

Thomas took nine years to propose...now we've won a £25,000 wedding and will marry in a few months!



Cheers — happy couple Mairéad and fiancé Thomas with Pete Snodden (right) and (below) Mairéad with mum, Martina

A lucky couple from Co Down get the shock of their lives as they discover they have won the wedding of their dreams in Mauritius in our fabulous competition which they didn't even know they had entered **BT WOMAN**

Following a nine-year romance and a two-year promise of an engagement, Mairéad Toman (26), the winner of our fantastic bridal competition, is not used to things happening quickly.

But the Drumaness girl got the shock of her life this week when she discovered she had won our Belfast Telegraph bridal competition in association with Chaka Travel and will be married by the end of November.

Mairéad and fiancé Thomas (29) were on holiday in Ibiza when they were announced as finalists for the competition, which they didn't even know they had been secretly entered for by Mairéad's mum Martina.

However, engineered by Martina, the couple were blissfully unaware and enjoying a cup of coffee in Loganberry Deli in Holywood yesterday when celebrity DJ Pete Snodden suddenly arrived to tell them they had won the dream competition.

It was tears and hugs all around as the couple digested the news that they had just won a £25,000 competition which will see them have the wedding of their dreams in just a few months' time.

Mum Martina Mason explains her delight at keeping the secret from the couple: "When I found out they had won I couldn't stop shaking. I just burst into tears and really couldn't take it in, but the fact that they were away made it easier to keep it a secret."

"The applications closed at midnight and I emailed mine off at 11.40pm thinking nothing more of it to be honest."

"I was just delighted when they were selected as a finalist as I

thought it would be something lovely to show them when they returned from their holidays. When I got the call I couldn't take it all in — things like this don't happen in our lives — it is like a dream."

Martina, who gave birth to Mairéad when she was just 16 and moved in with mum Phyllis, who helped bring her up, says she entered the competition as she felt her daughter missed out on a lot growing up and she really wanted to give something back and show her how much she loved her and wanted her to have the wedding she deserved.

Now, thanks to our amazing competition, this dream has become a reality for shop assistant Mairéad and funding accountant Thomas.

The couple are currently living in Dublin, where Thomas is still training, but spend as much time as possible in Co Down with family and friends.

An emotional Mairéad said: "I just can't take this all in. Thomas and I have been together for almost nine years."

"I picked my engagement ring two years ago — and he only got round to proposing on the beach at Newcastle at Christmas — so I am not used to whirlwinds. We had just

started saving for our wedding and planned it for around 2011. I can't believe now it is going to happen in a matter of months."

"This means the world to me and it is something I will never get over or be able to thank mum enough for."

As the news slowly sank in that the next few months will be a frenzy of dress-picking, suit hire, rings, honeymoon clothes as well as planning and organizing their

dream wedding in Mauritius courtesy of Chaka Travel and Beachcomber Hotels and an after-party at a Hastings Hotel of their choice, the couple became more and more shocked and excited.

Thomas said: "It is funny for when we were in Ibiza we were chatting about how we were getting too old for all the partying and we really needed to settle down — now in a matter of weeks we will be married. I really can't take it all in."

"I knew from pretty early on that Mairéad and I would end up getting married and everyone said we were made for each other but, as Mairéad will tell you, I never do anything in a hurry — that's why it took me eight years to propose."

"We had talked in the past about getting married abroad but it seemed like a really expensive option as well. There is just so much to think about and take in."

After a frantic round of calls to friends and family members, the first of which was to a very proud and excited granny Phyllis, who is already planning her trip to the wedding — which she says she wouldn't miss for the world — the couple said farewell to Pete, who will DJ at their wedding and, set off to begin planning the run-up to their dream wedding.



Prize package

- Our wedding extravaganza, which draws together some of the province's most elite bridal service providers and names in the industry, is worth a staggering £25,000 and includes a dream wedding in Mauritius, a five star honeymoon at one of the world's most romantic settings, and everything the couple needs in the run-up to their big day.
- Chaka Travel all-inclusive 5* honeymoon with Beachcomber Hotels in Mauritius
 - Chaka Travel luxury wedding package in Mauritius, created by celebrity designer, Laurence
 - Chaka Travel return flights for the bride and groom with Air Mauritius
 - Accommodation for two witnesses with Beachcomber hotels
 - Designer wedding dress from The Bridal Suite, Holywood
 - Designer suit hire

- from Hire Class in Lisburn
- Wedding rings from Steenson's Designer and Bespoke Jewellers, Belfast
- Afterparty room from Hastings Hotels
- Wedding planner to the stars, Leo Callow
- Bootcamp and Hen Spa Day, courtesy of Hastings Hotels
- £500 worth of designer honeymoon clothes from The Jeanery in Belfast
- Celebrity DJ Pete Snodden from Cool FM for the afterparty
- Male grooming package for Thomas and his best man, by Jason Shankey Male Grooming
- Make-up styling by professional make-up artist to the stars, Paddy McGurgan.
- Hair styling on the day of the afterparty from Associate Hair, Stranmillis, Belfast
- Groceries upon their return, provided by Musgrave Retail Partners NI



TOMORROW

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