



made cone-shaped spice towers,” Cohen explains. “Each spice was its own mountain, so if someone wanted to spice their dish a little more, they were able to do so.”

Similarly, Malissa Blackman of **Weddings by Malissa** in Barbados (barbadosweddings.net) planned a destination wedding for a Barbadian native living in New York City and his bride of Cuban heritage. As a tribute, Blackman ensured the cuisine represented both nationalities with freshly caught fish and Caribbean flavors like mango, pineapple and local spices. Two signature cocktails, one a rum punch in the spirit of Barbados and the other a Cuban-style mojito, were also created.

IN THE GAME
From top: Wedding planner Megan Jones stands in as “best man” at her brother’s wedding; Yaniv Cohen of Shiraz Events (far right) at work.

On other occasions, planners have to get out of their everyday environments to fulfill a bride’s dream concept. Tiffany Cook of

Dream Design Weddings (dreamdesignweddings.com), based in Palm Beach, learned that firsthand when she became engaged. (Cook throws amazing affairs for professional athletes and celebrities, and regularly appears on *Platinum Weddings*.) It was a trip to Paris that helped her gather inspiration for her own “platinum” wedding at Fontainebleau last April. Strolling down the Champs-Élysées, she spotted a Swarovski store and remembered a magnificent staircase made entirely of crystals. She recalls, “I told my fiancé, I don’t know how, but I’m going to build this staircase, and that’s how we’re going to enter the ballroom.” True to her word, she managed to replicate the staircase and also create a custom crystal sweetheart table for her wedding day. As one can imagine, the event was, in a word, perfection.

Designing Love Stories

Sometimes planning a wedding becomes personal—even if it’s not the planner’s own big day. | *By Shayne Benowitz* |

Key West wedding planner Megan Jones of **Swankey Events** (swankeyevents.com) was honored when her older brother Brandon asked her to be his “best man,” but her responsibilities extended way beyond keeping the rings safe and giving a toast. She gave his bride, Samantha, a piece of her

native England by decorating the church in an English garden motif with white flowers crawling on wrought iron canopies and potted tulips lining the aisle. And, for the reception at the Casa Marina Resort, Jones flew in two suitcases of English candy and ensured guests went home with tea and biscuits.

Yes, sometimes the role of planner takes on a decidedly different spin, especially when family is involved.

Other times, event planners can tap into shared history to create common ground. As an example, for a Jewish wedding at Miami Art Space, Yaniv Cohen of Miami’s **Shiraz Events** (shirazevents.com) borrowed the sights and fragrances of an Israeli marketplace—a familiar environment from his native country—when he created a decorative, interactive spice table using cumin, paprika and curry. At Lauren Myers and Gregory Deutch’s March 10, 2012, wedding at Miami Event Space, “We took Moroccan hammered silver trays and

