

A Beautiful 'I Do'

BEAVER CREEK WEDDINGS OFFER A PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCE FULL OF NATURAL BEAUTY, DELICIOUS FOOD AND THE SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

BY KIMBERLY NICOLETTI • PHOTOS BY HARPER POINT PHOTOGRAPHY & DOMINIQUE TAYLOR

A tinge of green still remained on the golden-edged aspen leaves. Dewdrops glistened in the morning light as Carly Arnold blotted away tears; she and her soon-to-be husband, Brad, stood back to back, under the turning aspens, reading letters each had written to the other. "Your beautiful dimples light up my world, and your laugh makes me smile more than anything. You are everything to me ..." he wrote. Then Brad caught a tear from his eye before the couple hugged and posed for photos inspired by both the grandeur, and the playfulness, of Beaver Creek's mountains.

Brad took the sensible route: He paired his suit and tie with black Nikes, while Carly faced the more difficult task of balancing on one of two long boards — painted with the Colorado logo and words "Just Married" — on Beaver Creek Village's sidewalk in high-heeled wedges. It was just one detail the couple highlighted at their Beaver Creek wedding, Sept. 13, 2014.

Carly grew up visiting Beaver Creek on family vacations. She and

Brad moved to the mountain town three years ago, from Kansas, after graduating college. He proposed to Carly at Beaver Lake, and with their mutual love of skiing, riding and long boarding, it seemed only natural to share their love of the town with family and friends.

As it turned out, the feeling was mutual. About 300 family and friends opted to enjoy Beaver Creek as a vacation during the couple's wedding.

"It was amazing how many family and friends wanted to come out," Carly says. "It was a vacation — a destination — not a burden that they had to travel to."

As fate would have it, the couple's first initials are B and C, so they created a logo playing off Beaver Creek's, which they used on invitations, patterned ceiling lights and even beer coolers.

As the week progressed, the couple joined group hikes to Beaver Lake, biked, and spent quality time with friends and family in the village before the busy day.



The couple's first dance at Talons Restaurant.



Beaver Creek's many amenities, such as the chair lifts, complimentary cookies and beautiful scenery add to the experience. Venues such as the Chapel at Beaver Creek and Talons Restaurant contribute as well.



ALL-INCLUSIVE VISION

Childhood memories often spur couples to choose Beaver Creek for their wedding, but the resort's recreation, dining and events seal the deal.

"It's not just a wedding," says JoAnn Moore, master bridal consultant and owner of Mountains & Meadows in Vail. "It's a wedding celebration where guests can kayak, fly fish, raft, golf — the girls go to the spas. Everything is right in the village, and we can get them just about anything related to the great outdoors."

Beaver Creek's exclusive, yet varied, options make the location not only look picture perfect, but also feel picture perfect. The venues, resort and wedding professionals all cooperate to ensure an effortless wedding.

"Talk about vision and collectively coming together," Moore says. "It's like clockwork how the staff works together ... and we're just blessed with the best chefs. It's unique, and it's an adventure. It's like having all this magic for (the couple) to themselves."

For example, last September, the forest surrounding Beano's Cabin smelled of sage as Leon Joseph Littlebird performed a Native American blessing. As he called in the ancestors, a hummingbird briefly hovered over the bride and groom. The groom walked down the aisle as Littlebird played a warrior song on his flute, after which a string quartet chimed in.

Beano's is just one of the rustic, yet high-end, venues that make it feel like a couple is getting married in their own, intimate cabin. Allie's and Zach's also offer exquisite dining, paired with unparalleled mountain experiences.

SaddleRidge showcases some of the best Western heritage within an elegant, oversized cabin. It hosts the largest collection

of Native American and Western artifacts and furnishings outside of a museum. Its giant windows and 40-foot-high vaulted ceilings provide a warm, open, outdoor feeling.

"It does feel like a Colorado experience," says Kelly Karli, owner of Kelly Karli Weddings and Events in Edwards. "It's rustic (but you can soften it, too.)"

Carly was one of the first brides to celebrate her reception at Talons Restaurant, built specifically for the 2015 World Alpine Ski Championships. She played upon the venue's nod to alpine skiing by using a pair of vintage wooden skis as the "guest book," and bringing in an old, modified ski chair from Rose Bowl to act as a photo booth. During cocktail hour, photographers snapped pictures of guests mingling on the 6,700-square-foot deck from above before everyone moved inside for dinner.

Properties like the Ritz-Carlton, Bachelor Gulch, when booked in low season, can feel like having "your own isolated hotel, where you can enjoy each other's company in the hotel, the spa or the Jacuzzi," Karli says. Any time of the year, it offers the pristine privacy of the Bachelor Gulch area.

Even locations like the Park Hyatt's grand ballrooms can be transformed to reflect Colorado's natural environment. Planners like Karli employ everything from cherry blossom trees and greenery to textural lighting and flowers to accent and soften the rock pillars. Likewise, they add drapery, lighting and perhaps some birch branches around the columns at Spruce Saddle to transform it from a ski-in-and-out-Epic-burger-stop to a stunningly up-lit, intimate locale.

"The venues work to go out of the box," Moore says. "They are not just pinecones and aspen leaves; they (cooperate) to bring as personalized and unique an experience as the couple."



EXCHANGING VOWS

As Carly walked down Mother Nature's aisle to Beaver Creek's Wedding Deck, Brad stood against the Gore Range's rock-solid backdrop.

Though she risked the ever-present chances of rain, or snow, and even worried a bit when it frosted the night before, the day turned out sunny and warm.

"Everything really came together with nature," she says. "And all of our pictures are so amazing."

Every couple planning an outdoor ceremony at Beaver Creek has a backup plan so reliable that staff members set up the secondary site, just in case. However, in Moore's 30 years of planning Beaver Creek weddings, she has only had to use the backup plan five times.

Couples who prefer indoor weddings for weather, or religious, reasons opt for The Chapel at Beaver Creek. The stone and stucco, nondenominational chapel, which is owned and operated by representatives from various congregations, sits within a balsam tree grove. Sunlight streams through the large windows, which overlook colorful foliage. A babbling river runs near the courtyard, providing gorgeous backgrounds.

PICTURE PERFECT

Beaver Creek blends the best of both worlds: It offers all the amenities and fine dining of a city, with the quaint, casual feel of an alpine village.

"Beaver Creek feels just far enough in the middle of nowhere,"

says photographer Jason Grubb of Jason and Gina photography. "Beaver Creek has that elegance, that, 'I'm separated from the world' feel."

"It's a great opportunity to show off a place that means something to the couple," says Nate Agnini, co-owner of Nate & Jenny Weddings. "People are just blown away by the beauty and grandeur of Colorado."

Lush evergreens, the earthy bark of pine trees and mountain peaks punctuated by blue skies form the backdrop for the Arnolds' photos. Soft grasses play upon the light emanating behind flower girls' delicate hair. In one snapshot, the bride's silvery high-heels and her simple, wildflower-inspired bouquet rest upon a stack of cut firewood.

Throughout Beaver Creek, nooks and crannies offer unique photo opportunities, from green golf course shots to old, wooden barns that capture the essence of Colorado.

"There is a lot of variety, from river shots to mountain views, and they are all quite accessible," says Vail Valley photographer Dominique Taylor. "It epitomizes a mountain wedding experience, whatever the season is and wherever you go in Beaver Creek."

During Carly and Brad's ceremony on the Wedding Deck, the couple rooted a small aspen in a planter, in lieu of lighting a unity candle. Mature trees, which have stood the test of blustery winds, heavy snowstorms and intense sunlight, formed the background for the fledgling aspen. After the wedding, the couple transplanted it to Carly's parents' backyard in Bachelor Gulch, where it continues to grow strong.