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Wedding party gifts

By H.M. Cauley
For the AJC
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Tradition dictates that not just the bride and groom receive gifts on their special day. The supporting cast of bridesmaids and groomsmen are also honored by the happy couple with a token of the nuptials.

Coming up with meaningful, memorable gifts doesn't have to be another stressful thing to cross off the to-do list. Instead, couples will wow their friends by using a little imagination.

Make it personal

Monogramming is big — on everything. Go the extra mile and have initials or a name carved onto barware, tote bags, stationery, cutting boards, bathing suits and more. Christie Harper, owner of the DabberDoo gift shop in Virginia-Highland, encourages her brides to add the touch to towels, travel bags, nut bowls — even pink leather flasks. For groomsmen, go for a set of monogrammed highball or wine glasses and pair them with a favorite beverage.

"Monogramming is great because there are so many ways to do it," she said. "If you have one friend who's athletic and another who's a girly-girl, you can do a different style of monogram for each and it adds personal value to the gift."

At Sid Mashburn on the city's Westside, \$115 monogrammed pocket knives have been popular gifts for the guys. "It's definitely the coolest gift we've ever done," said store rep Matt Lambert. "With monogramming, it's one of those things that make you realize the person put some thought into it."

Pampering packages

Friends and supporters get stressed out, too.

Assemble a basket or tote filled with a variety of treats: aromatic candles, bath gels, spa headbands, oils, exfoliating products, scented moisturizers and bubble baths are a good start. Toss in a spa gift certificate for friends to use after the festivities are over.

Be unique

There are several ways that brides and grooms can give one-of-a-kind gifts.

At Paisley Umbrella in Buckhead, shoppers can work with a perfumer to create an individual scent and give small bottles of it to their friends for \$50 to \$75 each.

Store owner Katriesa Raines can also direct couples to a local jewelry artist who will create specialized pieces to wear.

"You can pick your stones to customize everything from rings to earrings — which are common gifts but can be special when you put together a different piece for each of your girls," Raines said.

Long-life gifts

April Milliken Trigg, owner of the Eventologie events company in Grant Park, gave her bridesmaids a purse, earrings and a soft wrap that could be put to good use after the wedding day.

"I knew that when I was a bridesmaid, I liked things that were personal to me, not the wedding," she said. "I really liked getting a monogrammed bathrobe that I could use anytime."

Green gifts

Eco-conscious couples may want to check out smartglassjewelry.com where a wealth of recycled ideas await.

Turn ordinary glass into jewelry mementos for both men and women. "One of my brides now is collecting bottles from her bachelorette party and having them made into jewelry for her bridesmaids," Trigg said. "She's also doing cufflinks for the groomsmen."

Monogrammed stationery made from recycled paper is another thoughtful eco-gift. Another green option is to forgo traditional gifts completely and plant a tree in each friend's name.

Fit the theme

Having a beach wedding? Consider gifts that fit the setting: bathing suits, flip-flops, beach towels, tote bags. For those destination events, pack up travel-sized toiletries, neck rests, eyeshades and reading material.

For the guys

Make the men in your wedding party happy with a cooler and sports chair, sets of grilling tools, specialty cigars, deluxe shaving kits and the time-honored hip flask. "Some things just don't change a lot and liquor flasks are still very big," said Gillian Harte, publisher of "Perfect Wedding Guide."

Buyer's Edge

