

A PERFECT

Match

TWO WEST COASTERS TRAVELED TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC FOR A MODERN-MEETS-THE-TROPICS CELEBRATION: THINK HAND-ROLLED CIGARS, MINI BOTTLES OF RUM, AND LOUNGE FURNITURE ON THE BEACH!

BY **AMANDA MACMILLAN**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **ANGIE SILVY**

The bride's bouquet included air plants, dried sarsaparilla lilies, balsamwood flowers, craspedia, orchids, and yellow roses.





1 Alex wore a boutonniere of orchids and craspedia wrapped in twine. **2** Wedding planner Yelena Johnson sourced the custom wooden signs from Etsy seller Lovetheunique. **3** Four-year-old flower girl Montserrat, the groom's niece, decided at the last minute to kick off her shoes and walk barefoot down the aisle. **4** Chrome vases filled with yellow and white blooms decorated the cocktail-hour tables. **5** The letterpressed invitations were designed by Aerialist Press. **6** Welcome baskets filled with fedoras, sun hats, sunglasses, and snacks greeted guests in their hotel rooms.

Q **ON OCTOBER 20, 2012, SAN FRANCISCO COUPLE NATALIA CARVAJAL AND ALEX VILLAMIL MARRIED AT THE PUNTACANA RESORT IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. WE ASKED NATALIA TO WALK US THROUGH THEIR CELEBRATION.**

A TOTAL WIN "I lost a bet and had to go out with 10 guys on Match.com. After my 10th bad date, I was about to cancel my membership. That's when I got a message from Alex."

CENTRAL LOCATION "My family is from Colombia, and Alex's is from the Dominican Republic. We wanted to get married on the beach, and

Punta Cana is one of our all-time-favorite spots."

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS "My Lela Rose gown was tissue-weight silk taffeta—delicate and airy and perfect for the tropics. I wore Oscar de la Renta wedge heels to keep from sinking into the sand."

DODGING RAINDROPS "A storm held off just long

enough to have an outdoor ceremony and cocktail hour. It started pouring when we went in for dinner, but the weather cleared up in time for us to dance on the beach."

HANDLE WITH CARE "Our wedding planner brought three suitcases of candles and vases. Four vases broke in transit, but luckily she brought extras!"

FLOWER POWER "A lot of flowers we wanted weren't available locally, so our florist used a combination of dried, silk, and imported varieties. The end result was fantastic."

MEMORABLE MUSIC "I walked down the aisle to 'Songbird,' by Fleetwood Mac. It's always been a special song to me, and it was playing at the restaurant when Alex proposed."

DANCE-FLOOR CHANGE-UP "I was sweating like crazy in the Caribbean heat, so on the dance floor I kept hiking up my skirt. Out of nowhere, my wedding planner appeared and started pinning it up with a million safety pins. Then about 20 guests joined in to help. In two minutes, I went from having a ball gown to a miniskirt!"



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1 Each place setting was decorated with a menu card and fresh fruit from a local market. 2 The couple hired a cigar roller to teach guests about traditional Dominican cigars. 3 Whitewashed wooden lanterns and succulents lined the ceremony aisle. 4 Natalia loves clean and modern decor, while Alex prefers a rustic look. They blended their styles at the reception by using burlap table runners, antique-style urns from Anthropologie, and translucent ghost chairs. 5 Mini bottles of rum, with escort cards attached, directed guests to their seats. 6 The reception was held at Playa Blanca, a seafood restaurant at the resort. 7 Modern lounge furniture was set up on the beach so guests could sip cocktails on the sand. 8 Natalia's sister Maria officiated the ceremony, and Maria's husband walked the bride down the aisle.



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Natalia and Alex weren't able to do a tasting before the wedding, so they chose a vanilla cake, a guaranteed crowd pleaser. The icing was fondant, which doesn't melt in the heat.

Venue and catering:
Puntacana Resort & Club;
puntacana.com.

Wedding planner:
The Stylish Soiree;
stylishsoiree.com.

Bride's dress:
Lela Rose; lelarose.com.

Groom's suit:
Brooks Brothers;
brooksbrothers.com.

Flowers:
Soulflower Floral Design;
soulflowersf.com.

Stationery:
Aerialist Press;
theaerialistpress.com.

Ceremony music:
Luichy Guzmán;
luichyguzman.com.

Reception music:
DJ Mannia; mannia
cancun.com.mx.

Cake:
Punta Cana Party; punta
canaparty@gmail.com.

Hair and makeup:
The Glamourist;
theglamourist.com.

Cigar roller:
Rafael Cedano;
809-466-1212.

Photography:
Angie Silvy; angiesilvy
photography.com.

TAKE-HOME TIPS FROM NATALIA AND ALEX

Generate buzz

To get everyone excited for the wedding, they sent each guest a canvas tote bag that read, "Save the date for sun, surf, and sangria!"

Import VIPs

Finding vendors you love in a far-away place can be tough. If it's in the budget, bring your own. They flew in a florist and hair/makeup artist.

Show guests a good time

The couple turned the wedding into a vacation by organizing group activities like a boat ride and a trip to the lagoons.

Choose a special "something old"

To honor her mom, who passed away 10 years ago, Natalia wore jewelry that once belonged to her.

Create a sense of place

Before the big day, their florist and planner visited a local market and bought fresh fruit to decorate the tables and cake.