

HEN HAVENS

As Royal Wedding fever builds, it is becoming a fabulous year to be getting married. Why not break with tradition and do something a little different for your hen party? Here are some of our favourites...

THE DEVILLED EGG KITCHEN ACADEMY

Having experienced the joys of The Devilled Egg firsthand, this AREA writer can assure you it is a wonderful place to hold a hen party. We sampled delicious canapés and were given an insight into cocktail making before the cooking fun began. With Barbora Stuess on hand offering advice and assistance, it is relaxed and lots of fun. To book, call 0117 973 2823 or visit www.thedevilledegg.com.



▲ UNIQUE HOME STAYS

For the ultimate in luxury, rent one of Unique Home Stay's many chic properties with a group of friends. Take your pick from mansions, beach huts and cottages in the UK and abroad. Our favourites include The Art House, a luxurious boutique B&B townhouse in the Cotswolds where the rental is inclusive of breakfast, Molton Brown toiletries, delicious home baked cakes, scones and a complimentary gift. For sunnier climes, try the modern and fresh Malvarrosa Beach Villa in Valencia (pictured) with its ultra-cool interiors. Visit www.uniquehomestays.com for more information.

OLD-FASHIONED TEA PARTY

Vintage is back in fashion. Get the girls together for a glamorous tea party complete with scrumptious scones, cute cupcakes and a generous amount of tea! Hens can step back in time by dressing up as 1950s beauties and indulge in some pampering by giving each other manicures and make-up

lessons. Bristol Vintage offers boutique event planning and vintage crockery hire to make your special party one to remember! For more information, visit www.bristolvintage.co.uk.

WINE TASTING (BOND OVER A BEVERAGE)



For an evening of civilised and sophisticated fun, there's nothing better than wine tasting with the girls. Flinty Red becomes a private wine tasting venue on selected early evenings, with a great selection of wines from Spain, Italy, Chile and France, chosen for their quality and flavour. Learn about how wine is produced and indulge your senses and taste buds; you can even impress your friends with your newfound knowledge! For reservations, call 0117 923 8755 or visit www.flintyred.co.uk for more information.



▲ FASCINATOR AND HAT-MAKING WORKSHOPS

This workshop by Bristol company, Vintage Tea Sets, is a super-hip hen party idea! Hens will be introduced to the skills and techniques involved in creating gorgeous and distinctive accessories, learning a stylish new craft. It's a lovely way to add a personal touch to the bridal party by creating bespoke headpieces for the wedding. The workshops cater for all abilities; no fashion experience necessary! Courses cost from £49 per person, including all materials. For more information visit: www.vintage teasets.co.uk.



What do you think made you decide to go into apparel design?

I've always had a passion for design. I bought Vogue every month from the age of 11 and my best friend and I would spend our free time making clothes, trying to copy styles. I started designing sportswear and was lucky enough to be in prestigious stores in New York like Bloomingdales and Macys. When I came back to England I fell upon wedding dresses as a business idea very quickly. It was as if something clicked; from a design perspective and a business style I knew this would be right for me.

Who have been your main influences?

My mother encouraged me from a very early age. My husband has also been a source of inspiration. He is a real entrepreneur and has had a very strong influence over the Castigliano brand - the decisions we have made and our development.

Why bridal specifically?

Bridal wear appealed because the bridal gown is the single most important one a woman will invest in. I love transforming a woman so she looks and feels more confident than ever before. The bridal gown also says everything about a woman's style and personality.

AREA talks to bridal designer Caroline Castigliano about the inspirations behind her designs...

When you first set up your company, what made you ask Jasper Conran to design for you?

I loved Jasper Conran's designs and I was delighted when he created his first bridalwear collection for us. The designs were fantastically received and the brand was catapulted into the spotlight when Lady Sarah Armstrong-Jones chose one of Jasper's bespoke designs for her wedding. She wore a gorgeous white, draped georgette gown with a ruched bodice. Within months, the first Caroline Castigliano bridal collection featuring my designs was launched.

What are your initial considerations when designing a dress?

Unquestionably, the cut. I have spent many years refining the perfect cut to enhance the female figure. This, combined with our intricate detailing, our classic silhouettes and our contemporary styling, assures our clients of a stunning result.

What is the experience like for brides-to-be at your boutiques?

She is met by a member of our highly skilled team. We spend time getting to know her style and the vision she has for her wedding. It's an experience she can enjoy with her bridesmaids and mother, with a glass of champagne in hand! I get incredible fulfilment from being involved in such an important part of their day.

How would you describe your clientele?

Our brides are women with a definite sense of style who are aware of fashion and the latest trends, they love the

beauty of fabrics and fine tailoring. They understand the importance of investing in quality fabrics and beautifully cut clothes and they want to make a statement at their wedding.

What's next for Caroline Castigliano?

The world! We are doing well in Dubai, have just launched in Saudi Arabia, New York and Ireland, and will start expanding to Australia later on in the year. I recently dressed some stars at the BAFTAs and I'm working on some stunning gowns for the Oscars.

We are really excited to be celebrating our 20th birthday this year, and are certainly planning to celebrate in style. We will continue throughout the year and plan exclusive events for our brides, so keep an eye out on our website for more details.

Visit www.carolinecastigliano.co.uk to discover her beautiful collection.

