



ABOVE: Some of Lucy's collection of vintage crockery which is available for hire.

The vintage candlesticks Lucy Morris found to dress the tables at her wedding didn't just provide an elegant atmospheric glow, they also illuminated a business idea that had been flickering at the back of her mind.

Unable to find a company that could supply the mix of pretty vintage crockery that she'd envisaged for her reception at Voewood House in Holt, Lucy started her own avid gathering of mismatched plates, tablecloths, teacups and candlesticks.

"I was like every bride – completely obsessed with my wedding day!" says 30-something Lucy. "But I was depressed when I couldn't find anything except white tablecloths and crockery. So I started crazily collecting an eclectic mix myself and spent a small fortune!"

Her search criteria was simple: Old but beautiful. A fan of Victorian, Edwardian and Art Deco pieces, she sourced crockery that was "pretty and chic – not chintzy" and nothing beyond the 1950s.

Lucy married husband Kevin in September 2008, but after the wedding and a stream of compliments from her guests, felt her collection was too good not to share. With her home cupboards bursting with shelves of pretty china – and three children under four whose small mitts found the delicate contents a temptation – Lucy decided to set up online crockery and accessories hire company, Pretty Vintage.

"I did a lot of research and couldn't believe no-one in Norfolk was offering a vintage crockery hire service," said Lucy, who drew on experience running her own designer cards business and long-time

affection for all things vintage to launch her new venture.

Now she has a huge range of crockery, including no fewer than 200 cake plates, more than 100 teacups and around 30 teapots and tablecloths, and has revamped her basement to cope with the growing stock.

Demand has been unprecedented, with customers getting in touch to hire pieces for all sorts of special occasions like birthdays, garden parties, christening and weddings. Orders range from a small tea set for a birthday do, to a full dinner service for 150 wedding guests.

"There are so many ways to work vintage," says Lucy. "I am well aware that sometimes the hardest thing is to envisage how something will hang together, so I've compiled some images and ideas on my website to help customers choose how far down the vintage path they wish to travel."

For a traditional English garden party theme, for example, customers can hire bunting, deck chairs, mismatched floral plates and old-fashioned outdoor games like croquet and boules. While for what Lucy describes as Grace Kelly-inspired Hollywood glamour, you can hire champagne saucers, sparkling silver cutlery and cut-glass candlesticks – perfect for chic wedding tables.

"Vintage can mean elegant and timeless and can be done with only a few strategically placed pieces," she explains. "And if there is something particular a customer is looking for that I don't have in stock, I'll do my best to find it for them."

Alongside Pretty Vintage, Lucy has also

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launched The Cupcake Tin, a bakery service for people looking for vintage-style cakes.

"I really struggled to get a simple, old-fashioned wedding cake when I married; designers always want to add extra details," she said. "So I thought about cupcakes – ones that are simple but beautiful. Now I offer vanilla cupcakes with royal icing on the website. These can then be piped and decorated how the customer wishes."

Lucy believes the trend for the past has been boosted by people like supermodel Kate Moss, whose vintage-inspired clothing range for Topshop has proved hugely popular. "I also think people like holding on to traditional things and hanker after those pretty eras of florals and pastel colours," she says.

At weddings, Lucy finds vintage details work especially well, because they offer a unique way to make the occasion a little different – and provide a great talking point.

"You don't have to embrace the whole vintage thing. You could have a modern wedding, just with lots of bunting or a vintage cruet set on each table," she says. "And when you're sat at tables with people you don't know, vintage crockery takes people on a trip down memory lane and definitely gets them talking." 🌸

*Pretty Vintage, 07949 205946;*

*www.prettyvintage.co.uk*

BELOW: Vintage glassware on one of the tables at Lucy and Kevin's wedding.

