



AMERICAN-GROWN HERO

Aimée Newlander, Slow Weddings Network
Santa Cruz, California

To destination wedding planner **Aimée Newlander**, the new **Slow Weddings Network (SWN)** is part of a "slow trifecta" that also includes Slow Food and Slow Flowers. "Our goal is to create hubs across the globe where wedding vendors can gather to learn about each other's work, refer one another, and collaborate in a mindful, passionate and professional environment alongside couples and coordinators who feel the same way about slowing down the fast-paced wedding," she explains.

Based in Santa Cruz, California, she has long shared her "mindful weddings" philosophy with couples getting married along the California Coast in Big Sur, Carmel, Santa Cruz and Pescadero. Before starting Weddings by Aimée in 2009, she worked in the health and wellness industry for 15 years. "I real-

ized that brides and grooms need a wellness person in their environment because weddings can be stressful," she points out.

Aimée has served hundreds of couples in her region and in destinations around the globe. "One thing I sought to understand better . . . within the wedding industry, is why things move so fast," she says. "Why do we spend so much time and energy planning an event where it has become the standard that people don't have time to sit down and enjoy their meal or connect with family and friends who often travel so far? I want our couples to slow down and be present for their wedding day!"

In addition, she wanted to change the industry's status quo, such as vendors competing with one another and passing the buck for responsibility. "When we

can all embrace a team mentality, make an event run smoother, be more coherent and enjoyable for everyone involved, we're ensuring a better wedding day for our couples."

Aimée knew she wasn't alone, and two years ago she invited caterers, pastry chefs, photographers, florists, artisans, officiants, venues and other like-minded vendors including yoga instructors to a backyard barbecue to share her idea for starting a grassroots "slow wedding" organization.

Volunteers offered to help with outreach and marketing, including launching a Facebook group and an Instagram feed. Vendors across the U.S. and from Canada, Europe and South America found the SWN through social media and reached out. "I realized how much demand and need we had for this type



of a movement in the wedding industry," she says.

The Slow Weddings Network launched in 2016 as a membership organization dedicated to providing resources, education and promotion of professional, passionate and mindful small businesses and vendors around the globe. "We want to create social change by shifting the perspective around wedding culture," Aimée says.

The group's website shares its mission and introduces members' services. Couples who visit the site can search by geographic locations and categories including florists/floral design, venues, planning/coordination, officiants, catering/food/beverage, decor/design, photography/videography and tents/rentals.

With a board of directors to guide it, the organization hosts quarterly networking events in the Santa Cruz area, including one held earlier this summer at University of California Santa Cruz's Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems, a Slow Weddings Network partner.

Aimée has made presentations to interested groups in Seattle, and she has an upcoming gathering planned for New York's Hudson Valley. "I'm focusing my time on traveling around the U.S. because it's really important to get the story out to other regions," she says.

Membership in the SWN is open to full- and part-time business owners, with three packages ranging from \$250 to \$600, depending on the needs of each vendor. "Alongside highly recognized names and established brands are small, local, mindful organizations that you may never find in a wedding magazine advertisement," she says.

One woman's mission to give her couples a calm (rather than chaotic) ceremony has launched a global network of like-minded wedding vendors. It's a heroic goal whose time has come.



Slow Weddings Network:
Local, Mindful, Passionate, Professional

See www.slowweddingsnetwork.org for membership details.

For those in San Francisco, Seattle, Colorado and New York areas interested in hosting a SWN Event during Aimée's future travels, please email slowweddingsorg@gmail.com.

Facebook: [slowweddingsnetwork](https://www.facebook.com/slowweddingsnetwork)

Instagram: [@slowweddingsnetwork](https://www.instagram.com/slowweddingsnetwork) ■