiful areas outside by the pool and by the golf course," which blend seamlessly with the club's elegant interiors.

**Inside:** According to Haral, many brides love that the indoor space creates a sense of being outdoors. "The indoor space overlooks the golf course, and the view is such a big deal," she says. Plus, with two balconies overlooking the golf course, one of them covered, "The bride with an outdoors fantasy can get it halfway."

**Hot for 2015:** "We are getting more and more requests for outdoor weddings. 'Shabby chic' has taken off like crazy," Haral says. She sees rustic, barn-inspired themes with touches like mason jars and s'mores stations continuing to gain popularity this year.

**CHATEAU COCOMAR**

14525 Champions Drive  
Houston, Texas 77069

**Outside:** With its storybook setting and European Old World styling, Chateau Cocomar is best known for its magnificent marble ballrooms and antique French accents. But the venue's immaculately manicured WakeCo Jardin has become extremely popular for intimate cocktail receptions, alfresco lounge areas and spectacular "first look" photo ops, notes Chateau Cocomar's Sherry Alvarez.

**Inside:** "Our first-floor ballroom, foyer and Chantilly room are our most popular indoor spaces," Alvarez says. "Most couples choose to use these areas for cocktail and reception space. They are special because they allow guests to mix and mingle, exploring

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each of the rooms and finding something different—cocktail bars, buffets, appetizer displays, formal dining tables—in each.”

**Hot for 2015:** “A lot of our brides want to incorporate the outdoors for some portion of their event, whether it’s cocktail hour or ceremony,” notes Alvarez. She says that 2015 brides are planning outdoor gatherings that take advantage of Chateau Cocomar’s “beautiful European exterior, which is unique to Houston, and makes for a gorgeous backdrop for wedding guests to enjoy.”

#### THE GROVE

1611 Lamar Street  
Houston, Texas 77010

**Outside:** Tatiana Escobar, catering manager for The Grove, says her favorite outdoor space is the Treehouse Deck,

part of the venue’s second-floor private-event space. “The deck has incredible views of the downtown skyline, as well as of Discovery Green park. The view is the perfect balance between the architecture and urban scenery of Downtown, and the peaceful tranquility of the park,” she notes. Tenting is available for the deck as well.

**Inside:** Escobar points to the Primavera Room, located at the eastern end on the first floor of the restaurant, for its intimate feel. The space is used for small ceremonies and receptions, or rehearsal dinners. “There is also a small adjacent deck located just outside the room that can be used for a variety of events such as cocktail receptions and wedding ceremonies. The architecture, including the designer light fixtures, and the intimate size of the Primavera

Room, make this space special to me,” she says. Surrounded by glass walls and Brazilian ipe wood, the space works well for a seated dinner or cocktail reception.

**Hot for 2015:** Escobar says couples are going in an industrial direction for 2015 weddings: “I am seeing more of a modern geometric style as well as industrial designs. The use of simple shapes and metallic colors is becoming popular.”

#### OLD GLORY RANCH

3633 River Road  
Wimberley, Texas 78676

**Outside:** Old Glory Ranch has two stunning riverside locations: the intimate Landing, and the capacious Wedding Deck. According to venue owner Suzanne McCord, “Each provides an

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amazing setting with rapids gently flowing, and ancient cypress trees that are vibrant green in the spring and summer, and bold copper and orange in the fall. We also have an oak grove that can be transformed into an outdoor space for ceremonies with amazing sunsets." The venue offers an inclement-weather plan, allowing events to be moved indoors to the Chapel Hall, if necessary.

**Inside:** "The Chapel Hall is the ideal indoor setting, giving clients the feel of an old country church that is warm and inviting," McCord says. "The ambiance of Victorian Texas, with gorgeous antique appointments from around the world, and stained-glass windows, gives this building a comfortable elegance unsurpassed by modern buildings. Since it is not sanctioned or affiliated with any particular religion, it offers clients the option to have whatever type of ceremony they might choose." The space can also transition into a reception area with a relaxed setting and rustic-chic decor.

**Hot for 2015:** "Trends seem to be 'shabby chic,' with personal touches, such as couples making their own invitations, favors, programs, frames for photos, and so on," McCord says. Recently, the venue introduced the Sport Court, which is popular among clients who want to include outdoor games for their cocktail hour or reception. McCord explains, "It features a regulation-size croquet court with a gazebo that serves as a bar, and lawn games around the perimeter such as ladder golf, bocce ball, washer toss and corn hole," bringing an air of youthful whimsy to an already wonderful wedding.

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