



WORTH THE WAIT

TIMING AND DISTANCE
CONSPIRED TO KEEP THESE
NEW YORKERS APART.
BUT MORE THAN A DECADE
AFTER MEETING,
THE ONCE STAR-CROSSED
LOVES GOT THEIR
HAPPILY-EVER-AFTER.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELIZABETH MESSINA
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SIDE BY SIDE

Nicholas Gudz and Tara Maietta—he in a Sebastien Grey suit, and she in Oscar de la Renta—slipped away for photos after their seaside ceremony at a historic estate in Waterford, Connecticut. **Opposite:** The bride's pale blue organza gown was intricately embroidered with taffeta appliques and delicate beads.



STYLE AND SUBSTANCE

1. Tara borrowed her garter from her grandmother, who wore it at her own wedding 66 years earlier. **2.** Cones of sage, lavender, mint, and rosemary (said to symbolize long life, devotion, virtue, and loyalty) were set out for guests to toss as the newlyweds made their way back up the aisle. **3.** Along with picturesque gardens of roses, daisies, and lavender, the sprawling Italianate-style mansion, built in 1906, has 42 rooms. **4.** Tara and Nick exchanged self-penned vows under a pergola in the garden. Afterward, they slipped the papers with their promises into a bottle they buried on the property. “We came back to dig it up on our first anniversary,” says Tara, “and we celebrated right there with Champagne.”

“It was perfect,” says Tara Maietta of her first date with Nicholas Gudz, back in 2004. The two recent college grads, introduced by a mutual friend, instantly connected over dinner at a downtown New York City restaurant. The only problem? “Literally days later, he had to move back to his hometown upstate,” she says. By the time Nick returned to the Big Apple the following year, Tara was dating someone else. “We’d bump into each other at social gatherings, but we never got the chance to see where a relationship would take us,” she says. With Nick’s relocation to Southern California soon afterward, that possibility seemed even more remote, though they both made a point to stay in touch.

The odds didn’t improve until 2010, when Tara took a job in Los Angeles. She was now single, and their connection proved to be the real thing. One more move awaited them, though: back to NYC in 2012, where Tara began a sales job at Oscar de la Renta and Nick cofounded a site for financial advisers. On an October night in 2013, she returned to their apartment, exhausted from a long work trip. Nick was on the sofa, with candles flickering and Coldplay on the stereo. “She thought I was trying to make her feel better,” he recalls. “But as we chatted I reached for the ring box I’d hidden in the cushions.” He nervously presented the diamond; she enthusiastically accepted it.

They were set on a California wedding, until planning from so far away proved too big a challenge. Knowing they wanted a “natural but sophisticated” outdoor celebration, a friend suggested the Eolia mansion at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford, Connecticut. The estate’s 230 acres include a lavender field, a lighthouse, an orchard and, notes Tara, “the most beautiful English gardens you’ve ever seen.” They were told the venue was booked for the next two years—only to later get word that Friday, July 11, 2014, had opened up unexpectedly.

Seizing the day, quite literally, eight months after that fateful call, 143 guests joined the couple in the formal gardens for a nondenominational ceremony, followed by live jazz and cocktails overlooking the Long Island Sound. Dinner inside the mansion ended with peach cobbler and ice cream sandwiches. There was cake, too, but the newlyweds skipped the ceremonial cutting. “I didn’t want the music to stop!” says Tara. When it’s been more than a decade since that first perfect date, you don’t want to stop for anything.

TWICE AS NICE

The floral pattern on Tara’s dress made a breathtaking backdrop for her bouquet of ‘Café au Lait’ dahlias, sweet peas, astilbes, eucalyptus, jasmine vines, pokeberry greens, olive branches, and astrantias.



A PLACE IN THE SUN

1. After the ceremony, guests made their way to the tented cocktail hour with waterfront views. **2.** Passed appetizers included strawberry-cucumber soup shots, seared ahi tuna on wonton crisps, grilled shrimp on polenta, petite rosemary lamb chops, and gruyère gougères. Spiked blueberry lemonade was the

evening's signature sipper. **3.** An oversize kraft-paper banner (measuring almost 12 feet in length!) listed the seating assignments. "It was far too long," says the bride, here holding it up with her maid of honor. "But it looked amazing!" They ended up cutting it in half and hanging it near the reception entrance.

REFINED ROMANCE

1. Inside the mansion, arrangements of dahlias, peonies, roses, sweet peas, and herbs graced round dinner tables. **2.** Eucalyptus and jasmine-vine garlands ran down the center of the rectangular ones. The meal, which took place in three of the estate's ground-floor rooms, began with a watermelon and feta salad, followed by a choice of pan-seared sea bass, rosemary-

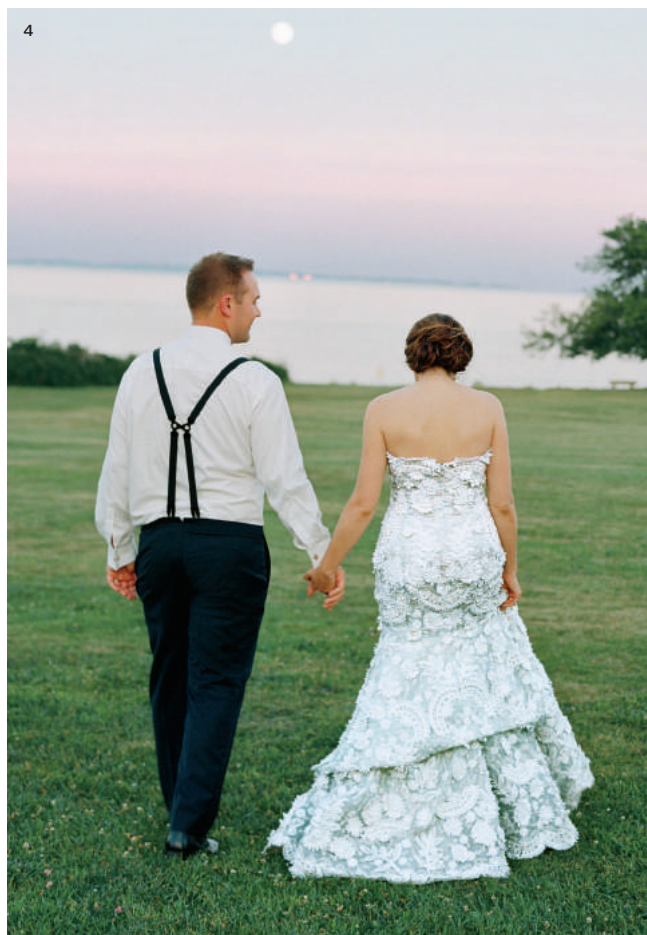
crusted beef tenderloin, or roast chicken breast with chardonnay wine sauce. **3.** Devotion—and great parties—runs in the bride's family. "My parents are still truly, madly in love with each other after 35 years," says Tara of her mom and dad, shown here post-ceremony. "Plus, they're always the first people on the dance floor—and the last ones to leave!"



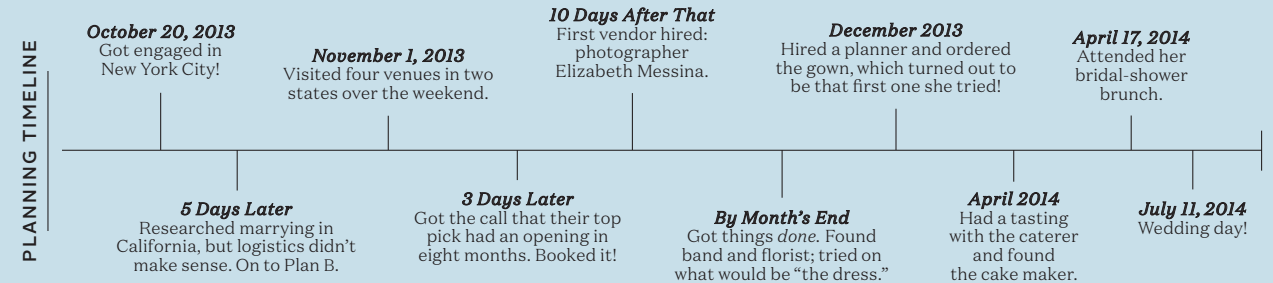
TIERS OF JOY

1. “We were certain from the start that we wanted more than one cake,” says Tara. They served three in total, each presented on a moss-lined table, including this chocolate-and-raspberry creation. **2.** An impressive three-layer Tahitian vanilla pound cake was decorated with sugar flowers, berries, and vines.

3. The fondant appliqués on this toasted-almond confection resembled those on the bride’s gown. **4.** Post-vows, the newlyweds took a stroll down to the water. Later that night, a super-moon rose, surprising party-goers with its size and brightness. “It was magical,” says Tara. “Our guests still talk about it.”



TARA AND NICK’S CHIC SOIRÉE



TIPS FROM THE BRIDE (AND ONE FROM THE GROOM)

Hire a full-service planner, and hire them first. → Stop looking at Pinterest. It only confuses you and the team that is trying to execute everything. → Don’t shop with a lot of people; it’s too overwhelming and you lose sense of who you are. → At your first fitting, know that the gown will *not* fit perfectly. Let the seamstresses work their magic, and by the next one, it will feel like your wedding dress. → If stuff happens that day, let it happen. It’s the partner by your side that matters. → *Take it all in. Before you know it, you’ll be on your honeymoon.*

THE LOGISTICS

THE ACCOMMODATIONS
The bride, her maid of honor, closest girlfriends, mother, and grandmother stayed at **The Spa at Norwich Inn** (thespa.atnorwichinn.com). The groom and his best friends and brothers weren’t far away at **Mohegan Sun** (mohegansun.com). The rest of the guests checked into the **Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa**, where the next-day brunch took place (marriott.com).

THE REHEARSAL DINNER
Immediately following a dry run of the ceremony at the mansion, the couple and their photographer shot photos on the beach. “It was a great way for us to get comfortable being in front of the camera and with each other,” Tara says. Then 70 loved ones joined them at a restaurant, **Latitude 41**, for a barbecue dinner along the water’s edge (coastalgourmetct.com).

BY THE NUMBERS

7
Years between first and second dates

25
Number of people who worked on Tara’s embroidered Oscar de la Renta gown

650
Hours it took them to make it

1948
The year Tara’s grandmother wed wearing the now-heirloom garter

6
Times the garter slid off of Tara’s leg as she danced to the live band

4
Brides in Tara’s family who wore it (including her)

“*Rather than getting ready with just the girls, we pregamed on the day of with all our friends—boys included. We danced, drank rosé, and just let loose before the ceremony. It really helped ease any nervousness.*”

TARA, ON CALMING HER PREWEDDING JITTERS

The Big Reveal

Tara and Nick decided to do a first look before walking down the aisle. “Our photographer had us stand back-to-back,” she says. “We could feel each other’s hands, smell each other’s scents, and, most of all, feel this intense energy between us.” After a solid two minutes, the two turned around. “Nick looked at me as if I had never been more beautiful,” Tara recalls. “And he had never been more handsome. He swung me around, and we danced under the pergola.”

HONEYMOON DISPATCH

Postwedding, the couple jetted off for a week in Bora Bora, where they stayed at the **St. Regis Bora Bora** (stregisborabora.com). Their Polynesian adventure included a just-for-them sailboat cruise at sunset and dinner on a private island, followed by some of the best stargazing they’d ever experienced.

SOURCES

Location Eolia Mansion at Harkness Memorial State Park **Event planning** True Event **Catering** Gourmet Galley Catering **Flowers** Hana Floral Design **Photography** Elizabeth Messina **Officiant** Chaz Zesulka **Stationery** Regas Studio **Calligraphy** Miss Multee **Cakes** Ana Parzych Cakes **Music** Suite Occasions (ceremony); Honey and Vinyl (cocktails); Rhythm Collective (reception) **Rentals** La Tavola Fine Linen; Rentals Unlimited **Bride’s gown and veil** Oscar de la Renta **Groom’s suit** Sebastien Grey

See The Guide for more vendor sources