

BY RONIT HOGI

In my career as event organiser, I am used to producing a dream wedding within an agreed budget. But recently I had to achieve this for a very unusual wedding — for a couple who love horses more than anything. Lior and Rotem Hoffman Moshe are professional riders and own a horse, Luigi. Their wish was to celebrate at the horse ranch where they met. Horses, of course, were the co-stars, and so were the couple's two dogs. Everybody enjoyed the rustic farm atmosphere.

To make the most of the venue's beauty and ambience, we decided to have fun and throw a country-style party on a Friday afternoon and celebrate until the start of Shabbat. Four hundred people were invited. We had to make sure our unconventional venue would be comfortable for that many guests and accommodate all the equipment needed.

There was a lot of work ahead. Planning this party was a challenge for us — and for the couple, who found it difficult to imagine the farm becoming a dream party venue. Our budget was no more than average for such an event. The guests' enjoyment was our top priority.

The farm we chose is famous for its flair and amenities. It is one of the most beautiful ranches in central Israel — although it still does not offer the infrastructure of a mainstream wedding venue. So we had to start from the beginning. We had to measure, sketch, build, add electrical outlets and toilets, call in the gardeners and provide for shade and air-conditioning. And then, of course, we had to choose a rabbi, catering and bar services, furniture, a DJ, designs, photographers and attractions for all the family members.

The staging and installation was a lengthy process, taking three days. We had to consider the needs of our suppliers and let them work in reasonable conditions.

First, we added shade. White and airy draping was hung over the intended seating, reception and chupah areas, except under the trees' natural shade.

Second to enter the ranch were the carpenters, who built a large stage for the dance floor and an additional stage for the chupah. Later, the electricians arrived. Portable air-conditioners were set around the dance floor.

Furniture came in several categories — round tables for family seating, mediaeval-style wooden tables for close friends, loungers and canopy beds for relaxation. We rented furniture in a natural wooden veneer and in golden shades that blended naturally with the rustic environment and the festive white draping.

Then we set out to enhance the farm vibe. Flower arrangements incorporated elements from the world of horse riding. The table numbers were inspired by the colourful ribbon rosettes given to winning horses. We placed golden-coloured horse-shoes near the flower bouquets on each table. Miniature horse figures were added to the flowers. Instead of conventional barriers, we used stacks of hay and added comfortable white and gold pillows on our benches. Delicate white drapes decorated the stable entrance and other special spots.

A singing rabbi, accompanied by a keyboard player, presided over the ceremony. The celebration was held a few days before Rosh Hashanah, so



Four-hundred guests partied on the ranch, from lunchtime until Shabbat



Horseshoes forged a link with the equestrian theme. *Opposite:* flamingo fun

Stable

the rabbi also blessed the new year and the coming Shabbat. This blessing was such an emotional, moving moment for everyone.

The DJ position and a drum set were set on the edge of the dance floor and the drummer played along with the DJ, creating a groovy live-music effect.

A variety of party accessories were set out in large decorative baskets and later given to the partying guests.

Catering, of course, was really important to the families. Because the wedding party was spun out across the Friday afternoon, a great selection of gourmet dishes was served non-stop from our open kitchen area. The bar was also set near the dance floor and served drinks to the revelling guests throughout.

The result was a spectacular celebration. The farm



Clockwise from below: Luigi, the horse, comes along for the ride; decked in colour-themed ribbons, the couple's dogs, Kate Russell (left) and Marley, were also lead players on the big day; horse-show rosettes proved a winner on the tables. Inset left: tiny tabletop horses



PHOTO: ARIEL KREIDERMAN

relationship

was transformed. It was decorated exactly as the couple imagined — and exceeded their wildest hopes. The bride and groom arrived at 11am for their photo session, which featured pictures with the horses in the stable. A little later, their relatives joined in for family pictures, until the other guests arrived at 12.30.

The wedding was in September, which is still hot in Israel, but the guests enjoyed a cool sea breeze. The white drapes and tall trees gave shade and the portable air-conditioners cooled the dance floor area.

At the bride's request, we set up several amenities and activities for the guests. Hand-held fans were given out and were still welcome, despite the efficient ventilation, air-conditioning and shade.

A flower-decorated wall was designed for people who wanted to take selfies with their own mobile



phones or be photographed for magnets by one of our professional photographers.

A comfortable makeup area was set up, because the warm afternoon meant many guests wanted to reapply their cosmetics.

Braids were on offer for young girls and teenagers, while the little children could have a festive ride in the farm on the back of a brightly decorated pony. This was very popular.

At the end of the party, perfectly timed for the approach of Shabbat, the guests received a souvenir horseshoe designed especially for the married couple, which could be used as a car air freshener with the bespoke perfume provided. The horseshoe carried the wedding date and a farewell blessing. **JB** ronithogi.co.il