

# Wedding Planner for a High-Profile Affair

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RHINEBECK, N.Y. — The shroud of secrecy surrounding Chelsea Clinton’s wedding here was due in part to the wedding planner, not the Clintons.

Bryan Rafanelli, a Boston-based event planner who managed the Clinton weekend wedding extravaganza, said in an interview on Sunday that he required confidentiality agreements with his vendors.

“This is how I run my business, protecting the privacy of my clients,” Mr. Rafanelli said, chatting at the Beekman Arms, the stately inn that was a focal point of the weekend before the Saturday night ceremony at the Astor Courts estate on the Hudson River.

He said that while he put a lid on the nearly two dozen vendors involved, there was no similar lockdown on the 450 guests.

Guests, he said, simply understood that the Clintons would not

be happy if they blabbed publicly.

In the spirit of nondisclosure, Mr. Rafanelli declined to reveal certain details himself — like how much the wedding cost. “I know Chelsea and Marc wanted to have the highest quality,” he said, referring to the bridegroom, Marc Mezvinsky. “That doesn’t mean the most expensive; it just means really a beautiful wedding.”

Mr. Rafanelli laughed when told the rumored price of the invitations was \$150 each (“absolutely not”) and the bank of high-end toilets was \$15,000, which he said was not true, either but admitted that they were “appropriate to an event at a Stanford White-designed structure” like Astor Courts.

The invitations, which played off architectural details of the Beaux-Arts-style estate mansion, were mailed 12 weeks ago, Mr. Rafanelli said. The only information they did not contain was the location, which was sent by e-mail last Monday.

He did not disclose any quarrels in the decision-making. “This was Chelsea and Marc’s wedding,” he said. “And this is the wedding her parents wanted her to have.”

Mr. Rafanelli, 48, knows well what the Clintons expect in terms of taste and discretion — and how to keep a low profile in a high-profile undertaking.

He has known Hillary Rodham Clinton, the secretary of state and mother of the bride, for a decade, first meeting her through

Elaine Schuster, a client and Democratic fund-raiser in Boston. He planned a fund-raiser for Mrs. Clinton in Boston in 2000, when she first ran for the Senate in New York.

His subsequent events for her include a Palm Beach fund-raiser during her 2008 presidential campaign, to which he was a contributor. He also oversaw the wedding of Mrs. Clinton's longtime aide Huma Abedin and Representative Anthony D. Weiner of Brooklyn last month. (Former President Bill Clinton performed the ceremony.)

For Ms. Clinton's wedding, the family entrusted quite a few details to Mr. Rafanelli, who began his planning in December. He said the couple wanted to be married in New York.

Mr. Rafanelli offered them three possibilities, and they picked Astor Courts because it could accommodate an outdoor ceremony and met various security and privacy requirements. And the tennis courts offered a flat surface for tents.

The bride is a vegan, but the still-secret menu offered "everything," Mr. Rafanelli said. The wedding cake was gluten-free, as was the bread. So were the chocolate-chip cookies in the straw welcome bags in the guests' hotel rooms.

The ceremony was set for 6 p.m., and Mr. Rafanelli said the Clintons were "pretty close" to being on time — a rare occurrence for many bridal parties but especially for the former president, who runs on "Clinton time," which is chronically late. "We're moving two families to a spectacular property, so there

was some precision involved,” Mr. Rafanelli said. He was proud of having herded everyone into position to witness what turned out to be a spectacular sunset at 8:23; they all made it by 8:15.