

Simply Salt Spring

A full-page photograph of a wedding couple, Jessie and Ben, in a rural setting. The bride is wearing a white strapless dress with a wide black belt and a full skirt, and a white veil. The groom is wearing a dark suit with a white shirt and a light-colored tie. They are standing on a grassy path, leaning against a large stone wall on the left. The background features lush green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a warm, golden glow. The couple is captured in a romantic moment, kissing and holding hands.

Jessie & Ben wed
in the casual rural
elegance of a Salt
Spring Island farm.

Jessie Carlson and Ben Yardley
September 6, 2008
Stowel Lake Farm, Salt Spring Island, BC

Written by Larry Pellizzari
Photographed by Jenna Tye

Right Jessie in her veil and favourite cowboy boots at Hastings House, where she, her family and bridesmaids stayed the night before the wedding. The boots proved ideal footwear for an outdoor wedding.

Below A bouquet of white roses, hydrangeas, orchids and verbena in one of the galvanized steel buckets that suited the setting perfectly.



WHEN VANCOUVER STYLIST JESSIE CARLSON FIRST MET HER future husband Ben Yardley, one of her initial thoughts was “What’s with all the eyeliner?” Jessie was with a group of friends checking out Ben’s indie-rock band Chinatown. Onstage, Ben was decked out in rock star stage regalia which included eye makeup and nail polish.

“I knew who Jessie was through a mutual friend,” Ben recalls. “I’d said that I thought Jessie was super-hot, but asked my friend not to say anything. Of course, she told Jessie right away.”

So Ben’s attraction was already in the open when a few weeks later he and Jessie were among a group of friends out to see a friend’s band perform. That night Ben asked Jessie out, and the next week they went on their first date.

“He wasn’t the type of person I thought I would ever date,” Jessie reminisces. “He was a musician and was always on tour and had all these girls following after him. But when I got to know him, he was so intelligent, and kind and sweet. No rock star cooler-than-thou attitude. He was just a really, really good man.”

They dated for a year-and-a-half, then moved in together. “That was a big decision for me,” says Jessie. “But things felt so right: There wasn’t a lot of drama... things just flowed between us.” Ben concurs, “We were so happy.”

They began discussing marriage, and started shopping for engagement rings, eventually finding a beautiful vintage ring at La Contessa Antiques in West Vancouver. “I used to go back to the store to look at the ring because I loved it so much,” says Jessie. “Then one day I found out it was sold; I was devastated.”

It turns out that Ben had bought the ring and snuck it home with elaborate proposal scenarios playing in his mind. “I was thinking, ‘It’s got to be perfect.’ Maybe out on a boat or in a fancy restaurant

“I couldn’t wait any longer. I proposed to her right there in the hallway.”





Left from top Jessie walks with her mother and father in front of Stowel Lake Farm's beautifully converted barn. Jesse's mother wears a strapless floral dress from Manuel Mendoza.

Bridesmaids carry bouquets of white roses, dusty miller and miniature green cymbidium orchids. Their dresses were from Manuel Mendoza.


or on a trip—something out of a movie.” That evening he and Jessie had dinner guests over. “I kept sneaking off to look at the ring,” Ben recalls. “I was so excited. When our guests finally left, as soon as the door closed, I said to Jessie, ‘Guess what I got?’ I couldn’t wait any longer. I proposed to her right there in the hallway.”

They started planning their wedding with the guideline that it be “really real, really authentic and comfortable for people.” According to Jessie, “Things fell into place once we found the location.”

The couple often spent weekends on Salt Spring Island, where Ben grew up and where his family still lives. One afternoon while riding around the island on Ben’s motorcycle they stopped at Stowel Lake Farm where he used to ride horses as a child. About 10 years ago the barn was converted into a reception and event venue with huge floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the lush grounds. Jessie immediately fell in love with the farm. “We looked at each other and I said, ‘This is where we’re going to get married.’”

They prepared the barn with chandeliers and linens for the reception, and were wed amidst the natural beauty of the perennial garden. The day was filled with personal touches from the whimsical rice crispy cake to the galvanized steel buckets of white roses, hydrangeas, orchids and verbena placed around the site. Jessie’s gown, designed by Vancouver couturier Manuel Mendoza, was accentuated by a black belt, adorned with turquoise and silver conchas.

After dinner and speeches, the couple shared their first dance as husband and wife. When the band kicked up, Ben picked up his guitar and joined his band-mates. He dedicated the Faces song “Ooh La La” to Jessie. “In the song, a grandfather tells his grandson about women,” Ben explains. “It talks about growing up and has resonance about the important events in life.”

Jessie and Ben shared this most important event—their union—in style, with laughter and music floating to the idyllic, starry Salt Spring sky. 



Bottom left Jessie and Ben enjoy the presence of friends and family during after-dinner speeches.

Bottom right The barn at Stowel Lake Farm was the perfect venue for an evening of dancing. Ben’s band supplied the live music. Chandeliers provided by Upright Decor in Vancouver.





The Details

How they did it



1 Jessie's bouquet consisted mainly of white roses with accents of lisianthus, bells of Ireland, green hypericum berries, dusty miller, and alstroemeria. Her sister is a florist and provided insight and inspiration for the design.

2 The reception's entertainment included music by Ben's part-time band, Little Sister and the Time Machine. "It's nothing serious, they all just get a lot of joy out of playing together," explains Jessie.

3 Salt Spring Island's Dinners Ready Catering created a whimsical rice crispy cake, a nod to the treat Jessie and Ben used to make almost every night.

4 As Ben is a musician and Jessie a fashion stylist, the table decor became an extension of what they love. Tables featured the couple's favourite bands and ads of Jessie's favourite fashion designers.

5 Antique glass vases and galvanized steel buckets of live flowers were placed around the site, lending a shabby/chic look.

6 Ben built a box for the place cards using old pieces of pine collected from around Salt Spring. Jessie handwrote all the cards which were purchased from Michael's and placed them on a bed of moss in the box.

7 Jessie's "something blue" were the turquoise accents on her accessories. The turquoise and silver conchas on her belt came from a belt of her mother's and complemented her grandmother's turquoise, diamond, and silver bracelet.

The Dream Team

Bridal Planner:

Easy Elegance
www.weddingsaltspring.com

Photographer:

Jenna Tye Photography
www.jennatye.com

Ceremony & Reception Venue:

Stowel Lake Farm
www.stowellakefarm.com

Bride's Dress:

Manuel Mendoza
www.manuelmendoza.com

Groom's Attire:

Harry Rosen
www.harryrosen.com

Bride's Shoes:

Western Town Boots
www.westerncorral.ca

Stationery:

Paperqueen
www.thepaperqueen.com

Flowers:

Flowers by Arrangement
www.flowersbyarrangement.ca

Cake & Catering:

Dinner's Ready
www.dinnerreadyonsaltspring.com

Wedding Rings:

MJ Jewellers
www.mjjewellers.ca

