

HONOLULU

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A local party planner brings eco-friendly ideas to a notoriously disposable-loving industry.

Sheila Sarhangi



Photos: Courtesy of Savoir Faire Events

When wedding planner Aubrey Akana became pregnant with her first child (Daisy, now 4 years old), light bulbs started to go off in her head about the world around her. Actions that once seemed simple—such as what household products she used, what food she ate and what she tossed in the trash—suddenly received more careful examination. “I did a lot of research,” says Akana, “from things that would benefit my health to the health of the environment.”

At the time, Akana’s company, Savoir Faire Events, was in its second year of business. Inspired, she incorporated her new eco-friendly intelligence and changed the way she coordinated events.

Today, her company offers a green option for every facet of a festivity, from invitations to tableware. In her industry, the greatest challenge is to strike a delicate balance of being Earth-conscious without sacrificing aesthetics. She won’t force eco-friendly ideas on clients; they can go for it, or they can opt for another route. But, she says, every function ends up with at least two elements that are “green.”

Take, as an example, table centerpieces. For a rustic, Tuscan sort of feel, Akana will cluster flowerpots sprouting with tomatoes or aromatic herbs like rosemary and basil.

When the event is finished, the decorations double as plantable party favors. “Sometimes, we’ll attach a favorite recipe to it, which gives it that personal touch,” says Akana. Another plus: cost savings. Using vegetable centerpieces instead of flowers can save about eight dollars per table.



If a couple wants glass vases, she might fill them with star fruit, rambutan or lychee—purchased from local farmers’ markets—which look beautiful naturally thanks to their color and shape. If flowers are used, she’ll ask clients if they can be donated afterward, such as to a children’s hospital or Punchbowl Cemetery, just so they’ll get one extra use.

Other eco-conscious ways of doing business? She saves gas by carpooling to pick up the bride-to-be for meetings with vendors; collects and composts materials (like decorative leaves) after guests have departed.

She also uses corn-based disposable plates and utensils. They are 20 to 30 percent more expensive than the paper plates you could buy at a Costco or Walmart, but, she notes, those kind of standard disposables only contribute to the waste stream.

Recycling helps, too: At her parties, she says, “If we didn’t recycle bar items, like cans and wine bottles, it would create double the trash.”

Although weddings are her specialty—her largest nuptial event was at Paradise Cove with nearly 800 guests, her most intimate at Hale Koa with only 12 in attendance—she also handles parties of all occasion, among them baby lūaus and bachelorette parties.

Why go through all the trouble to plan green? “I’d like to believe that if I make small changes, then maybe I can get this message across to somebody else,” she says.



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