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balls, theweddinglibrary.com.
Runner, customizedwedding
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A (BIG)
DAY AT
THE

beach

Together with a team of top pros, a New York City event planner created the ultimate Caribbean seaside wedding. Bring on the mango-rum cocktails! | Photographs by Mel Barlow



Take your **color cues** from the
beachy setting and layer white, ecru, and cream.
For a dash of flash, add sparkling accents.

THIS PAGE Pillar candles and votive holders; all, Jamali Floral & Garden Supplies; jamaligarden.com. Sea horses, theweddinglibrary.com. Tablecloth, [nuage designs.com](http://nuage.com). Silver candleholders, Lazy Susan; lazysusanusa.com. Bamboo chargers, Branch; branchhome.com.
OPPOSITE Caterer, Chet Peters; [villa aquamare.com](http://villa-aquamare.com). Sea-horse escort cards and rattan invitation and menu; all, cecineyork.com. Hors d'oeuvres plates, Branch; branchhome.com.



PLANNING a beach wedding? Check out these ideas from consultant **Claudia Hanlin** of New York City's **Wedding Library**, who put together this stunning celebration at **Aquamare**, an enclave of luxury villas on **Virgin Gorda** in the **British Virgin Islands**.

~ **LOCATION** For the vows, pick a spot on the beach that has a focal point, such as a row of palm trees, or create your own with a flower-covered arch. (At Aquamare, Hanlin used the compound's permanent "dream bed" structure; see previous spread.) A day or two before the wedding, check out the space at the same time of day as your ceremony and think about logistics: Will guests be facing the setting sun—and squinting? Will sand fleas be an issue? Whatever your specific details, a reception on a nearby terrace or deck will make it easier to set up tables, serve food, and avoid those pesky flies.

~ **STATIONERY** Ditch the silks and brocades, and go with materials that say "casual elegance." Rattan framed the invitations (above) and matching menus (bottom). Hanlin chose beachy colors and shapes to set a fun mood, like the white sea-horse escort cards, which were placed on a tray of shells (top left), and the ocean blue guest book (next page).

~ **FOOD** Keep the menu as light as the breeze—cream-cheese-and-strawberry fritters strike just the right note for the cocktail hour. While making sure the menu will appeal to all your guests, ask the caterer to incorporate local ingredients into the mix rather than defaulting to a steak-and-lobster lineup.

~ **DECOR** Light hues are a natural palette for a beach wedding, but to prevent them from looking washed out, layer textures and tones. On the tables, Hanlin contrasted white (napkins, plates) with ecru (bamboo chargers, overlays) and added silver elements (candlestick holders, sea horses) to make the tables pop. For wilt-proof centerpieces, skip delicate garden blooms and opt instead for tropical options like orchids and local flowering branches.



~ **TIME OF DAY** So your guests don't melt under the hot sun, plan on an early-evening ceremony. (Bonus: The prettiest ocean views occur approximately 15 minutes before sunset.) Once the sun goes down, you'll need to provide some light—set up rows of lanterns and candles on the beach so everyone can smoothly make their way to the reception.

~ **DRINKS** Nothing adds flavor to a beach party like the local brew or cocktail. This frothy mango-rum drink, garnished with pineapple and lime on a seashell skewer, makes a colorful connection to the island theme.

~ **CAKE** Heat and humidity turn buttercream into a mess in minutes. Try Hanlin's trick: Display a faux cake made of Styrofoam layers covered with fondant, and serve guests a sheet cake—kept out of sight in a cool spot—decorated with the same icing as the decoy. (Ask the baker to make an inconspicuous slit in the faux tiers ahead of time so you and your guy can easily make the ceremonial cut.)

~ **ENTERTAINMENT** Mix it up during the party by including beachy music—think calypso, reggae, steel drums, or even stilt dancers to add Caribbean flavor to the night. If you're hiring a DJ, you may need to rent equipment (speakers, microphones, amps) should the venue's sound system be insufficient.

~ **GUESTS** On many sunny beaches, heat will be guests' main comfort issue, so help them stay cool: Distribute paper parasols before the ceremony, and have plenty of nonalcoholic drinks on hand. Warn female guests about the pitfalls of heels on sand; better yet, provide a basket of flip-flops that they can grab from.

Love the party on these pages? Wedding Library can re-create it at your own beach location. Visit theweddinglibrary.com for details. For info on Aquamare's beachfront villas, go to villaaquamare.com.

WRITER **MARINA KHIDEKEL**

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a swanky bed on the beach goes glam after dark with glowing lanterns, plush pillows, and a romantic view



THIS PAGE Lanterns, Lazy Susan; lazy susanusa.com. Cushions and pillows; all, nuagedesigns.com. Mini torches (on ground), blomus.com.
OPPOSITE Guest book, Dewdrop Inc.; dewdropdesigns.com. Guest-book sign, cecinewyork.com. Cake, Gail Watson Custom Cake; gailwatsoncake.com. Porcelain cake topper, Lazy Susan; lazy susanusa.com. Shell toothpick, Jamali Floral & Garden Supplies; jamaligarden.com. Custom favor stickers, theweddinglibrary.com. Chocolate sea horses, J. Michelle Chocolatier; amazon.com.