



An Inn Wedding

Historic timber framed buildings and locally sourced food for an authentically English country wedding

As global recession continues, couples are looking closer to home for an engagingly English wedding experience. The recently launched family of modern day coaching inns, consisting of The Olde Bell in Hurley (Harper's Bazaar Top Ten Loveliest rural retreats) and The Crown Inn in Old Amersham (Vogue's secret address book), exemplifies this return to the vernacular.

Ise Crawford, designer and creative director behind the Inns and whose other projects include Soho House New York and Grand Hotel Stockholm, has tapped into the spaces' emotional values to allow the inns once again to function as places of rest, sustenance and celebration. An Inn is human, warm, social and improvised; a flexibility that allows things to happen. The buildings are organic and layered, functioning almost like its own village and so providing spaces to move between throughout the course of your wedding day.

The Olde Bell, Hurley, with its experienced wedding coordinator is the larger of the Inns, offering two spaces for big gatherings with a huge meadow garden and the River Thames at the end of the road. The building adjacent to the main 12th century building is the newly refurbished Malthouse with five main areas; the rooms overlooking and opening onto the large garden are filled with light and the spacious Oak room and Music room are wood panelled with a more intimate feel. The rooms have been stripped back to show the building's original features; period fireplaces, wooden floors and restored plaster detail and cornicing, now with large hand-crafted pendant lanterns.

Across the lane, which is still used to drive sheep, there is the 16th century Tith Barn with its exposed beamed ceiling and expansive hall, which can house up to 120 guests for a generous wedding feast. Using flowers from the huge meadow garden in pewter jugs to decorate the rooms, the Olde Bell provides an authentic English country setting.

Providing feasts for all, the chef Tony Albarno (previously of the gastro haven the Anchor and Hope on the Cut, Southbank), uses locally sourced food. To get things going; little mouthfuls of salt brandade cod toasts, or devils on horseback with punch bowls of seasonal fruit. To start; pear and pecorino salad, langoustines and mayonnaise. To follow; a side of pork with impressive crackling, beef Wellington or fennel and Berkswell gratin and if you have room, rhubarb and custard pots, or rich chocolate cake and crème fraiche and local cheeses.

While The Olde Bell plays host to weddings of all sizes, The Crown Inn in Old Amersham specialises in intimate gatherings, seating up to 40 people at a time. The historic timber framed building sits on the high street of the old market town with St Marys church a stroll down the lane. The Crown's kitchens are run by Rosie Sykes, author of The Kitchen Revolution, who, says Matthew Fort, the Guardian's food writer: 'Rosie is a cracking good cook...and sees cooking as way of making people happy'.

Either deep in the countryside or in a traditional market town, The Inns with their many facets offer a number of options and friendly bespoke service for you to create your own particular English country wedding. As it said above the doorway to The Olde Bell at the turn of the Century: 'One finds one's best welcome at an Inn'.

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