

well beyond ordinary

Numerous wedding sites
offer natural backdrops



Beautiful Background for a Wedding

Clockwise from left: ■ A bride poses for photographer Sposa Bella during a photo session at Chattooga Belle Farm in Long Creek, S.C. The 138-acre working farm offers a panoramic mountain view for outdoor weddings, and is just a short drive from Rabun County. ■ Deana and Tim Dunn of Clayton say 'I do' on July 10 at the Black Rock Mountain State Park overlook. Black Rock can accommodate smaller outdoor weddings while providing a stunning backdrop. ■ Chairs and tables are set up for Deana and Tim Dunn's wedding ceremony and reception.

WITH LONG SUMMERS AND incomparable scenery, many couples choose an outdoor setting for their nuptials, and Rabun County offers limitless options.

Deana and Tim Dunn of Clayton chose Black Rock Mountain State Park for their July 2010 wedding. "Black Rock is one of my favorite places in Rabun County, and I had always dreamed of getting married up there," Deana said.

She contacted Park Superintendent Anthony Lampros to



reserve the Black Rock overlook for the ceremony and rented the nearest pavilion for \$35 for the reception. She also rented a cabin to use as a changing area for family and friends.

"It was a wonderful setting for the family photos before the ceremony," she said.

Lampros said the park was host for about six weddings a year, and a majority of them are at the main overlook. He said the overlook offered an informal setting with endless photo opportunities.

"Guests can just bring a blanket to sit on or sit on the steps," he said.

He said it would be difficult to accommodate more than 100

guests because of parking and space at the overlook. He encourages people to car pool to limit the cost of parking fees.

Renting wedding and reception space can usually be expensive, but Deana said she and her husband were able to have a picture-perfect wedding without the typical expenses.

"The only drawback was paying the parking fee for all our guests," she said. "We hadn't expected that expense, but it was well worth it."

For couples who may need a little more direction in planning their ceremony, reception, catering and honeymoon, The Dillard House is well prepared to handle large or small affairs.

The Dillard House offers indoor and outdoor options for wedding rehearsals and ceremonies. Couples can wed in the Oak-lawn Garden and Gazebo surrounded by lush greenery or have a smaller ceremony inside the Rock House, which was the original Dillard home.

The Dillard House staff also can provide a variety of menu choices, tables, chairs, linens, all tables settings and serving pieces, beverage tables, service personnel for meal service, set-up and clean-up, a honeymoon chalet or suite, a horse-drawn carriage ride, bartending service and dressing rooms for the bride and groom.

Even if couples choose a more traditional church ceremony, The Dillard House facilities are still available for overnight guest accommodations, rehearsal dinners, receptions and post-wedding brunches.

The Barn Inn at Lake Rabun is just one of many bed and breakfast options in Rabun County. Owners Jan Timms and Nancy Gribble book weddings for the inn and Lake Rabun Pavilion. The 1920 horse barn, made of stone and timber, was renovated into a five-room inn in the 1980s.

Timms and Gribble bought the inn about six years ago and go to great measures to make sure each couple starts their marriage out happily. Unlike some bed and breakfasts, Timms makes breakfast when guests are ready for it.

She wants couples and their families to feel at home before and after their wedding.

"I've found that weddings and funerals are about the only time families get together anymore, so we want to make them comfortable," she said. The inn has six unique rooms, and Timms has even had some inflatable mattresses for parties wanting to stay together.

She said she usually places champagne and roses in a couple's room for their wedding night, but she can also cater to more specific needs. In one instance, a groom told Timms the bride didn't drink champagne or wine. "He said she liked Miller (Genuine) Draft, so I had a six-pack waiting for her that night," she said.

Timms said she would play whatever role the bride needed her to play, whether it is simply making the bed and cooking breakfast or being the wedding director, caterer and moderator between the bride and the mother of the bride. "We really try to offer a full service," she said.

While Barn Inn usually books small outdoor weddings, the pavilion overlooking Lake Rabun can hold 250 guests. Timms said people choose to have their wedding on the lake because of the views and quietness of the lake area. ➔



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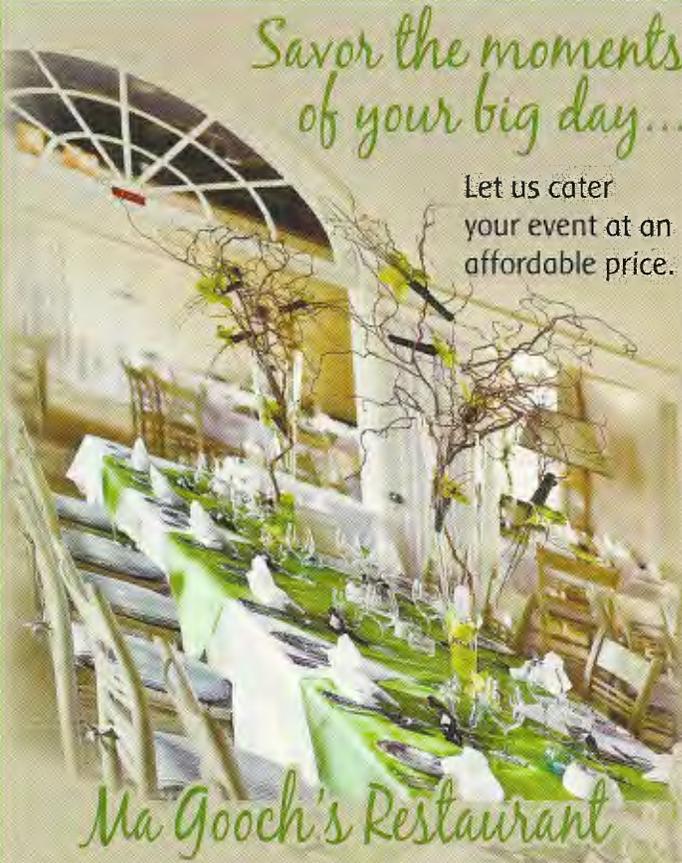
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The pavilion is already booked for many weekends throughout the summer and fall, and Timms said she already booked a wedding there for 2012. With an upper and lower floor, it's easy to set up for a ceremony and reception. The versatile space has a small stage, restrooms and a fireplace.

Chattooga Belle Farm in Long Creek, S.C., is just a short drive from Rabun County and provides many options for outdoor weddings. Tracy Waldroup, marketing director for Chattooga Belle Farm, said the 138-acre farm was a perfect wedding site for brides wanting a more natural and peaceful setting.

The farm, which features panoramic mountain views, orchards and vineyards, booked 15 weddings during its first year of operation and already is planning 25 weddings for 2011. Wedding season usually begins in April, but Waldroup said spring and fall were the most



Naturally different
Couples looking for something different may choose an outdoor wedding. *Hawkins Photography*

popular seasons for weddings on the farm.

"It's not a space for everyone. Some brides like a formal ceremony at a church and a reception at a country club," she said. "It's definitely not for those girls. It's for girls looking for something different."

Whether it's the economy or just a trend, Waldroup said more and more couples were opting for a more laid-back, natural approach.

"When the sun starts setting, it's absolutely gorgeous," she said. Couples can choose between several ceremony settings, including the vineyard, orchard, patio and barn.

Chattooga Belle Farm can accommodate up to 300 people for wedding ceremonies and receptions. The farm can also supply a cabin on the property for the wedding party, a bridal room, parking space and a kitchen. Parties must supply their own floral decorations, cake and catering. —*Jessi Stone*

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