

a wedding story

# Love in Harmony

by Jennifer Teel-Wolter



**T**hey say you can't hurry love. John Cuadros didn't get that memo. The bank examiner had grown tired of attending his friends' weddings and baby showers and was ready for his own turn.

"I started looking at my life and thinking – 'I want that,'" John remembers. "I knew it was time for a change."

John was determined to meet someone but he was fairly new to the dating scene and didn't want to waste his time in bars or clubs, where he might never meet a truly compatible woman. So, he signed up for eHarmony, an online dating service.

"When I saw Katie's profile, I knew I wanted to meet her right away. She just seemed really down to earth and our profiles showed we shared a lot of the same interests and outlooks on life."

Katie Little, a special education aide, had been on eHarmony for a few months and hadn't met anyone to her liking. She was about ready to cancel the service when she received John's email. Intrigued, she replied.

After exchanging a few messages, the couple decided to talk on the phone. The conversation came easily and they quickly realized they'd found a match. John asked Katie to meet in person and she agreed.

They met for Tapas and took a walk after finishing their meal. Before the date was even over, John knew he wanted to see Katie again. As it turned out, the feeling was





PHOTOS BY JORDAN'S PORTRAITS

mutual and the couple made plans to go for a picnic date the following week.

“It ended up being a thirteen hour date,” smiles Katie. “John took me for a picnic at the American River and we were having such a nice time, it was so natural and easy that I decided to ask him to join my parents and I for a concert that evening.”

After that, the couple moved easily into a relationship. They started spending time with each other’s families right away and found they were a good fit. Even their friends seemed to mesh well. Katie’s family noticed that she seemed happier and more at ease with John in her life and John’s family saw a similar trend.

“We had already done these exhaustive compatibility tests online, so we knew pretty quickly. Our relationship just fit,” says John.

While they both knew they’d found their soul mate, Katie decided to let John take the lead on the next steps. He wasted no time. After just a few months, the couple was talking about marriage and starting a family. They even began looking at rings together around the holidays.

In January, after nine months of dating, the couple moved in together when Katie’s roommate, and sister, decided she wanted to live on her own. It was a big step, but they were more than ready.

“By that time, we knew we were getting married. We’d picked out a ring and we knew it was going to happen, but I just didn’t know when,” says Katie.

In fact, the couple was so serious about getting married that at one point they’d discussed wedding dates with their parents.

“My Dad laughed and said: ‘Hey, aren’t you doing this backwards? Don’t you need to propose first?’” John recalls.

So, in February, John arranged a Valentine’s Day proposal. He took Katie away for the weekend to San Francisco and arranged a city tour. After touring China Town, they headed for Coit Tower. There, at the top, he proposed to a surprised and overjoyed Katie.

She immediately accepted and took a picture of the ring with her camera phone to text to friends. The couple called their families to announce their engagement. Both being the





eldest child, Katie and John's wedding was to be the first for both their families. Everyone was thrilled and ready to start planning.

Originally the couple hoped for an August wedding. But John wasn't sure that six months would be sufficient time to plan. With Katie working in the education field, aiming for the Spring Break timeline seemed to be a natural fit. Soon, they'd selected a date of April 4, 2009.

Even with more than a year to plan, Katie and John were eager to get started. The couple were looking to purchase a home and wanted to take advantage of the summer, which Katie had free. To help them get on track, they turned to seasoned wedding coordinator Lora Ward, of A Day to Remember.

"My Mom's best friend lived next door to Lora and my sister had gone to school with her kids, so we knew when we got engaged that we would work with Lora," Katie says.

At first John and Katie planned to just meet with Lora for some initial ideas and organizational help, but they soon realized that they'd need full coordination to manage all the details and keep the planning process low stress.

For her springtime wedding, Katie wanted a casual, easygoing feel. She envisioned something comfortable, with lemonade being sipped in the sunshine and daisies accenting an outdoor reception. She was partial to gingham for a pattern and a cheerful color palette of blue and yellow

followed. After talking with Lora, the couple decided to take inspiration from their memorable second date and bring in a picnic feel.

"It's my job to listen to the bride and groom's ideas and take them to the next level. Sometimes a couple has just a small idea and don't realize that it could grow into something larger and more complete," says Lora Ward. "For Katie and John, we took their idea of outdoor ease and brought in an elegance and a sophistication that was completely unique and really beautiful."

With the coordinator on board, it was time to select a venue. Katie and John looked through Sacramento Bride and Groom Magazine for reception site ideas and decided to visit several Clarksburg wineries. As soon as they stepped onto Wilson Vineyards, they knew they'd found their wedding locale.

"It was perfect. The outdoor setting was beautiful; it was a little bit rustic, and it was very charming," recalls the bride.

Next, Lora helped the couple design their décor. Working together with Katie's mom, they found a beautiful checked ribbon in a sunny yellow and white. A similar blue ribbon was also selected to be an accent. The signature pattern, based on Katie's original concept of gingham, was the base for the youthful, whimsical event design that followed.

To create the ambience of an elegant picnic, the bride worked with Lora and her florist to design a colorful and fun floral scheme. Katie knew she wanted to incorporate daisies, which had been her mother's wedding flower, into her own wedding day. So their florist suggested accenting them with white and yellow roses and delphinium for bursts of color. She then designed floral spheres to be used around the vintage barn at Wilson Vineyards and to accent the outdoor aisle. The unique design lent a joyful and spontaneous air to the arrangements – the perfect match for the couple's aesthetic. As a finishing touch, they added galvanized buckets with cheery bunches of flowers throughout the reception site.





Incorporating Easter was also a natural fit, with the holiday so close to the couple's wedding date. Wicker baskets were added to the reception décor and the bride and groom decided to hand-dye Easter eggs as accents, working with family and friends to get the job done.

"Katie did all of those eggs herself – all 80 of them; they were beautiful!" recalls Lora. "It's a great example of a fun touch that catches your guests off guard and creates a memorable experience."

When the day dawned on Katie and John's springtime fling wedding, the weather was perfect. Sunshine and a subtle breeze greeted the bride as she walked down the aisle in her strapless white gown, which featured blue embroidery and flowers cascading down the back. After exchanging vows on the lawn, Katie and John participated in a sand ceremony. The bride and groom each held glasses with yellow and blue sand, which they poured into a larger vase to signify the unifying of their lives and families. To close the ceremony, Katie's sister played a special song on the flute.

While photographs of the couple were snapped among the grape vines, their guests nibbled on passed appetizers provided by All Seasons All Reasons. Family and friends mingled and enjoyed looking at the display of family wedding photographs, as well as signing the unique guest book, which was a dinner platter that the bride and groom later heat-fired to preserve.

To find their table assignments, guests discovered a delightful display of escort cards poking out from a charming bed of gerbera daisies and wheatgrass, with brightly colored eggs tucked daintily about. Each table was named for a Disney character, as a nod to Katie and John's honeymoon destination.

Inside the rustic barn, the newlyweds and their guests dined on a lunchtime buffet of beef tenderloin, chicken breast stuffed with feta and roasted garlic, pasta, and roasted vegetables - accompanied by a refreshing green salad with apples, local pears, and Gorgonzola cheese.

Next, Katie and John cut their wedding cake – an adorable, tiny white creation adorned with a gingham bow. While they added a small cake for tradition, neither John nor Katie wanted to serve cake as the sole dessert. So, they worked with their baker, Carissa Jones of Sugar and Spice and ..., to create an impressive dessert display, featuring cupcakes, cookies, petit fours, and fruit custards.

"I think we had 20 different desserts! We wanted something fun and different, and our guests loved it," remembers the bride.

Katie and John weren't sure if their daytime wedding would inspire a lot of dancing, but, thanks to enthusiastic guests and an upbeat play list by their DJ, friends and family packed the dance floor all afternoon.

Before send off, guests were treated to an All Seasons All Reasons catering signature – the gourmet coffee station. Chocolate chunks, cinnamon, flavored creams, and syrups enticed guests as the warm aroma of freshly brewed coffee wafted across the lawn. It was the perfect end to the perfect afternoon.

"Everyone really enjoyed themselves, which was what we wanted. We wanted something fun, casual, and comfortable. But it turned out being even more than that – it was perfect!" says Katie. 😊

EVENT COORDINATION: LORA WARD OF A DAY TO REMEMBER

LOCATION: WILSON VINEYARDS

CAKE AND DESSERTS: SUGAR AND SPICE AND ...