



Katie Donnison and Ryan James

Their comfy chic celebration – featuring lanterns on the beach and West Coast seafood straight off the fire – was as down-to-earth as they are



REAL WEDDING

'The ocean was a big part of my life growing up, so a beach wedding felt right from the start,' says Ryan, who traced the words 'Will you marry me, Katie?' in the sand of Llandudno beach at daybreak while the two were on holiday in Cape Town. 'I loved Katie from the moment I saw her. She keeps me on the right path and best of all we grow together every day.'

As Katie is from England, they envisioned a fusion of South African and UK guests in a natural setting. They found the perfect venue in the form of Strandkombuis on the Cape's West Coast.

'I loved that the venue was so rustic. The rickety wooden walkway down to the beach and the smell of the ocean and braai was very "us" and it blew everyone away,' says Ryan.

'We wanted to complement the natural beauty without overdoing it so we incorporated shells and chose a white and silver colour scheme with a hint of blue to add to the nautical theme,' Katie adds. Their ideas ranged from 'extreme to ridiculous' but Wedding Concepts was able to ground their ideas in reality. 'Katie had a vision of lighting up the ocean at night with underwater floodlights, which was just not going to happen!' laughs Ryan.

To the other extreme, there was no dress code. In fact, even Katie spent most of the night in slip slops, although she donned a pair of heels for the dinner entrance and first dance to add some glamour – and height to her five-foot-two frame.

'It was very casual. Seeing our guests mingling on the beach with mojitos and daiquiris, while traditional African percussionists Abavuki entertained, was a surreal experience,' they reminisce.

Sushi and oysters were served during photographs and later platters of food fresh off the fire were served at each table. As no traditional South African feast is complete without them, smoked snoek, beef potjie, pumpkin fritters and koeksisters featured on the menu.

As night fell, the venue took on an even more magical quality. The dance floor was lit with fairy lights and lanterns were scattered on the beach. The couple's first dance was to a song written by their close friend Harry Brooks, a singer-songwriter in the UK, who also performed it on the night. 'It was an amazing touch and so personal,' beams Katie.

Half an hour before the couple was due to leave, they gathered their guests on the beach and gave each person a wish lantern (traditionally released by the Thai and Chinese on New Year) and asked everyone to make a wish for them as they let their lanterns go.

'The sight of 30 glowing orbs floating out over the ocean is something we'll always remember.' ♥

ADDRESS BOOK

Cake: Martin Senekal

+27 (0)82 925 6285

Catering: Blowfish Restaurant

(canapés) +27 (0)21 556 5464,

Strandkombuis (main course)

+27 (0)22 451 2360

Photographer: Jules Morgan

+27 (0)73 804 4059

Stationery: Lara's Designs

+27 (0)82 681 4500

Venue: Strandkombuis

+27 (0)22 451 2360

Wedding management and

co-ordination: Wedding Concepts

+27 (0)21 426 5783

Clockwise from top left

Says Katie of Ryan: 'I love Ryan because he is my best friend and he always makes me laugh'; the couple integrated hints of blue and silver to reference the sea; oysters and sushi were served after the ceremony; monogrammed slip slops were given to guests as favours;

Katie had a bouquet of trailing white orchids; the groomsmen adhered to the casual dress code in white golf shirts, linen trousers and slip slops; guests were treated to miniature designer cakes as well as coffee and koeksisters for dessert; wire messages were a whimsical and romantic addition to the rustic decor

