



BANCROFT POTTER
Tent Company Co-owner

KNOWN FOR Offering classic wooden-pole tents with a crisp, coastal aesthetic
WHERE TO FIND HIM Sperry Tents nationwide (sperrytents.com)

Aside from shading guests on sunny days and protection from rain, what are some benefits to having a tent?

A tent is a blank canvas, unlike a venue where you're stuck with the carpet, light fixtures, and décor. You can essentially design your environment—pick the tent style [see standard options at right], customize lighting, flooring, everything. We talk with couples and tweak things over the course of six to 12 months.

How do you style a tent?

Lighting can transform one by projecting patterns on the ceiling or even creating the illusion of flowing water. With center-pole tents, also called tension tents, you can run fishing line through the wooden poles and hang tea lights. Frame tents, which have metal poles around the edges, require more work to hide the frame, but they can support heavier lighting equipment. Most tent companies have options to light the interior, but there are specialty lighting companies that create beautiful effects both inside and out.

Can you put a tent anywhere?

A lot depends on location. We need to visit the site to measure the land's grade, see how much open space is available, and assess what's

underground. You can't secure a tent in four inches of topsoil, for example, and don't want a stake to go through a septic tank. How even the ground is plays a part, too. With platforms, we can create a level floor almost anywhere, but it's costly. Visit sites you're considering with the tent company to accurately estimate costs. A property might seem inexpensive until you realize it requires a platform for a tent.

What's an unexpected place to put a tent?

Over a swimming pool. You put down a Plexiglass floor, turn on the lights, and people literally dance on the water.

How do you estimate what size is needed?

For a fully seated and served event with a dance floor, we figure 18 to 20 square feet per person. That expands if you want a bar and lounge area. A 200-person wedding typically needs a 46-by-125-foot tent.

What is covered in the cost of a tent?

The basic price usually includes the tent itself, installation, and breakdown. For a 100-person wedding, that starts at around \$4,000 and goes up to 10 times that if you add sides, flooring, heat, and lighting.

"It's smart to have a rain plan," says Potter. "For a nonrefundable 50 percent deposit, you can reserve a marquee—a tented walkway—to keep guests dry as they arrive. If the weather is gorgeous, you can cancel it. If it isn't, you'll be glad you have it."

What about heating or air-conditioning a tent?

AC is expensive, and while we offer it, we tend to do pole-mounted fans instead. Heating is more affordable, and it's a good idea if the weather drops below 65 degrees at night, so outdoor fall and winter weddings are an option. We've done events in Maine in February by plowing the area, flooring it, and heating the tent.

What else helps make tents comfortable?

Putting a floor underneath your tent hedges your bets against the weather and is easier to walk on—especially for women in high heels. And they cost extra, but if you add on side flaps, those can be rolled up or down as needed for extra warmth.



FRAME TENTS

"They can withstand high winds that a center-pole tent can't," says Potter.



TENSION-POLE TENTS

These get their charming look from a tall center pole joined by ropes to perimeter posts.



SIDE-FLAP ADD-ONS

Roll-down flaps cost extra, but they're cozy and perfect for keeping out wind and rain.



MULTIPLE-POLE TENTS

Tents can be "round, rectangular, or oval," says Potter, and have more than one center pole.