

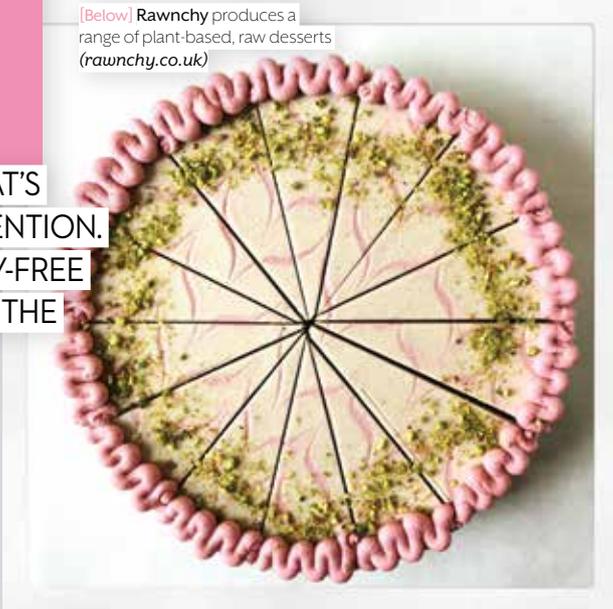
# Talking point

[Below] Looking for an ethical gown? **Minna's** your brand. Dresses like Stephanie, £1,400 (made from vegan-friendly polyester tulle), are manufactured locally using zero-waste pattern-cutting techniques ([minna.co.uk](http://minna.co.uk))



THE HOT TOPIC THAT'S GRABBED OUR ATTENTION. THIS ISSUE, CRUELTY-FREE WEDDINGS ARE ON THE AGENDA

[Below] **Rawnchy** produces a range of plant-based, raw desserts ([rawnchy.co.uk](http://rawnchy.co.uk))



We can no longer ignore the impact we're having on the natural world – but where do weddings fit in? *Rosie Patrick* looks at ways to keep eco-friendly, vegan values intact

**I**t's one step forward, two steps back. First, the online shopping behemoth that is ASOS pledges admirably to ban animal-derived mohair, cashmere and silk by 2019. Then a heatwave takes hold, so extreme that devastating fires ravage the moors, leaving no doubt that climate change is very much upon us. And,

as the war on plastic weighs heavy on society's conscience, we're faced with conflicting reports: while Morrisons announces it's selling 'naked' cucumbers (i.e. without the pointless shrink-wrapping) to reduce its carbon emissions, the Green Alliance claims abolishing the material altogether could be counterproductive, as it will inadvertently increase food waste, another deadly source of greenhouse gas. It's a scary world, and one that will end up like *WALL-E*'s if we don't act.

But that's the problem. *How* exactly do we act? We can go vegan. We can recycle. We can think twice about that dubious eyeshadow palette. Then life happens. We fall in love and want to get married. Unfortunately, tying the knot, as you may have noticed, is a pretty wasteful business: vast quantities of food, a lot of it meat-related, are served, flowers and dresses are enjoyed once only and paper invitations are posted. Is a cruelty-free, eco-friendly wedding even feasible?

## EAT YOUR FEELINGS

So, what's for dinner? If you're a #plantbasedbabe 365 days a year, why abandon your principles and make an exception for your wedding breakfast? A vegan menu need not be the hurdle you fear. "The process is really no different from that of a meat-eating couple's," points out Susannah Nixon at Stirling's Bespoke Catering & Events. "What vibe would you like to create? Are you looking for

# All's fair in love



[Above] "Use plants instead of flowers as part of your décor," urges The Little White Cow's Kate Symington. "They have a much longer life." ([thelittlewhitecow.co.uk](http://thelittlewhitecow.co.uk))

traditional plates or something more relaxed? The seasonality of your ingredients can have an impact on cost, but other than that, the sky's the limit. We are constantly experimenting, turning classics into cruelty-free dishes. Our vegan sticky toffee pudding blows guests' minds, and we do a fantastic BBQ jackfruit alternative to pulled pork."

Meat-free wedding meals, however, aren't without their struggles - we're looking at you, fussy families. "At the end of the day, it's your wedding and the menu should reflect who you are and what you believe in," stresses Susannah. "It's not fair to ask you to compromise this on the most important day of your life."

There's also the small matter of the cake. Enter Poppy Murracane, who runs Rawnchy, a Glasgow-based raw-dessert company. "For those who are resistant, know this: half my customers don't even know the cakes are vegan and the unadulterated glee on their faces after taking one bite makes me giggle," she laughs. "I'll bend over backwards for you too: I once had a couple who wanted the top of their cake to

Photo: [edinburghphotographic.com](http://edinburghphotographic.com)



[Above] "I used alternative brands on my lovely bride Nicole, who felt strongly about vegan beauty, and was pleased I could put her mind at rest," says makeup artist Leigh Blaney ([makeup-by-leighblaney.co.uk](http://makeup-by-leighblaney.co.uk))



[Below] "We make a delicious vegan Thai curry using tofu and coconut cream," says Susannah Nixon at Bespoke Catering & Events. "It's packed with flavour." ([bespoke-catering.com](http://bespoke-catering.com))

Photo: [jenniferflowerweddings.com](http://jenniferflowerweddings.com)

sustainable fashion fix? Designer Minna Hepburn, who can whip you up a reassuring bespoke piece, has a few ideas. "Working with vegans, we look for fabrics that feel and behave like silk, as that's what our original samples are made from," she explains. "Clients expect the end results to be the same, but it's tricky. Lace is better, as there are so many options."

Eco bridalwear is close to Minna's heart. "It's my view that all clothing should be ethical, in the sense of the materials, workers' conditions, manufacturing and price," she argues. "In the age of fast fashion, consumers fail to appreciate handmade items."

## FORCE OF NATURE

Another touchy subject in this realm is beauty and its often questionable testing practices. No one wants an animal to suffer in the name of rosy cheeks or a signature fragrance, but tracking down conscientious brands can be difficult. Recently, I've become acquainted with high-end company Le Labo, which produces divine 100% vegan scents in refillable, BPA-free packaging. And there's always The Body Shop, of course. But when it comes to makeup, especially the durable, bridal kind, I'm lost. "I'm learning all the time," admits makeup artist Leigh Blaney. "Though I couldn't completely overhaul my huge kit,

I've had vegan brushes for a while and mostly use cruelty-free Urban Decay on brides anyway - the All Nighter range is one of my favourites for longevity. My highlighters are from Anastasia Beverly Hills and I'm quite a fan of Tarte Cosmetics, as they're also waterproof. I'm happy to take any vegan suggestions."

## PLANT THE SEED

One last area to mull over: décor. It can destroy your best-laid eco plans in a flash. Find florists who care about their carbon footprint, such as Cloudberry Flowers in the Borders, who grow, rather than import, their blooms. Confetti should be biodegradable - shop Shropshire Petals for sustainable showers.

When it comes to green styling, an honest approach from the outset is all The Little White Cow needs to get to work on your venue. "When you're briefing us, be clear from the get-go," advises the company's Kate Symington. "It gives us the best chance to deliver your eco-friendly big day - for example, swapping our Chesterfields for hay bale seating instead."

What difference can you really make with your wedding? "The key words are 'borrow', 'recycle' and 'hire'," Kate says. "Encourage your guests to make good choices with BYOB or a DIY baking stall. Buy local. Pick an exclusive-use venue that doesn't require travelling in between stages of the day. Prioritise the business's ethos and ask tough questions - what do they do with their waste? What do they stand for? The way forward isn't always easy or obvious. It's all about being mindful." ♥



[Below] Cloudberry Flowers grows all the blooms used for its lush bouquets on site ([cloudberryflowers.wordpress.com](http://cloudberryflowers.wordpress.com))

resemble a choppy ocean because the proposal was on a scuba-diving trip, and I made translucent waves out of blue agar (vegan gelatine)."

## WHAT NOT TO WEAR

When every gown seems to be made of no-go materials, how can you bag yourself a