

Saying 'I do' on the dunes

Plan a dreamy ceremony at the beach, but have a backup, too

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COPQUIN

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With an abundance of lush parks and magnificent beaches at our fingertips, Long

Island seems the perfect locale for an outdoor wedding. Indeed, "We do five to 10 beach weddings a year, usually in July, August and September," says Jean Mackenzie of Four Seasons Caterer Southampton.

A couple set on getting married outdoors in a natural setting near the ocean should first decide if the reception after the ceremony will be held else-

Gurney's Inn in Montauk can move the celebration inside if the weather is bad.

where, such as in a catering facility. Logistically, that's a much easier way to go than holding both the ceremony and the reception outdoors, says Elaine DeLuca of Exquisite Events in Roslyn, because permits upon permits are always a requisite — not only for the ceremony, but for cooking outdoors, for alcohol consumption, for music and parking.

The next step would be to scout out locations. Select a park or beach you love, and then contact Town Hall. If weddings are allowed, ask about permit requirements. Permit fees may vary according to town residency. There may be tent restrictions and guest limits. Some towns allow neither wedding ceremonies nor receptions at their parks and beaches, so it's a good idea to have a few other locations in mind as backups.

Once permits have been obtained, a backup plan will be necessary because an outdoor event relies on Mother Nature's cooperation: "When planning an outdoor wedding, the weather becomes a big factor," cautions Mackenzie. And it's not just rain to be wary about. "Winds, waves, sand can all move and

change overnight." Sounds risky? There are ways to get around inclement weather.

The pristine park grounds at the Sands Point Preserve are available for an outdoor wedding ceremony, but in case of rain, it could be brought indoors to the elegant Hempstead House, where the reception would be held as well.

"Gurney's Inn in Montauk can do an outdoor wedding for you on the beach, but if the weather is nasty, they can bring everything inside," says DeLuca. Atlantica on the Ocean in Westhampton Beach and the Crescent Beach Club in Bayville are two other venues that can host beachfront wedding ceremonies with indoor receptions. Renting a beachfront house or estate is another good way to safeguard the ceremony in case of bad weather, she added.

So, "with the proper planning and the right people, you can do almost anything on the beach or a park that you can do elsewhere," says Mackenzie. Just be sure to do the research way in advance, then prepare for the best- and worst-case scenarios.

