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THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT REBECCA CHRISTENSEN AND Edward Herrman would get married by the ocean. She grew up sailing and crabbing on the New Jersey shore; he loves fishing and boating, and the couple live on the water in Bradenton, FL. When the bride's cousin, event designer and 2004 MB Trendsetter Michelle Rago, told us about the plans, we couldn't resist getting involved. So we teamed up to create a casually elegant seaside soiree on Bonnet Island, a private isle in New Jersey, for the couple's October 8, 2006, wedding.

Every element of the affair took its cue from the coast. We based the decor in fresh hues of seawater blue, white and sand, and then embellished with chic, natural touches using shells, driftwood and sea grass. At the same time, "we wanted everything to feel whimsical," says Rago, to reflect the bride's fun personality. "I was raised a Jersey Shore girl," says Rebecca. "Our wedding was perfect for who I am." —Elaine Stuart

Life's a Beach

Above: The invitations consist of a decoupage nautical puzzle; the save-the-date is the first piece to arrive, followed by the invite and response cards set on a bed of sea stones in a box tied with nautical knots, price upon request, by Karen Bartolomei for Grapevine.

Right: The island's Boat-house Chapel opens on all sides onto a beautiful bay; wind chime-like mobiles made from sand dollars and starfish hanging from branches decorate the barn doors. **Below:** The welcome baskets for out-of-town guests feature saltwater taffy, an ocean-scented candle, soaps and more in a copper bucket adorned with vintage Jersey Shore postcards, by Michelle Rago, Ltd.



A close-up photograph of a wedding bouquet. The bouquet is composed of numerous seashells of various shapes, sizes, and colors, including white, cream, and light brown. Interspersed among the shells are several dried, light-colored flowers. The bouquet is held together by a dark, textured stem, likely a branch, which is wrapped with light-colored twine. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white surface, possibly a tablecloth or a wall.

Down the Shore

A beach-themed wedding we styled with wedding planner and designer Michelle Rago on Bonnet Island, NJ, captures one couple's love of the coast

Edited by Linda Hirst Photographs by Dasha Wright



Seaworthy Style

In a creative twist on the escort-card table, a custom-built sailboat helps guests "navigate" the way to their seats. Boat base, price upon request, by Billy Hirst for Michelle Rago, Ltd. Sail, \$500, by Lucy Lorenzo for Grapevine. Seating tags (attached to starfish and bleached sand dollars), \$2 each, by Karen Bartolomei for Grapevine. Pale blue ribbon from Strano Designs.



Beach Bay



Deep Blue

Left: Even the signature cocktail—an aptly named Blue Bay Bonnettini made of vodka, blue curaçao and pineapple juice garnished with a lemon twist—reflects the couple's color scheme. Serving tray, \$363, from Match. Above: The petite ceremony programs, \$18 each, by Karen Bartolomei for Grapevine, feature embossed sea horses (a fish that mates for life). They are displayed in a vase, \$60, filled with finger starfish, \$2 each, both from HomeArt.



Marine Life

Opposite: Fanciful table dressings and place settings continue the nautical theme; the seashell napkin treatment, by Michelle Rago, Ltd., becomes a cute memento for guests. Ribbon from Strano Designs. Tented table-name cards, \$10 each, by Karen Bartolomei for Grapevine. Undercloth, service plate and crystal from Party Rental Ltd. Sheer overlay with window-pane cording from Magnolias Linens. This page, right: Fresh seafood creations, like these hors d'oeuvres of tuna carpaccio and seaweed salad on potato blinis, are on the menu by Alan Perl for The Ultimate Caterer in Marlboro, NJ.