



# tuscany, italy

Shelley Blott weds Mark Bata on August 21, 2008

**F**or Shelley and Mark, marrying at a vineyard was like destiny. Mark sells wines from around the world to restaurants and wine shops, while Shelley manages special events for a luxury department store in Calgary, Canada. The two met when Shelley needed wine for an in-store event, and a yearlong acquaintance commenced. “When he finally asked me out, I thought it was more of a work thing,” admits Shelley. “But by the end of the first date, we both just knew.”

Three months later they were engaged and planning a wine-centric wedding. An online search produced Castello di Meleto, a picturesque winery and medieval castle that was affordable and large enough for their 77 guests, who would be coming from three continents. The vino also met their high standards. “The wines were very good, so we booked it!” says Shelley.

Planned activities proved to be true bonding experiences — on the way to Montalcino for a winery tour, several vehicles got

lost. “We had fun anyway,” says the bride. “And it helped us coin the phrase of the trip: It’s all about the adventure!”

The excitement continued with a rehearsal dinner at Ristoro di Lamole, a nail-biting 40-minute drive up winding mountain roads. “The group was a little out of sorts when we arrived, but once we tried the food, all was forgotten!” laughs Shelley.

The ceremony unfolded like the fairy tale Shelley had imagined. Dressed in a taffeta Nicole Miller gown, she entered one of the castle’s stately salons while her stepbrother played acoustic guitar. A simple, romantic ceremony ensued, highlighted by the Italian tradition of drinking *vin santo* (holy wine). Afterward, the reception on the back lawn boasted vineyard views and a four-course meal that included zucchini-flower risotto and Tuscan beef filet. In lieu of cake, the couple served flan, gelato and a fruit buffet set up near the dance floor in the stables.

“Our objective was that everyone have great food, wine and lots of fun,” she says. “And we really did achieve that!” — *EH*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CORBIN GURKIN



▲ **I ACCENTED MY GOWN** with gold metallic ballet flats by Calvin Klein; the jeweled toes matched the 1940s antique bracelet I wore, which a designer friend had found at a flea market. I also wore a vintage Carol Tannenbaum brooch and matching drop earrings.



▲ **OUR WELCOME BASKETS** included packets of tea, shower gels and lip balms, all customized with our names and wedding date, as well as coffee, maps of Tuscany and Italian phrase books. I wanted the gifts to be practical, personal and fun.



▲ **MY FATHER, ED**, escorted me down the aisle to Pachelbel’s “Canon in D.” Both the bridesmaids and I carried the same bouquets of orchids and calla lilies; mine was just slightly larger. The groomsmen wore simple orchid boutonnières.

▼ **MARK AND I** held the ceremony inside one of Castello di Meleto’s elegant salons, which was decorated with beautiful frescos. The castle is located in a small town called Gaiole, just south of Florence, and dates to the 13th century.



▼ **THE APPETIZER BUFFET** had all sorts of goodies, including a Parmesan wheel, Tuscan cold cuts, flatbread, goat cheese and zucchini tarts, ham mousse, crostini, bruschetta and asparagus quiche. I didn’t actually get to eat any of it, but I guess that’s pretty normal!



▼ **DURING THE COCKTAIL HOUR** we served prosecco from one of our favorite producers, Primo Franco, who was also a guest at the wedding. As our gift, he created a special label with our initials and the wedding date on it. The actual vintage isn’t even on the market yet!



▲ **WE BASED OUR COLOR SCHEME** on the centerpieces. I wanted green grapes floating in square glass vases, so we chose brown and champagne as the complementary colors. Chocolate-colored linens covered the tables, and we had green tea lights to match the grapes.



▲ **THE THREE FLOWER GIRLS** (our nieces) sit with two sons of guests outside the castle. Mark’s sister Denise made the girls’ dresses to continue the green color scheme. For the processional, they carried chocolate-brown petals in aluminum buckets tied with ribbons.



▲ **MARK AND I** roamed the castle grounds after the ceremony. Mark wore a custom-tailored Italian suit by Isaia in a soft gray with a champagne pinstripe. His calla boutonnière was different from the groomsmen’s, and designed to complement my bouquet.