



FORECAST FOR FUN Southern California's idyllic climate meant daytime temperatures in the 70s and acres of tropical vegetation for the November wedding of Andrew Baker (opposite, left) and Kevin Gaines Jr. Most of their guests had never been to a same-sex wedding, so the two were determined to throw what Andrew calls "an event they simply did not want to miss."



BETTER TOGETHER

On a balmy Southern California afternoon, a dashing couple welcomed more than 200 guests to a wedding where the vibe was modern and masculine, and every element was an opportunity to celebrate the power of love and acceptance.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AMY LYNN
TEXT BY LINDSY VAN GELDER



SHOW OF HANDSOME Black tuxes (with velvet bow ties) were one of just a few classic choices for the day; above, Andrew strides in with some of his groomsmen. The newlyweds changed into white tux jackets for their first dance.

Two men, one Black, one White. At the start of the ceremony, their officiant, friend Clay Cardozo, solemnly reminded Andrew Baker, Kevin Gaines Jr., and their 215 guests that “there was a time when this marriage would not have been happening, because of the way these two men look on the outside or because of how they love.” Their big day defined a better time, though, in which inclusivity, acceptance, and the power of diversity were joyfully celebrated, right down to the rainbow-flag cuff links worn by all the groomsmen to represent gay pride.

Within that framework of unity, Andrew and Kev’s November 1, 2019, nuptials were also a showcase for their spirited individuality. The three days of festivities took place at Rancho Las Lomas, in Silverado, California (about 80 miles from San Diego, where they live), a 32-acre resort with an on-site zoo that includes zebras, macaws, and a white Bengal tiger. They chose a counterintuitive color scheme: Black was the dominant color, with accents in white, gold, and emerald, which matched the verdant

setting. They also signed off on quite a few nontraditional details, from the absence of a wedding cake to the presence of thoroughly of-the-moment music (the wedding party sauntered in to tracks by the EDM artists Rüfüs du Sol and Odesza). “We told our families from the get-go that it was important to us to do it our way,” says Andrew. “It’s how we approach everything in life.” The pair met at a bar in 2015; each had only been in one serious relationship before. Kev was a naval officer at the time, but he eventually joined Andrew as a financial planner at the same practice.

Both men describe their relationship as a mutual growth process from day one. “My whole life, I inherently worried about what people think,” says Andrew, whereas “Kev is unapologetically himself.” In his vows, Kev mirrored Andrew’s sentiments: “I think we’ve all had that conversation with ourselves where we’ve convinced ourselves we’re not good enough,” he told him. “We’re too ugly, too fat, too Black, too gay. The moment I met you, all of those feelings I had inside disappeared.”



ROOM TO GROW 1. Potted arrangements and garlands of garden roses, dahlias, scabiosa, anthurium, veronica, king protea, calathea, and ferns marked the aisle and altar. **2. & 3.** All of the printed pieces shared a tropical motif, along with the wedding palette and the Fiona typeface. The grooms wanted refreshingly informal language, which they wrote with their planner. **4.** Their seating chart nodded to the grooms’ jobs as financial advisers.





LIGHTING THE WAY A canopy of southern smilax and gleaming Edison bulbs hovered over the head table; clusters of roses, antique carnations, Italian ruscus, and variegated ivy ran down the center. The dinner menu, which featured Greek salad, chicken piccata, steak, and balsamic-glazed Brussels sprouts, was printed on the chargers.

KEV + ANDREW'S GARDEN EXTRAVAGANZA

BY THE NUMBERS

1

Best man. The grooms chose their close friend Gregg Ratner for the job.

26

Total number of groomsmen and groomswomen.

6

"Cheat-day treats" at the dessert bar: chocolate-covered Oreo cookies, white-chocolate-raspberry mini tarts, peanut-butter-cup-vanilla mini cupcakes, and three kinds of cookies.

114

Nights during the year before the wedding in which the pair didn't sleep in their own bed, because all or part of their San Diego house was rented out on Airbnb. As financial planners, they knew that having a debt-free wedding would be worth the sacrifice.

FULLY ENGAGED

The couple's wedding had quite an act to follow: For their 2018 "proposapalooza!" Andrew took Kev on a hike, where a photographer was secretly waiting to snap the moment. After Andrew got down on one knee and Kev said yes, they and a friend (and a bottle of Champagne) took a sightseeing helicopter ride over San Diego. Then they headed to dinner at the Hotel Salamar's rooftop restaurant, where dozens of friends greeted them as they stepped off the elevator, yelling, "Surprise!" and holding balloons that said "FEYONCE!"

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HOW COULD TWO PEOPLE
BE SO LUCKY TO HAVE
THEIR WORLDS COLLIDE
AND MAKE SUCH
A BEAUTIFUL MESS?
”

—A LINE FROM ANDREW'S VOWS

HONEYMOON DISPATCH

Andrew and Kev had two extremely different ideas for their dream trip: a super-chill, turn-off-the-phone-and-read-a-book destination, and one packed with parties, shopping, and culture. So they went ahead and booked both, splitting 10 days between the Mahogany Bay Resort & Beach Club in Belize (mahoganybayvillage.com), and the jumping Papaya Playa Project in Tulum, Mexico (papayaplayaproject.com). When they got to Tulum after four relaxing days in Belize, there was no record of their reservation, and though the glitch was nobody's fault, they had to sit in the lobby for five hours while it got resolved. In the end, they were upgraded to "the nicest villa on the whole property," says Andrew. But before the happy resolution, they made a mutual decision not to freak out: "We sat there patiently drinking tequila, and told ourselves that this was just part of our honeymoon story."

IN THE NAME OF LOVE

Soon after they were engaged, Kev told Andrew that he planned to change his last name to Baker.

Estranged from his own father, who had never been a big part of his life, he had found a father figure in Andrew's dad. "I see how much his family respects him, and I said, 'This is a no-brainer,'" says Kev. "This is what I've been looking for: being a Baker."

THE HEIGHT OF FUN

"Our favorite moment was when a live saxophonist performed at the reception, and our wedding party marched out with 10-foot-tall poles with photos of our faces on top," says Kev. "It was one of the biggest hits of the night."

TOAST-WORTHY WORDS

The theme of acceptance came through in quotes printed on two cocktail napkins. One was a RuPaul line—"If you can't love yourself, how in the hell are you gonna love somebody else?"—that also made it into their vows. The other, "I like me better when I'm with you," is the title line of the Lauv song they chose for their first dance.

SOURCES

Location Rancho Las Lomas **Event planning and design** Details, Darling **Photography** Amy Lynn Photography **Videography** Wild Light Films **Catering** 24 Carrots **Flowers** Shindig Chic **Stationery and printed chargers** Prim & Pixie **Grooms' ensembles** Suitsupply **Grooming** Beauty by Stacey **Music** DJ Mr. E (deejay); Jason Whitmore (saxophone) **Linens** La Tavola Fine Linen **Rentals** Witty Rentals; Signature Party Rentals **Photo booth** Desert Luna Photo Booths