



I Do, Round 2

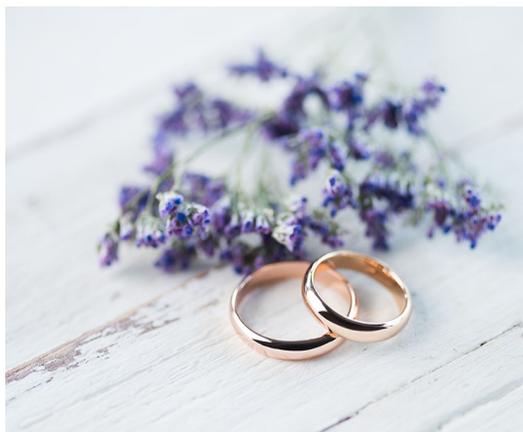
American Dream Cakes 
...making life delicious

I Do, Round 2

When marrying a service member, you're signing on for a life that inherently includes change and challenges. You're probably going to face training assignments, deployments, new duty stations and more – sometimes together and sometimes apart. Uprooting your life when orders come in takes a leap of faith, but if you're in the military (and spouses serve, too!) you learn that home is where you make it.

Many times, military couples marry far from home or on short notice before a deployment or overseas duty station. When that happens, family may not be present for their vows and there may not be time to plan a big ceremony or reception. A courthouse wedding or small ceremony with a few friends is conducted with plans to include family and more formal traditions for a “real wedding” at a later date. Your wedding was as real as it gets, but some brides and grooms missed the feeling of celebrating their union with traditional elements and family present.

Enter... “I Do, Round 2.”



A second ceremony can be planned shortly after a deployment or years later as a vow renewal. No matter what brings you to the place you're ready to celebrate your marriage with family and friends, it's never too late to commemorate all your love has brought you through together. It's special this time, since you and your spouse have some time invested in your relationship and are poised to make a ceremony even more personal and memorable because this time... it's all about the two of you sharing your story with your world.

You're free to have just as much style and grandeur as you want. You're also free to keep it as informal and personalized as you desire. Big or small, here are a few key items you'll want to nail down when planning "I do, Round 2!"

◆ Embrace the "Round 2" Factor:

This is round 2. You've already "been there, done that" on some items. Your guests know you've already been making this work – and work well. Take a little liberty in this setting to incorporate the traditional elements you adore, but feel free to drop items that don't make your heart sing. This is YOUR DAY. And you two have been through some life challenges already. Celebrate your successes! Deployments? Kids? Life? Long distance relationships... Hey, you two know how to rock this! Make this entire experience one that celebrates your strengths, love and marriage.



◆ Who Will Host

The tradition of the parents paying for a wedding has remained the custom for most first-time marriages. In the case of a second ceremony, a couple's parents may or may not observe this tradition. We're not saying your parents don't love you, but if they footed the bill for the first wedding, they might not chip in this time. You're older, wiser and more independent. That applies to financing the wedding, too.

Even with some first-time marriages, it is not uncommon for a couple to take on the hosting duty themselves or have a friend do the honors if the finances aren't available from their parents. Evaluate your situation to decide whether your parents would be the proper hosts or if you want to take this task on yourself.

◆ Location/Venue

Many factors affect choosing the location and venue for your 'Round 2 ceremony' and reception. How close do you want it to be to family? How flexible will your schedules be? Do your families live far away from each other? Is it the location you've always dreamed for your wedding?

If friends and family are available to help plan from a distance, it helps make coordination easier. Military couples can have a ceremony at the base chapel where they are stationed and host their reception in a building on base or at a venue out in town. Hosting the ceremony and reception at the same venue may save time and expenses.

Wedding venues include churches, base chapel, beaches, gardens/parks, and even your own home or backyard for intimate affairs. Choose the venue that works best for your plans and budget, then make it your own.

◆ **Officiant**

If the legality of the marriage has already been completed, practically anyone can officiate your exchange of vows. Generally, the officiant prepares a sermon or words of wisdom to share with the couple; so, it's a good idea to select a person who is good at speaking in front of people and a person you respect and admire.

◆ **Guest List**

To invite guests... or Not? This is a personal decision and your choice can be romantic either way. A renewal ceremony with guests gives you the opportunity to profess your love and celebrate with friends and family. Traditional flair can be observed and your loved ones are part of the ceremony, photos and memories.

Or picture just the two of you, the minister, and a breath-taking view. This intimate option allows a quiet, romantic experience. With no guests, there's no one to make happy but the two of you. After the ceremony is complete, you and your spouse can enjoy skipping the formalities and entertaining guests. As with any event or party, you can decide the size of the guest list.

Larger celebrations require a larger budget but bring the benefit of sharing the experience with friends and family. Consider your location when making the guest list. What is the capacity of the venue you've chosen? Are you providing a seated meal or lighter fare? Is the space too big for your intimate reaffirmation? Depending on your venue capacities and plans, you may have separate guest lists for the ceremony and reception.



◆ Dress Code

What should I wear? Today, what the bride and groom “should” wear during a ceremony is much more fluid and personalized. Don't stress over traditional touches if they don't fit you.

The bride doesn't have to wear white.
The groom doesn't have to wear a tux.

What you wear will be influenced by the type of ceremony you plan to have. If it's a larger affair with wedding parties, you may enjoy wearing formal attire. If it's the two of you on the beach, you opt for more casual dress. You might swing your ceremony and reception toward a more modern or playful theme. Be creative and have fun. This is your day to celebrate.



If the bride has a gown from your first ceremony, she may consider wearing it again for the 'Round 2' with friends. In addition to the sentimental value it holds – it's always good to get a second use out of that investment!

Wedding Gown: this is your chance, so take advantage of it! You will probably not have another chance to wear a wedding gown. Choose the style that suits your personality, figure and the theme for the rest of the wedding

- If the groom wears dress blues, plan on a more formal wedding dress.
- Research the specific details/customs for a traditional military wedding in your branch of service.

Want a break from the uniform for this ceremony?

- Try matching suits for groomsmen and dresses for the ladies.
Or...
- For a casual feel, the bride and her entourage can wear cocktail or maxi dresses and the gents can wear matching trousers and vests.

◆ DO get a cake!

This is one tradition it's hard to skip. Cake is expected. Guests want to admire it and they want to see you cut it.

There are new trends in wedding cakes to consider. Mini-cakes, elegant cupcakes, naked cakes, and even tarts and pies are making appearances at wedding receptions. Explore styles in our gallery and online to see what you and your groom like. Our American Dream Cakes Team can help you determine the best cake to fit your ceremony, taste and budget. Call us at 910-346-2347 for a Wedding Cake Consultation.

- If you are renewing your vows and want to commemorate the original cake you had at your wedding, the cake designers at American Dream Cakes can make a small replica of the cake or cake top for your vow renewal ceremony. Taking the time to renew your promise to love and cherish your spouse demonstrates commitment. There's nothing more romantic than a time-tested commitment to love, honor and cherish each other



◆ Registry

If you're still a young couple or could use a little help with setting up house, it's fine to create a wedding gift registry. Many couples who are renewing vows or having a second ceremony after a justice of the peace wedding, have already established their home and do not create a typical registry. But that's ok, friends and family will want to celebrate with you and gifts are part of the celebration they can share in.

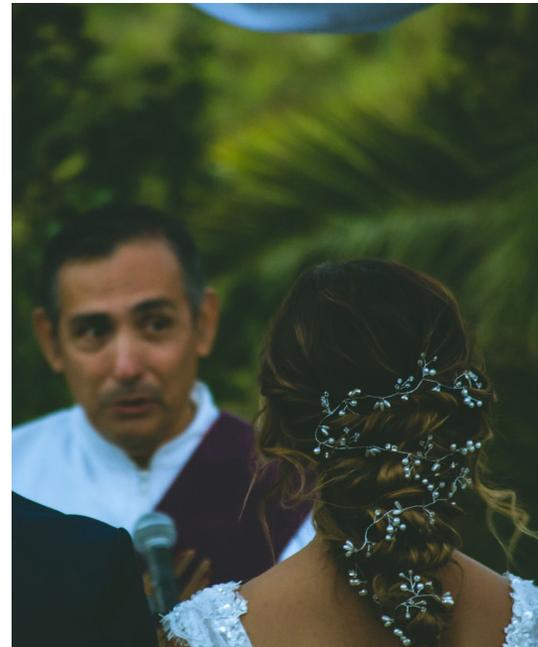
If you're not in need of a typical registry, consider other creative alternatives. Create a honeymoon registry and list items like luggage, power converters, towels, scuba gear or ski equipment and cash for the trip. Or create a "Family Rec Room" registry and include items that you can share with friends and children. A game table, cozy rug, a turntable, beanbag chairs or other family fun items.

If you have what you need, consider offering a way for guests to contribute to a charity fund. Use your imagination. The sky's the limit if you're a little creative with your plans.

◆ Do I Want a Wedding Party?

A wedding party can be fun if you have a few friends in mind you want to ask. In some cases, it can be challenging to select participants. If you have developed many friendships over the years and are having trouble narrowing the list to a few participants, you can opt to have only one person stand with you or not have a wedding party at all. Decide early on if you're going all in, or super-slim.

This also relates to the style of your wedding and the size of your guest list. If you have a small, intimate wedding, you won't need many in your wedding party.



◆ Vows

Vows are an important part of every wedding ceremony. You can recite the same vows you originally made at your wedding or choose to make it even more personal by writing your own updated vows together. Some couples mix a little of the traditional vows in with some of their own. It's about the two of you. Make it your own.

Should you decide to write your own, you can express your love straight from the heart. Not sure what to say or feel you're not the best with words? There's help for that! Research wedding vows online and customize them to your relationship. It's easier to start with a framework and personalize it.

Some couples who write their own vows keep them secret until the wedding, but if you want to relieve the stress of the unknown, share your vows with each other while you're writing them. This removes the unknown element, but doesn't diminish the value in what you choose to say to your spouse. They're still from the heart.

Here are a few examples of vows to help get you started:

- I see these vows not as promises but as privileges: I get to laugh with you and cry with you; care for you and share with you. And most importantly, love you every single day.
- You make my joys greater, my sorrows more bearable, and my spirit known. I promise you nothing less than the rest of my life. This is what I mean when I tell you I love you every day.
- Because of you, I laugh, I smile, I dare to dream. Each day, I look forward to sharing my life with you, caring for you, nurturing you, being there for you. I promise today, as I did on our wedding day, to love and cherish you through whatever life brings.

In the military, home is where you make it. And weddings are what you make them, too. Whether you started at the courthouse before a deployment or are renewing your vows after years of service together... you know how to adapt. You are capable of dealing with challenges. Planning a ceremony is not too much for you!

You've already been there. This time, make your ceremony personal and memorable. You are sharing your love story and commitment with the world. And that's beautiful all by itself.

