

"People still tell us how much fun the day was," Rhulen says. "Even my mom—who is tough to please—hasn't stopped raving about it."

When film producer Anthony Rhulen, 35, proposed to actress Ashley Scott, 27, her reaction was hardly typical. "I screamed, swore and fell to the ground," says Scott. "It was the most spectacular feeling."

The timing of the proposal—just three months after the pair began dating—may have seemed hasty to some, but not to Scott and Rhulen. "I never had any doubts," says the groom, who popped the question in a park overlooking the Atlantic Ocean near Scott's hometown of Charleston, S.C. "I always feel better with Ashley than without her, and that made the decision very easy."

It helped that the couple, who met at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival, were friends before things turned romantic. "We hung out together all the time," says Scott, who is best known for her role on the television series *Dark Angel* and can next be seen in the film *Into the Blue*. "Then I found myself putting on makeup before he came over or calling him before I went to bed. I gradually became more smitten with him, and he with me."

They made up for their brief courtship by spending nearly a year meticulously planning an October 2004 destination wedding at a lush, 120-acre Napa Valley vineyard. The location was chosen in part to honor Rhulen's deceased father, who shared the couple's love of wine. "The place reminded me of him, and it just felt right," says Rhulen.

In a statue garden surrounded by foliage of blazing crimson, orange and gold, Scott strode down a white gravel aisle flanked by her two brothers; their father met them halfway and escorted his daughter to the

altar. "I'm very close to my brothers and thought it wouldn't be fair to just have my dad with me," says Scott, who wore her father's wedding band on her right thumb as "something old."

Afterward, the 100 guests, including actor Josh Hartnett, made their way to a plantation-style estate with sweeping porches—a setting that inspired the Southern-theme cocktail hour. "I was born near New Orleans and wanted to get my country thing in somewhere," says Scott of the outdoor party, which included an oyster bar, lemon mint juleps, peach iced tea and a bluegrass band.

An alfresco dinner, accompanied by Honig sauvignon blanc and Beaulieu

Vineyard cabernet sauvignon, was served under a grape arbor strung with tiny lights. "Ashley loves fairies, so we hung Swarovski crystal fairies, butterflies and dragonflies from the vines," says wedding planner Yifat Oren. "It was very *Midsummer Night's Dream*."

The storybook ending must have seemed a long way off on the night the couple first kissed. "We were still friends at that point; then he leaned in to kiss me," says Scott. "It was the most awkward moment of our lives! But we've perfected the art now." ■

PLANNING A GREAT REHEARSAL DINNER

The rehearsal dinner is your chance to celebrate with loved ones in a more intimate, casual atmosphere—and to set the tone for events to come. Yifat Oren, who organized an Italian feast for Scott and Rhulen at the Frazier winery in Napa Valley, offers her tips for ensuring a memorable evening.

■ Choose a unique

location Oren favors rehearsal-dinner spots that may be too kitschy or have too strong a theme for a reception, like a Mexican restaurant or bowling alley. Sites that take advantage of local ambiance, such as a secluded beach, are also good options.

■ Create contrast

While Scott and Rhulen's reception featured pastel hues and garden-style floral

arrangements, the rehearsal had a "moody, Gothic feel," says Oren, noting the two 112-foot-long tables dressed in burgundy crushed silk cloths and topped with vintage silver candelabras.

■ **Provide open seating** This complements the relaxed vibe of the event and encourages guests, some of whom may be meeting for the first time, to mingle, Oren says.

■ **Let there be toasts** Due to the tight scheduling of traditions such as the cake cutting and first dance, "I discourage allowing too many toasts at the reception," Oren says. The rehearsal dinner is the ideal venue for additional speeches.

