

**THIS BRIDE IS  
SMART,  
*sexy*  
and so not  
20!**

Olivia Falcon (right) was 40 when she said 'I do'. But far from being an issue, she found planning her day liberating. From suits-all style tricks to guest-list tactics, here's what *you* can learn from an older bride



We're officially a nation saying 'sheesh, what's the rush?' With the latest stats showing the average first-time bride is now 30, more of us are wanting to tick a few things off our single-girl bucket list before exchanging vows – travelling, getting our boss's job, working out what's going on in *Game Of Thrones* to name a few. Having planned my own wedding at the age of 40, I've come to realise there's no perfect time to walk up the aisle. Sure, there are perks galore to getting hitched in your 20s (skin with ping, for one) but the confidence I've gained over the years means that when I'm asking for what I want, I take *no* prisoners

**Be cunning with colour**

Virginal white is lovely and all that, but who are we kidding? At 40, with my two children skipping down the aisle behind me, I couldn't help but think it was time to shelve the blushing bride routine and channel something sophisticated. And colour, as it happens, is the look *du jour*. 'This season, soft shades of blush pink and barley are taking centre stage,' says bridal designer, Jenny Packham, who created my own wedding dress (above). Other key sartorial style points for the so-not-20 bride: nix the veil (too Miss Havisham), avoid frills (too ageing) and don't go near strapless unless you could arm-wrestle Gwyneth Paltrow (and win). I'm a beauty journalist so I know super-bright colours and bold make-up looks aren't easy to pull off when you're over 20. Take Kim Kardashian's smokey cat-eye make-up – at 33, she nailed the style, but for anyone older it could be draining.

**It's time to get mischievous**

The unofficial job of the bride? Pairing up your BFF with the 'I-can't-believe-he's-not-Ryan-Gosling's-twin' from work. But when most of your girlfriends are off the shelf – like mine are – there's a slightly different dynamic to

play with. No Cilla Black hat is required, but it's still wickedly good fun. Whatever your age, why not break the ice with tongue-in-cheek crib notes, placed on chairs, so that guests can bone up on their dinner companions and cut the small talk. Be creative and try to think of any quirky character details to get the party started

('You won't believe what Sam can do with an olive!'). This is also a great chance to give any terrified single ladies a break from the excruciating bridal bouquet drop. I wrapped a four-leaf clover in my bouquet and shouted out to all the women there to take a swing for a year of bonnie blessings.

**The age-old invitations problem**

Every bride – at any stage of her life – gets pressurised by parents to invite an endless number of their friends and older relatives. Great Uncle Ted with the appalling breath, who no one has (thankfully) seen for 20 years, is suddenly staunchly touted as 'nearest and dearest family'. Whether you're paying the lion share of your wedding bill (as many financially secure couples →



Olivia with daughters Grace and Georgia-Mae on her wedding day

do) or your parents are footing the cost, there are still crafty ways that you can subtly limit the number of 'oldies' making the cut. I capped it at one table of 10 'elders' to cover parents, in-laws and outlaws. To soften the blow, simply suggest a big lunchtime family gathering a month before, so everyone can celebrate your upcoming nuptials. If anyone out there *still* needs convincing that they shouldn't attend, crank up the Lady Gaga, and shout at the top of your voice, 'I DON'T THINK IT WILL BE YOUR KIND OF THING'. Subtle? No. Effective? Most certainly.

## Get what you really want

With two kids and a mortgage between us, our gift list was never going to be traditional or practical. Like many brides who've been cohabiting with their other half for a while, we didn't ask for the things we needed (yawn) but the things we *wanted* (yay!). Me? I asked for a Jonathan Adler muse bowl and Marie Brandolini glassware from Venice. I even listed a few items just for me – such as Frederic Malle perfumes and Prada sunglasses – with *zero* guilt. Need more convincing that this is the way forward? Ask yourself this: would all your guests rather buy you something that makes your heart flutter, or something that collects dust? And there you have your answer. But if you need any more inspiration, go

to [thebottomdrawer.co.uk](http://thebottomdrawer.co.uk), where friends and family can buy everything from garden makeovers to money towards a car. Or bookmark website [notanotherbill.com](http://notanotherbill.com) – where your friends pick a package they want and the firm will then send you a selection of whimsical presents (think hand-crafted coat hooks and horn-whisky tots) over the course of a year. Rather have the cash for your honeymoon? Yell it from the rooftops.

## Your passport to pampering

The downside of not being a 20-something bride? You've got to be a dedicated 'glow-getter'. To achieve a wedding-ready body and perfect skin, the planning started several months before my wedding. I took strategic visits to the new Phi clinic in Harley Street, London, for its Ferrari-fast Vectus laser hair removal (from £150 for lower legs; [phiclinic.com](http://phiclinic.com)), which I teamed with its 360 facial (£750), a marathon of laser and light

5 things you'll never hear a 40-year-old bride say...

1 'A chocolate fountain? That is soooooo chic!'

2 'I'm so happy I could burst with rainbows and unicorns.'

3 'Forget any make-up. I'm going au naturel.'

4 'I wonder if that horse-drawn carriage Katie Price used is available... (if not, I'll just take her tiara).'

5 'Let's ditch the formal do and marry in Glastonbury! I hear the local priestess's free...'

therapies, which stimulates collagen production, reduces redness and hydrates in a way that no regular facial can. I also soaked up wedding tips galore from Myriam Djellouli (£160 for bridal make-up and a trial, 07932 657867), who was Guerlain's national make-up trainer before setting up on her own. Myriam told me to avoid powder which shows up fine lines, and invest in Bobbi Brown's Blotting Papers (£17; [bobbibrown.co.uk](http://bobbibrown.co.uk)) for a matte, camera-friendly finish. For any bride wanting to feel svelte on her big day, I suggest London juicery Purearth's juice cleanse (£210 for a three-day course; [purearth.co.uk](http://purearth.co.uk)) – it uses vegetable-based juices and nut milks, rather than the usual sugar-filled fruits, for the speediest of results.

## Change your flight path

For your honeymoon, it's smart to think outside of the obvious. As a mother of two, I chose a family-friendly honeymoon, but, when you look beyond the path everyone else takes, there are some awesome alternatives. I didn't want to fly over six hours with kids, so The Palm Dubai ([oneandonlyresorts.com](http://oneandonlyresorts.com)) and the lovely Zighy Bay in Oman ([sixsenses.com](http://sixsenses.com)) were both contenders. In the end, we picked Borgo Egnazia in Puglia (from £490 per person; [chiclocations.com](http://chiclocations.com)) which ticked all the boxes – for the ankle-biters, too. Everyone was smiling – including me!

## Glam up your girlie get-together

Fairywings and L-plates aren't everyone's bag. The luxury of age is that you know what you want – and you're not afraid to ask for it. I wanted to be pampered, preened and thoroughly spoiled. After some research, it was difficult to decide between Natura Bissé's skincare masterclasses (available at The Grove in Hertfordshire and London's Grace Belgravia, £50 per person; [thegrove.co.uk](http://thegrove.co.uk) and [gracebelgravia.com](http://gracebelgravia.com)), which combine mini-facials and skincare tips with a champagne cream tea – and Daylesford in Gloucestershire. Here there are cottages to hire with access to the Bamford Haybarn spa, as well as yoga and Pilates classes (from £720 a night for six people; [daylesford.com](http://daylesford.com)). Or if you're into retoxing, not detoxing, check out London-based Mixology (£45 per person; [mixologyevents.co.uk](http://mixologyevents.co.uk)), which offers cocktail classes where hens can learn how to mix tipples – a very handy life skill. **B**

For a behind-the-scenes look at Olivia's gorgeous wedding day turn to page 120



# GRAND DESIGNS

*Olivia Falcon, 40, married Peter Tanner, 48, at Syon Park in Brentford, Middlesex, on 30 May 2014. She says:*

**Our wedding day was all about celebrating our new family** with my extended family and friends. I wanted a glamorous celebration, but one where everyone could really let their hair down.

**We chose Syon Park because of its grand setting** – we then had a less traditional order of events. The speeches were dispersed throughout the day as we've both been to weddings where they'd become very long and tedious!

**It was a huge honour to have the UK's head of Kabbalah bless our marriage.** Peter is Jewish and I'm Christian so Kabbalah, which has roots in Judaism, was a good middle ground.

**The choir that featured in the movie *Love Actually* sang as I walked down the aisle.** We chose uplifting songs such as Jackie Wilson's (*Your Love Keeps Lifting Me*) *Higher and Higher*.

**My dad lent us his 1968 E-type Jaguar for the day.** We decorated it with ribbons, flowers and a 'Married with Children' plaque made by a friend.

**The colour palette was based on my gorgeous Jenny Packham dress** – cinnamon pink with a pop of red.

**Sofia Coppola's period drama *Marie Antoinette* inspired our cake** – a four-tier layered sponge of vanilla and red velvet (pictured on next page). As it was my 40th birthday the week before, we also had a Tiffany-blue chocolate cake – with fountain candles for drama.

**Our videographers made a film of guests lip synching to *Mr Blue Sky*.** It was a real icebreaker for guests, not to mention *the* most amusing keepsake.

**My top tip** Be mindful on the day. Pause to smell the roses and mentally take snapshots of moments – it's a great way of remembering the best bits. →

# How they did it



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT ONE OF THE VINTAGE-INSPIRED DRESSES WITH BOWS WORN BY THE BRIDESMAIDS. THE GIRLS' SWEET HAIR BOWS, WHICH THEY DECIDED NOT TO WEAR AT THE LAST MINUTE. THE BRIDAL BOUQUET OF CORAL SUNSET, SHIRLEY TEMPLE AND RED CHARM PEONIES, AND TAMANGO SPRAY AND BACCARA ROSES. OLIVIA AND PETER IN SYON PARK'S LONG LIBRARY. THE COUPLE AND THEIR DAUGHTERS GRACE AND GEORGIA-MAE ARRIVE AT THE RECEPTION IN OLIVIA'S FATHER'S E-TYPE JAGUAR. THE DINNER TABLES WERE DECORATED WITH AVALANCHE, SWEET AVALANCHE AND SPRAY ROSES IN MIRRORED VASES. THE BRIDESMAIDS AND TWO PAGEBOYS RELAX IN THE DRAWING ROOM

