

# PLAYING FOR KEEPS

A Savannah couple meets over a football rivalry and marries in a playful *riverfront revelry*.



Stephanie Cisco  
real weddings

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What happens when a die-hard Alabama football fan meets a University of Southern California fanatic?

Love, actually.

Stephanie Lynn Driggers joined her sister at Locos Grill & Pub on a September afternoon in 2006 to watch the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame battle the USC Trojans on the field. Because her team wasn't playing, the petite pharmacist was a little distracted from the game by a handsome stranger smiling at her from across the room.

After taking a shot of courage, she went over and introduced herself. She learned quickly that the friendly Army Ranger, Sgt. 1st Class Francisco "Cisco" Lopez, hailed from the Golden State and was there to support his home team. Stephanie, a devotee of the Southeastern Conference, automatically rooted for the opposition.

It was a good day for Cisco. His team won — and he got Stephanie's number.

Almost three years later, Cisco invited Stephanie, her mother, her sister and her sister's then-boyfriend (also an Army Ranger and now her fiancé) to the Chart House on the Savannah riverfront for dinner. Cisco would be deploying in two days for Afghanistan and wanted a nice meal before heading overseas. When he dropped to his knee, though, Stephanie was surprised — even though everyone else was in on the secret.



## Stephanie and Cisco

**Season:** Spring

**Guests:** 85

**Planning time:** Ten months

**Palette:** Ivory with silver-blue accents

**Rehearsal dinner:** Chart House

**Ceremony/reception:** Savannah International Trade and Convention Center lawn

By Amy Paige Condon  
Photography by Teresa Earnest

"I was caught off guard," she remembers. "I don't even remember what he said."

**Enjoying the View**

Through the window of the restaurant, Stephanie could see the Savannah International Trade and Convention Center on Hutchinson Island. The sleek, contemporary building adjacent to the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort and Spa offered panoramic views of the Savannah River, the restored waterfront and the city's skyline behind it. At the Ranger Ball held at the center the year before, she had walked onto the lawn and felt that this was where she wanted to be married when the time came.

"I love that space, watching the boats go by," she says. "I knew I wanted an outdoor wedding."

The week after Cisco proposed, Stephanie booked the convention center for Memorial Day weekend 2010.

With only nine months to plan the wedding and with Cisco away on duty, Stephanie called Sebrell Smith Designer Events to help.

"I didn't want it to be stressful," says Stephanie, who had gathered clippings from magazines and websites to share her ideas for an elegant and contemporary wedding with traditional touches that put guests at ease. She also didn't want conventional customs, such as the bouquet toss, a formal first dance or a cake cutting.

In Stephanie, Sebrell found "one of those perfect brides who knew what she liked and understood she could delegate."

**Setting Her Sites**

Stephanie's and Cisco's was the first wedding Sebrell would design at the trade center. While the open lawn and bricked patio surface were perfect for the sophisticated



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outdoor party the bride wanted, it was unprotected from wind, hot sun and rain — and Stephanie did not want a tent to obstruct views of the working waterfront. Without that structure, Sebrell had to invent a way of hanging paper lanterns and stringing twinkling lights with planters, pipes and draping.

Stephanie also wanted an unconventional seating layout. Instead of the typical tables and chairs with centerpieces for the reception, she wanted an outdoor living area set up with loveseats, cocktail tables, benches and lounge chairs.

Just like the river flowing alongside their reception, Stephanie and Cisco wanted their guests to move and circulate.

“I didn’t want anyone to get stationed. I wanted people up, dancing, talking and laughing,” recalls Stephanie. “We thought of [our wedding] as a celebration, and we wanted everyone to celebrate with us.”

Instead of renting furniture, the couple invested in an ivory leather sectional, ottoman and wooden tables for their own bonus room and had those delivered to the convention center for the wedding reception.

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**Inspiration Strikes**

With her planner ably handling the site and event coordination, Stephanie turned her attention to other matters: deciding on a color palette for the wedding and selecting a cake.

Stephanie preferred relaxing, neutral tones, but she knew she needed splashes of color. Most of what she found in the marketplace was too bold, though, until the day she walked up to BleuBelle Boutique. A draped strapless dress in shades of fawn and silvery blue hydrangea hung in the window.

“I knew right then,” recalls Stephanie, who chose a shortened cocktail version of the frock for her bridesmaids. “I wanted those spring colors.”

The same cool tones with just enough warmth to soften the edges ended up in the groomsmen’s ties and in accents throughout the event design, including the fondant ribbon framing each of the three tiers on her Rice Krispie Treat wedding cake.

“It was a surprise, and everybody wanted a slice,” says Sebrell.

**Endless Party**

Another surprise on the wedding day occurred when a band at a bar across the river played a rousing concert of Jimmy Buffet tunes loud enough to carry and almost overpower the ceremony. Reverend Zach Sasser, who officiated, made light of it saying, “We are blessed this day also with Jimmy here to entertain us.”

During the cocktail hour, the 85 guests sipped blood orange margaritas and noshed on Vidalia onion soufflés, chicken salad sandwiches and goat cheese crostinis with pecans and honey. They passed around and signed their warm wishes in a photo book designed by Stephanie and filled with engagement pictures by wedding photographer Teresa Earnest.

Later the reception’s food stations served Southern hospitality along with both salmon and barbecue brisket, shrimp and grits with a garnish of fried green tomatoes and a mashed potato martini bar.

The groom’s cake harkened back to the day the couple met over a ball game. A vanilla cake with raspberry filling was shaped like a football with one half decorated for the Crimston Tide and the other for the Trojans.

Instead of the expected first dance, both Stephanie and Cisco opened the dancing by dedicating songs to their fathers. When rain threatened the party, the guests helped the deejay move his equipment and the lounge furniture indoors so that the dancing could continue.

As a golf cart — decorated with tiny bells and a “Just Married” sign designed by the bride’s sisters — whisked Stephanie and Cisco away to the Westin, guests lit sparklers to illuminate the newlyweds’ way.

The party wasn’t over, though. The couple changed into street clothes and met a smaller contingent of family members in the lobby. They crossed the bridge into downtown and danced at the clubs on Congress Street. Per Savannah tradition, they capped off the magical night with a picnic at 4 a.m. in Ellis Square with two large pizzas from late-night eatery Sweet Melissa’s. S

**Behind the Veil**

**The big day:** Saturday, May 29, 2010

**Palette:** Ivory with silver-blue accents

**Planning time:** Ten months

**Guests:** 85

**Rehearsal dinner site:** Chart House

**Ceremony/reception site:** Savannah International Trade and Convention Center lawn

**Planner/event designer:** Sebrell Smith, Sebrell Smith Designer Events

**Officiant:** Rev. Zach Sasser

**Ceremony music:** New Arts Ensembles

**Gown:** Watters from Bella Mia

**Hair and makeup:** Rob’s at Drayton Tower

**Bridesmaids’ dresses:** Alvina Valenta from BleuBelle Boutique

**Groom/groomsmen’s attire:** Simon’s Formal Wear

**Catering:** Savor Savannah

**Reception music:** Sean Hall, Mobile Music Unlimited

**Florist:** Sebrell Smith

**Cake:** Michelle Still, Delectable Designs

**Rentals:** Savannah Special Events

**Accommodations and transportation:** Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort

**Photographer:** Teresa Earnest, Memories N’ More Photography, 912.443.1976, www.memoriesnmore.com

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