



Connecticut OK's Same-sex Weddings

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Following decisions earlier this year by California and Massachusetts, Connecticut's Supreme Court ruled Friday that gays and lesbians have the right to marry in the state. The ruling goes into effect Oct. 28.

On Monday, the team at catering company [A Thyme to Cook](#), based in North Stonington, Conn., was discussing the business the decision might bring.

The company already serves about four to five receptions celebrating same-sex unions each year, president Linda Sample tells *Special Events*, and she "definitely" expects an increased demand for such events. "We already have two on the books for '09," she says. She adds, "We are in the midst of establishing our marketing plan to target this audience." The company recently joined the [Rainbow Wedding Network](#), an online source for gay-friendly wedding vendors.

Although she isn't certain how much new business she will see, Elissa Fallo, head of [Perfect Productions](#) of Farmington, Conn., expects "many more" same-sex ceremonies to come. "I think

that the benefits of using a planner at a same-sex service will be the same as using them at any other wedding," she says. "Once couples are aware of our services, I think that they will start to utilize them more." To help boost awareness of her company, Fallo is considering putting an ad in an alternative lifestyle magazine.

BIGGER BALLGAME

Fallo expects the scope of same-sex events to grow now that they are officially "weddings." "Even though civil unions were accepted here, I don't think that people were making a big deal out of them," she says. "Once you call it a 'wedding,' it's a whole other ballgame."

Based on the same-sex wedding market in neighboring Massachusetts, which opened the door to same-sex unions of residents in 2004 and to visitors in July, Andrea Robinson, head of Ledyard, Conn.-based [AMR Event Planning](#), expects a "significant" increase in that segment of her business. "I typically plan about 20 weddings per year, and I'm hoping to have somewhere between five and seven same-sex weddings this coming year," she says.

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Robinson maintains that even more than traditional weddings, same-sex events require the services of an event professional. "First, same-sex weddings are nontraditional, and couples tend to apply that nontraditional thinking to all aspects of their celebration, which is an event planner's dream," she says. "These out-of-the box ideas take a lot of planning and coordination to pull off, and that's where the wedding planner comes in. Secondly, same-sex marriages take a degree of sensitivity that you wouldn't necessarily need with a traditional wedding. There are usually a lot of different family issues to deal with, and couples don't want to have to 'come out' to every single vendor they deal with."

Sample says her work with same-sex ceremonies is "such fun." "The couples, as well as their guests, have been so enjoyable, innovative, open to creative ideas, and great to work with," she notes. "We have done several wedding cakes with two brides or grooms on top and have also had some receptions that maintain all the traditions of toasts, first dance, cake-cutting, etc., but make little, if any, reference to it being a same-sex union. We tend to do more women couples than men--not sure why that is!"