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Shane Karas and Junlin Long's Zoom reception at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Miami. Below: Tiffany and Wadih Pazos on their wedding day

Micro Matrimony

Couples across the country are forging large wedding guest lists in favor of social distancing recommendations—and romance
By Jess Swanson

EVER SINCE SHE WAS A LITTLE GIRL, Tiffany Pazos imagined her wedding day—the dress she'd be wearing, the gorgeous tropical setting. "Vimeo livestream" and "Zoom wedding reception" weren't in any of the original plans, and yet that's what happened on her big day when social distancing regulations prompted the cancellation of her 80-person Maui wedding scheduled for July.

Rather than wait, she and her fiancé, Wadih, moved their nuptials even earlier, to May, and became one of the first to hold a microwedding at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, one of Miami's most coveted wedding spots. To the strains of a harpist, Pazos walked down the aisle in a billowy white dress past lush palms and rare orchids, approaching Wadih and his three sons, the only guests present. Still, more than 500 people watched remotely as the couple said their vows.

Fairchild has been hosting weddings for over 80 years, with most accommodating 200 to 400 guests. That came to a halt in March. But by May, Fairchild had introduced its Garden of Love program, becoming one of the first traditional venues to offer small-scale weddings. "People think that microweddings aren't special, that bigger is better," Pazos says. "But at the end of the day, if you and your partner are happy and in love, you can have a beautiful wedding and not need 250 people there to prove it."

"Vimeo livestream" and "Zoom reception" weren't in her plans.

In the past year, boutique hotels and resorts around the country—from Portland to Palm Springs to Nashville—have adopted their own microwedding and minimony packages. The St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort in Puerto Rico has held almost half a dozen microweddings at its seaside private cabanas and tree-lined gardens. "Larger weddings tend to be a whirlwind of emotions, and smaller details can be missed," says St. Regis Bahia Beach

Resort event director Gerry Farrulla. "Microweddings allow the couple to capture every intimate moment."

Even before social distancing guidelines, wedding planners were noticing couples opting for more intimate ceremonies. Alison Events principal Alison Hotchkiss has produced over 400 events in nine countries, specializing in destination weddings. "For so long we were on the trajectory of spend more, go bigger," she says. "But in the last year or two we noticed this transition to smaller destination weddings." Though Hotchkiss was envisioning 50-person guest lists—not 10—she says quarantine has allowed couples to take stock of what matters. "They're finding less is more and choosing quality over quantity."

