

wedding traditions



source: World Wedding Traditions

Save the ribbons and bows that grace the gifts you receive at your bridal shower to create an artistic bouquet that you carry during the wedding rehearsal. Remember that each ribbon that breaks as you open the packages is said to represent the birth of a child.

Plant a seedling on the morning of or the day before your wedding to grow along with your marriage. If roses are one of your favorite blooms, you might choose the plant that is always associated with love.

Future wealth and good fortune for newlyweds is said to be inspired by slipping a lucky sixpence into one of the shoes you wear for your wedding. The sixpence first became known as a lucky coin when introduced by Edward VI of England in 1551, and later became part of wedding tradition with brides in the Victorian era.

Brides are encouraged to include "something blue" among their wedding finery to bolster the favorite old line, "Those who dress in blue have lovers true." Blue has long been considered the color of fidelity, purity and love, and was first worn in ribbons by early Jewish brides.

Carry a handkerchief passed down through generations of your family to begin your own tradition with a lacy square that you select. A bride who cries on her wedding day is never supposed to shed another tear about her marriage.

The custom of a bride being given away originated with the sale of the bride by the father to the prospective groom. Today, the tradition is considered a sign of the father entrusting his beloved daughter to the care of her husband-to-be.

The ceremonial kiss that closes the marriage ceremony is considered symbolic of an exchange of spirit as each new spouse breathes a part of the soul into the other.

The celebration of marriage is heightened by the offering of toasts to the bride and groom. Ancient French custom encouraged the newlyweds to drink the reception toast from a special cup that was typically passed among family generations. Today, couples are given special toasting goblets for their reception.

Ask your pastry chef to enclose bridesmaids' charms -- one for each single woman in the wedding party -- attached to ribbons placed in the frosting of your wedding cake. Before you and your husband cut the first slice of cake, the bridesmaids are called to pull the ribbons, each claiming a token that holds the promise of her future -- hope, love, good luck, next to marry or old maid.

As one of the first domestic acts of your marriage, you and your groom will cut the wedding cake before it is served to guests at the reception. The groom traditionally places his hand over yours as a symbol of his desire to take care of you. It is also said that the bride's hand must be the first to cut the cake.

After cutting the cake, the newlyweds often share a taste by feeding each other. The ancient Romans believed that the joint partaking of the cake created a magic bonding. The sweetness symbolized the couples' future happiness and the grain held the promise of a fruitful union.

The top layer of the wedding cake is customarily taken home and frozen by the bride and groom, who will share it as they celebrate their first anniversary. It is believed that a cake that lasts a year is the guarantee of a long marriage.

Before leaving to change for the honeymoon getaway, the bride tosses her bouquet to an assembly of unmarried bridesmaids and friends. The lucky recipient is expected to be the next one to marry.

After the bride throws her bouquet, the groom removes the garter she has worn on her leg and tosses to an assembly of bachelor groomsman and friends. The one lucky enough to snag the garter should also prepare to marry next.

The custom of showering newlyweds with rice as they depart for the honeymoon anticipates the fruitfulness of the union. Today, birdseed, confetti, or dried flowers have replaced the rice.

wedding traditions

African Tradition

Jumping the Broom is a custom that originated as the symbolic jumping the doorway, or threshold from a carefree single life into the responsibilities of domestic life and a future together. Tying the Knot means that the couple is actually bound together at the wrists during the ceremony, linking them together symbolically. The bride, as a symbol of modesty, will hide her face behind a veil of braided hair. As an offer to the gods to join in the celebration, wine is poured onto the ground.

Amish Tradition

The wedding ceremony of the Amish are plain and wonderfully simple. The bride and groom personally deliver to each guest an invitation to their bonding. The wedding is planned to be celebrated after the harvesting season, so all can attend, usually in the middle of the week. The ceremony is simple, as is the Bride's dress, which is new, but something ordinary that could be worn to church on Sunday.

Argentinian Tradition

Bridesmaids, a maid of honor, or a best man have never been part of a traditional wedding in Argentina. The mother of the groom, and the father of the bride escort the couple getting married down the church aisle, and then stand beside them through the wedding ceremony. It is an Argentinean wedding tradition for the couple to exchange their wedding rings at the engagement, and not during the marriage vows.

Australian Tradition

Australia Wedding fashions have changed over the years, but the white wedding dress is still traditionally worn by brides in Australia, reflecting a custom which dates back many centuries. A bible is often given as a wedding gift, which is kept as a precious souvenir for future generations. The traditions which are known and loved in the western world are all present here - the wedding cake, the exchange of rings and the reception with friends and family. Australian weddings will often bring together extended family members, and a couple's marriage will provide a wonderful opportunity for everyone to celebrate the start of their new life together.

Austrian Tradition

In the past when the marriage proposal was a more formal procedure, the prospective groom sent his friend or members of the family to represent his interests to the prospective bride and her family. If they saw a blind man, a monk or a pregnant woman it was thought that the marriage would be doomed if they continued their journey as these sights were thought to be bad omens. If, however, they saw goats, pigeons or wolves these were good omens which would bring good fortune to the marriage. It was thought unlucky for a woman to marry a man whose surname began with the same letter as hers. The sentiment was summarised in the following rhyme: "To change the name and not the letter, is to change the worst and not the better." The bride should not practise writing her new name before the wedding. This is thought to bring bad luck by tempting fate.

Although most weddings take place on a Saturday it was considered unlucky in the past. Fridays were also considered unlucky particularly Friday the 13th. The famous old rhyme advises a wedding in the first half of the week: "Monday for wealth, Tuesday for health, Wednesday the best day of all, Thursday for losses, Friday for crosses, Saturday for no luck at all." It is thought unlucky for the bride to make her own wedding dress. It is also unlucky for the groom to see the bride in her wedding dress before until she arrives the ceremony. The bride should not wear her entire outfit before the wedding day. Some brides leave a final stitch on the dress undone until it is time to leave for the ceremony when the outfit is completed. Traditionally, brides have been thought to be particularly vulnerable to evil spirits and many of the customs and traditions associated with weddings are to provide protection.

A combination of red and white flowers is avoided by the superstitious because they stand for blood and bandages. The groom often chooses a flower for his buttonhole which also occurs in the bride's bouquet. This is a vestige of the time when a knight would wear his lady's colour to display his love. When the bride is ready to leave the house for the wedding ceremony a last look in the mirror will bring her good luck. However returning to the mirror once she has begun her journey will result in bad luck. Seeing a chimney sweep on the way to a wedding is thought to bring good luck and it is still possible to hire one to attend wedding ceremonies. Other good luck omens when seen on the way to the ceremony include spiders, black cats and rainbows. Bad weather on the way to the wedding is thought to be an omen of an unhappy marriage, although in some cultures rain is considered a good omen. Cloudy skies and wind are believed to cause stormy marriages, snow on the other hand is associated with fertility and wealth.

Bridesmaids were dressed in a similar way to the bride. The bridesmaids were thought to act as decoys to confuse evil spirits and thus protect the bride. It is said that the first partner who buys a new item after the wedding will be the dominant one in the relationship. Many brides ensure that they make the first purchase by arranging to buy a small item such as a pin from a bridesmaid immediately after the ceremony.

Belgian Tradition

A traditional Belgian bride carries a special handkerchief, as part of her wedding outfit, on the day of her marriage. She might embroider her name on it, carry it with her on her day of matrimony, and then pass it down to one of her sisters as a family heirloom.

Bermuda Tradition

Wedding cakes of islanders are topped with a tiny sapling. After the wedding reception, the newlyweds plant the young tree at their home, where they watch it grow, as their marriage grows.

wedding traditions

Chilean Tradition

A traditional Chilean wedding custom calls for the couple getting married to exchange wedding rings when the engagement proposal takes place. Until the wedding vows at their marriage ceremony, the couple will wear their wedding bands on their right hands. Once they have become man and wife the rings are switched to their left hands.

Chinese Tradition

The invitations sent to the guest are wrapped in red gift-wrap, as the traditional colors of happiness and wealth are red and gold. Any gifts of money to the newlyweds are presented in red envelopes for the same reason. Gold jewelry -filled purses are also presented to the bride by women relatives and close friends to portray her new status. During the ceremony both bride and groom pay homage and respect to their parents and elders for the guidance and wisdom they have bestowed upon them. After the ceremony, firecrackers are lit to chase any evil spirits and demons away from the couple. During the reception the bride will be presented in typically at least three different wedding outfits.

Croatian Tradition

On the wedding day of a Croatian couple, the bride's family may playfully try to stall the groom from arriving at the church with his intended, by putting up different obstacles in the couple's path. After the traditional Croatian wedding ceremony and marriage vows have taken place, female relatives remove the bride's wedding veil and replace it with a scarf and apron while singing to her. This symbolizes the new bride's status as a wife. Then all of the guests walk three times around a well which represents the holy trinity, and throw apples into it, to ensure the newlywed's fertility.

Cuban Tradition

Cuban wedding receptions are famous for their festivities. There is almost always lively music and dancing at a Cuban marriage celebration. Wedding guests partake in the traditional money dance, where each man who dances with the new bride must pin money to her dress, to help the newlyweds with their honeymoon expenses. Along with receiving wedding presents, it is customary for the Cuban bride and groom to give each guest a favor, to remind them of this joyous occasion.

Cypress Tradition

Money is pinned to the bride and groom throughout their first dance at most wedding receptions in Cyprus. The 'pin money' is used by the couple to help get them started in their new life together.

Czech Tradition

The friends of a traditional Czech bride might plant a tree in her yard, then decorate it with colored ribbons and painted eggshells. Legend believed the bride would live as long as the tree. The night before her wedding day, her friends would also give her a crown of rosemary to represent wisdom, love, loyalty and remembrance. Before the marriage vows take place an infant is laid on the couple's bed, to bless and enhance their fertility. The bride-to-be is also given three covered dishes containing wheat for fertility, millet mixed with ashes that she must sift through to prove her patience, and the third hides a sparrow under the lid. After the Czech marriage ceremony, the new bride's wedding veil is switched for a traditional matron's bonnet, and the reception guests sing a Czech wedding song.

Danish Tradition

In Denmark, there is a traditional wedding custom of building an arch of pine branches, called the Gate of Honor, in front of the bride's family home. Another Gate of Honor is built when the couple celebrates their silver anniversary. At some point during the marriage celebration the groom will disappear and the male guests all kiss the new bride. After the groom returns his bride eventually leaves the room and all of the female guests kiss him.

At a traditional Danish reception the guests will all gather around the groom, during the dancing and festivities, to cut his tie and socks with scissors. The Danish marzipan ring cake is the customary wedding cake in Denmark. Also called the cornucopia cake, it is made with almonds, pastilage and marzipan. On the outside, the cake is beautifully decorated with sugar work. On the inside it is filled with fresh fruit, candy and almond cakes. To avoid bad luck, the newlyweds cut the cake together as a married couple and all of the reception guests must eat a piece.

Dutch Tradition

The roots of the customary bridal shower originated in Holland. If a Dutch bride was unfortunate enough to have her father not approve of her choice in husbands, he would not offer a dowry. Her friends would then "shower" her with gifts so she could still be married to her groom, without the help of her father. The families of the Dutch bride and groom host a party before the day of the wedding vows. Traditionally, the couple sit on a throne, beneath the pines, as their guests come to bless them and wish them happiness.

Dutch wedding receptions are famous for serving heavy foods. Two traditional items served at a marriage celebration in Holland are sweetmeats called, "bridal sugar" and spiced wine known as "bride's tears." After a Dutch wedding, newlyweds in Holland might plant lilies-of-the-valley around their house. This tradition symbolizes "the return of happiness" and the couple can then celebrate and renew their love with each blooming season.

wedding traditions

Early American Tradition

Wedding gowns of Victorian brides were accessorized with gloves, symbols of modesty and romance. Without the 'g', they were 'a pair of loves'. They still compliment with very formal wedding dresses for modern American brides today, and they are customary bridal accessories of princesses.

Egyptian Tradition

As in the past, many weddings in Egypt are still arranged, and the tradition of the groom's family proposing to the bride is often practiced. Just before the marriage vows begin there is a musical wedding march called the Zaffa. There is traditional Egyptian music, belly dancers, drums horns and performers with flaming swords. Traditionally, Egyptians believed that the ring finger has the "vein amoris", the vein of love, which runs straight to the heart.

English Tradition

The English wedding celebration begins on the way to the ceremony, as young girls scatter flower petals along the path the bride is walking, in hopes of providing a happy path in life. On one bent arm, the bride carries a horseshoe decorated with ribbons, to bestow on her good luck. The traditional wedding cake is a fruitcake, and the top tier is called the "christening cake", which is saved for the baptism of the couples first child. The cake is typically made of raisins, ground almonds and cherries and topped with special candies called marzipan.

Fiji Tradition

In Fiji, it is customary for a groom to present a valuable gift to his bride's father. Traditionally, this present should be a whale's tooth, symbolizing status and wealth.

Filipino Tradition

Engagement traditions and marriage rituals are very important to Filipino culture. At one time, as a way of proposing matrimony, a man would throw a spear at the front of the house of the girl he wished to marry. This act would symbolize her unavailability, and begin the Filipino engagement process. The groom and his family would then go together to the bride's family to ask for her hand in marriage. Traditionally, a Filipino bride would wear her best dress on her day of matrimony. Her groom would wear the customary marriage clothes of black pants and an embroidered shirt, made of an almost translucent fabric. Orange blossoms used for wedding bouquets and church decorations were, and still are, very popular.

Today, a bride getting married in the Philippines might wear a white wedding dress on her day of matrimony, while her groom could be wearing a black tuxedo. There are many witnesses or sponsors at the wedding ceremony, who have various responsibilities. The first witnesses pin the bride's veil to the groom's shoulder to symbolize the couple being clothed as one. Next, they hang a white cord around the couple's necks which represents the eternal bond between them. Then, two candles are lit on either side of a unity candle, which the couple getting married light together. Lastly, the groom gives his bride thirteen coins that have been blessed by the priest for a life of faithfulness and prosperity. The traditional marriage celebration dance is the Pandango. Reception guests pin money to the newlyweds to help pay for the honeymoon. Often times, there is a bird cage decorated as a wedding bell with white doves inside. The newlyweds release the birds, symbolizing the bride and groom going off together in peace.

French Tradition

The traditional bridal trousseau, or hope chest, originated in France and came from the French word trousse, meaning bundle. The popularity of a bride wearing a white wedding gown on her day of matrimony, began in France several hundred years ago. The custom of having fragrant flowers as decorations and bridal bouquets has also been popular for centuries. Each flower represents a special and unique meaning to the bride and groom, and especially fragrant flowers helped freshen things up a bit, before deodorant and perfumes were invented. Wedding bells in France were usually heard in spring and summer when it was warm enough for everyone to bathe!

Still practiced in small villages today, is a traditional French custom, for the groom to call on his future bride at her home on the morning of their wedding day. As he escorts her to the wedding chapel, the town's children stretch white ribbons across the road, which the bride cuts. The groom usually walks his mother down the aisle just prior to the main wedding procession. As the newlywed couple departs from the wedding site, laurel leaves are scattered in their path for them to walk over.

A wedding toast is made to the newlyweds sometime during the traditional French wedding reception. Following this toast, they drink, as husband and wife, from a specially engraved, double handled goblet, usually a precious family heirloom passed down from generation to generation. After the wedding reception, and even later into the couple's wedding night, friends of the newlyweds might show up outside their window banging pots and pans, singing boisterous tunes. The groom is expected to invite them in for drinks and snacks.

Greek Tradition

Ancient Greek brides wore traditional wedding veils of yellow or red, which represented fire. These brightly colored veils were supposed to protect the bride from evil spirits and demons. In ancient Greece, diamonds were considered teardrops of the Gods, and it was believed that a diamond reflected the flames of love. A Greek bride may carry a lump of sugar on her wedding day to ensure she has a sweet life, or she might carry ivy, as a symbol of endless love. A traditional Greek Orthodox marriage includes the celebration of the formal engagement.

wedding traditions

Greek Tradition

On the day of the Greek wedding ceremony, the groom asks the bride's father for his daughter's hand in marriage. The groom's best man then accompanies the couple to the church, to be married. The best man, along with the priest, is in charge of the ceremony. He places gold crowns or wreaths made of orange blossoms on the heads of the bride and groom. These crowns or wreaths are linked by a silk ribbon. For the rest of their wedding day the newlyweds are honored as king and queen. The traditional Greek wedding reception is usually a huge party and can last through the night. There is feasting, drinking and dancing, which includes the famous Greek circle dance. Dishes are smashed on the floor for good luck and money is thrown at the musicians. Candy coated almonds, called Bom Bom Yara are served to the guests as reception party favors.

Hungarian Tradition

Along with the exchanging of wedding rings, it is customary for a Hungarian bride to give her groom a wedding present of handkerchiefs, usually three or seven, which are believed to be lucky numbers. In return, the Hungarian groom gives his bride a bag of coins. During a Hungarian wedding reception all of the male guests may dance with the bride. If they give her coins, she will give them a kiss in return.

Icelandic Tradition

Wedding receptions in Iceland feature wedding cake called kransakaka. This lovely cake is made by creating 'wedding rings' of almond pastry of various sizes which are then piled on top of one another to form a pyramid. Swirls of white icing decorate each ring, and fine chocolates or decorative candies fill the center.

Tradition of India

Sweets, eggs, and money are woven into to wedding themes of India. They symbolize, respectively, a sweet life, fertility, and prosperity. The Hindu wedding ceremony includes customary rituals to ward off evil spirits. After the wedding vows have been exchanged the groom's father or brother showers flower petals on the newlyweds; then he holds a coconut over the bride and groom's heads and circles it around them three times. An Indian groom often wears a turban with a veil of flowers streaming down in front of his face to protect him from evil spirits. Traditional Indian brides wear pink and red saris on their wedding day, adorning themselves extravagantly with as much jewelry as possible. Henna staining, a customary art form, is still practiced by Indian brides to be. On the eve of her wedding vows, following a traditional ceremonial cleansing, the bride-to-be will have her hands and feet painted with henna, in beautiful paisley or medallion patterns.

Irish Tradition

The Claddagh wedding tradition originates from the tale about a man in ancient Galway. He was soon to become wed and was taken prisoner by roving sailors and forced into labor in a foreign land. During that time he taught himself the art of jewelry-making. Upon his return to his homeland he found his maiden had never married, and in his happiness, he fashioned the now famous Claddagh wedding band. The rings depicts a heart, held by two hands with a crown over it. Many "lassies" now wear the Claddagh ring, but only those that are wed wear it with the hands facing in.

There are many dances at an Iris wedding, but one of the more notable is the "janting char" where the groom is carried in a chair to present him to the guests. An old Irish tradition calls for the couple getting married to walk together to the church together, to exchange their wedding vows. As they walked down the main street, to the chapel, onlookers would not only throw rice to bless the marriage, but larger items as well, such as pots and pans. The traditional Irish bride might wear a blue wedding dress on her wedding day, believing blue to be a lucky color. English lavender, an herb, is often mixed with her wedding flower. It is traditional for the bride to braid her hair, as this is considered a sacred way to keep feminine power and luck. St. Patrick's Day is considered one of the luckiest wedding anniversary dates in Ireland.

The Irish translation for "honeymoon" is mi na meala, which means the month of honey. It was an Irish custom for the newlyweds to spend a month together drinking honeyed wine, secluded, in case their families tried to separate them. Especially if they had eloped.

Italian Tradition

In the past, Italian wedding engagements were usually orchestrated by the families of the bride and groom. Lineage was of the most importance, and if the bride's father had any doubts, negotiations could stop in their tracks. In some cases, a matchmaker sent a message (masciata) to the prospective bride's family of the man's hope to marry. If her family found the groom's proposal acceptable, there would be wedding bells and a marriage. Diamond engagement rings have been popular with Italian brides since the 1400's. Italians have long held that diamonds are created by the flames of love. In medieval Italy, grooms even paid for their brides with precious stones.

In preparation for her wedding day, the bride assembles a trousseau, consisting of household items, clothing, and sometimes even her future husband's clothes to bring to the home of the groom. Her family provided her with a dowry of money and possibly domestic goods. Today, this custom continues in the form of the bridal shower. In Veneto, it is customary for the Italian couple getting married to walk to the wedding chapel together. The townsfolk place obstacles in the bride's path to see how she will react to domestic situations. If she picked up a broom, for example, she will keep a clean house. If they put a child in her way and she stopped to help him, she will be a good mother. In some regions, the bride and groom must cut a log in half before they reach the wedding site, using a double handled saw. This demonstrates their partnership in love and marriage.

wedding traditions

Italian Tradition

Tying a ribbon in front of the wedding chapel to symbolize the bond between the couple getting married is another popular wedding custom in Italy. The actual wedding ceremony (sposalizio) is officiated by a priest or civil authority. Old church tradition warns against marrying during Lent and Advent, and marriage is also avoided in the months of May and August. A lengthy celebration begins with a mass in the morning; and the dancing and feasting that follows may continue well into the wee hours of the morning. To ward off evil spirits, a groom in Italy might carry a piece of iron in his pocket. The bride wears a veil to hide her face from jealous spirits. Tearing the veil is considered good luck. Sunday marriages are believed to be the luckiest. It is considered bad luck for a bride to wear any gold, on the day she is married, until wedding rings are exchanged. Symbolic foods for fertility and for good luck are 'confetti' -- candy covered almonds tied in mesh bags to toss at the couple; and twists of fried dough powdered with sugar called wanda (bow ties). For hundreds of years, traditional gourmet Italian food has been served to wedding reception guests. Sweet liquor and strong drinks are served to the guests, by the best man, before the dinner begins. This gives the guests a chance to toast the happy couple with "Per cent'anni" which means, for a hundred years.

The menu at an Italian reception is nearly as important as the wedding itself. Guests may be served as many as 14 different courses with wine and other beverages. After dinner, the customary multi-layered Italian wedding cake is served with espresso and coffee. The sheer volume of food reflects how highly anticipated and festive a typical Italian wedding is. For the traditional Italian custom of 'buste', the bride will carry a satin bag (la borsa) in which guests place envelopes of money to defer the expenses of customarily lavish Italian weddings. Sometimes the bag is guarded by the bride's grandmother during the festivities or the bride might wear it and allow male guests to put money in it in exchange for a dance with her.

Before the reception is over, the bride and groom usually break a glass. The number of pieces of shattered glass symbolize the years the happy couple will share together. At some weddings, a pair of white doves is released into the air, symbolizing the couple's love and happiness. One popular custom is a toast, usually made by a male guest after a few glasses of wine. "Evviva gli sposi" - "hurray for the newlyweds." Guests respond with thundering applause. This toast is shouted whenever there is a lull in the wedding celebration, renewing spirits and enthusiasm. "Kiss for the bride" is another popular Italian toast. It calls for the bride and groom to stand and show their affections for all the guests to see.

Japanese Tradition

Historically, Japanese wedding ceremonies were performed in Shinto Shrines. Many of Japan's wedding sites, therefore, provide shrines for couples who want to follow Japanese wedding traditions. The Japanese bride-to-be is painted pure white from head to toe, visibly declaring her maiden status to the gods. The bride wears a white kimono and an elaborate headpiece covered with many ornaments to invite good luck to the happy couple. A white hood is attached to the kimono, which the bride wears like a veil to hide her 'horns of jealousy' from the groom's mother, who will now become the head of the family. Japanese grooms wear black kimonos to their wedding ceremony.

While the bride and groom exchange their wedding vows, their families face each other, instead of the couple getting married. Central to the traditional Japanese marriage ceremony is the ritual of drinking nine cups of sake, after which newlyweds are considered united. Families and guests also drink sake, to symbolize the bonding of the couple as well as of the two families. The father of the groom, and of the bride, then introduce their respective family members. For the wedding reception, the new bride changes into a red kimono and again later into a western-style gown. The wedding party and invited guests engage in games, skits and karaoke during the wedding reception. Guests are expected to offer the couple goshugi -- money -- in a festive envelope either before or after the wedding ceremony. Due to better climate, many Japanese brides prefer spring and fall wedding dates. Certain wedding anniversaries are thought to be lucky, so it is common to see dozens of newlywed couples heading for their honeymoon on the same day.

Jewish Tradition

The Jewish Ketubah

Traditional Hebrew wedding ceremonies begin with the bride and groom signing a marriage contract, called the Ketubah. The agreement, which once assured the bride's legal status, states the expectations and duties of the couple once they are married. This beautiful, ornate document will be framed and displayed in the couples' home. After the couple have signed the Ketubah, the groom lowers his bride's wedding veil after studying her face. This wedding custom recalls the biblical story of Jacob, who married the wrong woman when she covered her face with a veil. In the Jewish tradition, the wedding ring should be simple, a band with no details, no stones, and nothing engraved, with nothing to distinguish the beginning from the end. The rabbi, groom, groomsmen, and Jewish male guests traditionally wear a white-colored cap called a yamulkes.

The Traditional Jewish Wedding Ceremony

The wedding ceremony begins with a procession of the wedding party members. At the wedding site, both sets of parents escort the bride and groom down the aisle. The marriage ceremony is performed under a special canopy, called a huppah, which represents God's presence, shelter and protection. After exchanging wedding vows, seven marriage blessings are read. The groom then steps on a wine glass, to symbolize the fragility of human happiness, a hallmark of Jewish history. It is also traditional for the bride and groom to be alone together for a few moments immediately after the ceremony. This tradition, called yichud, originated so that the marriage could be consummated, but now it is observed as a lovely time to be together before the reception. There is rarely, therefore, a receiving line at a Jewish wedding.

wedding traditions

Favorite Jewish Wedding Dances

Wedding receptions are joyous celebrations, with much singing and many traditional dances. A lively Israeli dance called the Hora is performed at the wedding reception. While they hold on to either end of a handkerchief, bride and groom are lifted into the air on chairs by their joyful guests, as they are celebrated as 'king and queen of the night'. A lovely Jewish custom called the "Krenzl" -- which means 'crowning' honors the bride's mother when her last daughter is wed. The mother is seated in the center of the room and is crowned with a wreath of flowers, then all her daughters dance around her to a very lively Yiddish song. The Mizinke is a dance of celebration reserved for both parents who have just seen their last son or daughter married. The guests encircle the mother and father, while bestowing them with wedding flowers and kisses. Another traditional dance is called "gladdening of the bride." All of the guests at the reception circle the bride while they dance and sing praises about her. A Jewish wedding would not be complete without a sumptuous meal to satisfy the entire wedding party and guests.

Korean Tradition

Before a Korean bride may be married, she must take part in the traditional Introduction ceremony, where she is accepted into the groom's family. After the Korean newlyweds have exchanged their wedding vows, the groom, formally, introduces his new wife to his parents. The groom's father may throw red dates at his daughter-in-law to bring her luck in fertility. A couple getting married in Korea might incorporate ducks or geese into their wedding ceremony. Both ducks and geese mate for life and represent faithfulness. At one time, a man who wanted to get married in Korea, would travel to his future bride's home on a white pony and present her family with a pair of geese.

Latvian Tradition

On her wedding day, a traditional Latvian bride must wear her white wedding dress, and veil, until midnight. The women at the reception celebration then remove her wedding veil and pass it down to one of the younger sisters, who will presumably, marry next. Once her wedding gown and veil are removed, "the bride" becomes "the wife," and she wears a married woman's cap. Sometimes, at a Latvian wedding reception, the new bride is kidnapped by the groomsmen. The groom must pay a ransom, such as a song or a round of drinks, to get her back.

Mexican Tradition

A traditional couple getting married are sponsored, financially, by their Godparents, to act as padrinos, sponsors of the wedding. They are mentors to the bride and groom throughout their engagement, and even after they are married. Needless to say, the bride and groom honor them with a place in the wedding program. The padrinos may present the couple with a rosary and a Bible during their wedding ceremony. During the marriage vows, a white ribbon or rosary, called a "lasso", is wrapped around the necks of the couple, which represents their joining. It is customary for a groom to give his wife a wedding present of thirteen gold coins, which are then blessed by the priest during the marriage ceremony, representing the groom's commitment to support his new wife. As the newlyweds leave the church, red beads may be tossed at them, to bring good luck. At the wedding reception, all the guests will join hands and form a heart shape around the newly married couple as they have their first dance. At a traditional reception, it is customary for the guests to form a heart around the newlyweds, as they begin their first dance as husband and wife. A paper maché container known as a piñata is suspended from the ceiling at wedding receptions. It will be shaped like a heart or an animal. Filled with candy, it is hung by a string and swatted at by children. When it breaks, the candy falls out and is shared among the guests. The wedding cake is, usually, a fruit cake that has been soaked in rum.

Moroccan Tradition

As in other Muslim countries, a traditional Moroccan wedding ceremony lasts from four to seven days. On her wedding day, it is a Moroccan wedding custom for the bride to have a ceremonial purification milk bath before a ritual henna painting (Beberiska) of her hands and feet. Originally, this purification and painting was the wedding ceremony in Arab lands some 200 years ago. Modern Moroccan brides continue this tradition by anointing the palm of guests with a unique smear, called the henna. Before she is dressed in her wedding dress, another woman arranges her hair, applies her make-up and puts on her jewelry. The bride also wears an elaborate headpiece with a veil. Once the couples wedding vows have been exchanged, and before the newlywed Moroccan bride becomes the mistress of her new home, she walks around the outside of her house three times.

Native American Tradition

The traditional colors woven into the brides dress point to the four corners of the earth, White for east, Blue for south, Yellow for west and Black for north. The bride and groom wash their hands to symbolically rid themselves of evil and loves from their past. To symbolize their bonding ,the couple will share during their ceremony, a meal of corn mush, made of both white and yellow corn. The white represents male and yellow female, joined together.

New Zealand Tradition

Church weddings are the most traditional marriage celebrations in New Zealand. The bride wears a white wedding gown and is attended by bridesmaids. The groom wears a gray or black suit with a white shirt and tie, and he is supported by a best man and groomsmen. According to custom, the groom should not see the bride before she joins him at the front of the church on their wedding day. Weddings in New Zealand may also reflect the traditional culture of the island. Maori weddings will include a ceremonial welcome to the bride and groom, known as a Powhiri, and a traditional warrior challenge. The wedding ceremony will be conducted by a tribal elder and the couple will be blessed in the Maori language. Wedding rings made of carved bone or greenstone are also popular amongst those wishing to include the ancient culture of the Maori people in their wedding. Traditional Maori 'infinity loops' have a spiritual meaning of never-ending love.

wedding traditions

Norwegian Tradition

After a Norwegian couple exchange their wedding vows, friends place two small pine trees on either side of the newlywed's front door, until they have a baby. Along with her wedding gown and sterling jewelry, a Norwegian bride might also wear a gold and silver crown, covered with silver charms, which were believed to ward off evil spirits. Sometime during the wedding reception in Norway, the the new bride "dances off" her crown of charms.

Persian Tradition

An Iranian wedding custom began when the country was still called Persia. The groom would purchase the ceremonial wedding dress for his bride-to-be. This gown consisted of ten feet of sheeting that he would wrap around his intended wife. During wedding ceremony, it is an Iranian custom for a happily married woman to hold a translucent shawl over the couple's heads. After the newlyweds have exchanged their wedding vows, crumbs from two decorated sugar cones are shaved over their heads for good luck.

Polish Tradition

Traditional Rebraiding of the Polish Bride's Hair

The night before a girl in Poland hears her wedding bells, her mother and female relatives redo her customary single maidenly braid into two. This traditional wedding hair style symbolizes the new step the bride-to-be is taking into marriage.

Polish Wedding Reception

The reception celebration usually includes lively polka music and dancing. If a Polish bride can drink from her glass of wine, and not spill a drop, she is considered lucky. The "money dance" is always popular at a traditional reception in Poland. Guests pin money to the bride's wedding dress to buy a dance from her. The newlyweds might put these gifts of cash towards their honeymoon expenses. More traditionally, the maid of honor wears an apron and collects the money given by the guest to dance with the bride. After all the guests have danced with the bride, they form a tight circle around her, and the groom tries to break through the circle while the guests try hard to keep him out. Once he breaks through, he picks up his bride and carries her away from the wedding reception. The money collected during the dance is sent with them to spend on their honeymoon.

At the wedding reception, the bride will dance with her father, whilst a relative holds out an apron. Guests who place money in the apron win the opportunity to dance with the bride. After a time, the groom will throw in his wallet, thus surpassing all the other contributions. He will then whisk away his new wife on their honeymoon. The sharing of bread, salt and wine is an important feature of weddings in Poland. The parents of the newly married couple will present them with rye bread, lightly sprinkled with salt, and a glass of wine. The bread represents the hope that the bride and groom will never go hungry. The salt is a reminder that life may be difficult at times, but that they will learn to cope. The wine symbolizes the desire that the couple will never go thirsty, and that their lives will be filled with health and happiness.

The removal of the bridal veil, known as the *oczepiny* ceremony, is another traditional element of a Polish wedding day. The bride's veil will be removed as she enters the reception hall, signifying the end of her maidenhood and her transition to a married woman. A funny hat will be placed on the groom's head, representing the wish that the marriage will be full of happiness and laughter.

Puerto Rican Tradition

While a Priest is performing a traditional Puerto Rican wedding ceremony, he blesses a plate of coins and gives them to the groom. After the wedding vows have been exchanged, the groom gives the plate of coins to his bride, which she keeps as a wedding present from her husband. The gift of coins represent good luck and prosperity for the newlyweds. At the traditional Puerto Rican reception it is customary for a doll, dressed similar to the bride, to be placed at the head of the main table. This "bride doll" is covered with little charms, and are given to the guests as gifts. "Copias" are also passed out as presents to guests. These reception favors are ornately decorated cards with the newlyweds names and the date of the marriage.

Romanian Tradition

Young women in Romania begin planning for their wedding day long before they know who they will marry. Hopeful, young girls begin making and collecting accessories for their trousseau, or hope chest, as early as six years old. In the mountains of Romania there is an annual festival, on June 29th, where families gather to display their daughter's trousseau. Instead of rice, Romanian newlyweds may have candy or nuts thrown at them by wedding guests.

Russian Tradition

Russian church weddings are not considered official, and so couples wanting to get married must exchange their wedding vows at a Russian marriage civil ceremony. Here, the bride and groom receive bread and salt, symbolizing health, prosperity and long life. The Russian civil ceremony is often considered unimportant to friends and relatives of the bride and groom. The main affair is the wedding reception, a great two day celebration with music, dancing, feasting and drinking. Once the reception celebration has begun, a relative or close friend will make a wedding toast to the bride and groom. In keeping with Russian custom, everyone throws their champagne glasses on the floor. It is considered good luck if the glasses break when they hit the ground. When a traditional Orthodox couple get married in Russia, they are crowned as royalty for the day. The bride and groom must stand on a special carpet as they recite their marriage vows, but first they race each other to it. Whoever reaches the carpet first will, presumably, be the head of the household.

wedding traditions

Scottish Tradition

Traditional Scottish gold wedding bands date back to the 1500's, and are still popular wedding rings today, as are Celtic knotwork engagement rings. Often, before a Scottish bride is married, her mother holds an open house for a traditional "show of presents." Similar to a bridal shower, invitations are sent to the women among those who gave wedding gifts to the couple. The wedding gifts are unwrapped and set out with the card of the gift giver. The occasion is an opportunity for the bride to get acquainted with the wedding party members and guests before the wedding. After the show of presents, bride-to-be is dressed in long trains made of old curtains or other household materials. She is given a baby doll, a plastic potty with salt in the bottom, and other small items to carry. Her friends and guests escort her through her town, singing and banging pots and pans, heralding the bride's upcoming nuptials. To gather luck, the bride-to-be exchanges kisses for money, which is dropped into the potty.

The groom, meanwhile, is taken out for a stag night. The groom is likewise dressed up and taken around town by male companions, sometimes looking like a pregnant woman. His companions often indulge in a great deal of harmless practical joking, of which the poor groom is the main target. When the wild night winds down, the groom is usually left in the street in front of his home stripped of his clothes and sometimes even tied up. In the Scottish Highlands, an old custom known as creeling the bridegroom was popular. A large basket (creel) is filled with stones and is tied to the groom's back. The groom was required to carry the weight throughout the town searching for his bride. If his bride would come out and kiss him, he would be relieved of his burden.

Is old Scottish custom to begin a marriage celebration on the eve of the ceremony. Festive singing, dancing and drinking precedes a ceremonial foot washing of the bride-to-be. A wedding ring from a married woman is placed in the tub of water, and whichever lucky maiden snatched it during the foot washing it would be the next to marry. A Scottish bride's wedding gown is typically Victorian. She might wear a horseshoe on her arm for good luck, or a pageboy might deliver one to her as she arrives at the chapel. The Scottish groom wears a kilt in the colors of his clan's plaid, and he wraps a sash of this same plaid over his bride's shoulders, symbolizing that she is now part of his family. It is also customary for the groom to present his bride with an engraved 'wedding spune'.

On the wedding day, the entire wedding party starts out for the church. The first person to be met by the bride on her way to the wedding site is given a coin and a drink of whisky. That person, called the first foot, joins the procession and walks for about a mile before continuing on his or her business. Just outside the church doors, the couple is joined in marriage by a priest. After the joining, the priest leads the bride and groom and all the witnesses into the church for a lengthy nuptial mass conducted in Latin. The mass ends with the blessing of the food and drink brought by the guests. Wedding flowers, petals, or pretty paper confetti are thrown at the departing bride.

Traditional wedding reception festivities can easily last all night. The newly-wedded couple leads off the dancing with a traditional reel, and the bride's second dance is reserved for the person of the highest rank among the guests. The Sword Dance is usually performed at a traditional wedding in Scotland, which is similar to an Irish jig or a Highland fling. Guests gather in a circle before leaving the reception site and sing "Auld Lang Syne". The entire entourage escorts the young couple to their new home. Before the bride enters her new home, an oatcake or bannock (biscuit made of barley and oat flour) is broken above her head and a piece of the cake is passed around to everyone. Then the bride is carried over the threshold. The priest's blessing over the newlyweds, their home, and their marriage bed culminates the ceremony.

Spanish Tradition

Orange blossoms have long been the flower of choice for a girl getting married in Spain. Since the orange tree bears fruit and blossoms at the same time it's flowers represent happiness and fulfillment. Before a couple getting married in Spain exchange their vows in church, the groom gives his bride a wedding present of thirteen coins. This gift is a symbol of his commitment to support her. The bride-to-be then carries these coins, in a little bag, to her wedding ceremony.

According to Spanish custom, a Spanish bride wore, and still might wear, a black silk wedding dress with an intricately designed black lace veil. Her groom usually wears an embroidered shirt, hand made by his future wife. During a Spanish marriage celebration reception guests traditionally dance a "sequidillas manchegas" and present the newlyweds with a gift.

Sudanese Tradition

A bridegroom ceremony is a common wedding practice in the Sudan. The bridegroom is welcomed to the wedding site with an auspicious decoration called the umbul-umbul, a type of 'wedding announcement'. The mother of the bride gives the bridegroom a garland of flowers, welcoming him into her family. She also gives him a 'keris', a hidden message encouraging him not to be disheartened while toiling for his family. The bridegroom welcome is followed by a procession of ladies with candles, who pray for the ceremony. The bride and groom sit next to each other under an umbrella in front of the entrance to their future home with a veil covering both of their heads. The umbrella is held over the couple's head, serving not only a very practical purpose by also symbolizing esteem and respect.

The bride and groom bend forward and kiss the knees of their parents, a ceremony called sungkem, asking for forgiveness and blessing and promising to continue to serve their parents. This wedding ritual is held in front of a gargoyle fountain. Water flowing from the gargoyle suggests the continuous flow of priceless parental love for their children. A chosen man and woman, sing a special song called kidung on behalf of the parents, advising the couple to treat each other well and to live in harmony. Kidung also invokes blessing upon the couple. An egg breaking ceremony, called nincak endog, requires the couple to stand facing each other in front of their house. The bridegroom stands outside the entrance and the bride stands inside. The ceremony is conducted by the Sudanese equivalent of an American 'maid of honor', who remains an advisor throughout the marriage. In this ceremony, seven broomsticks are burnt and thrown away, dramatizing the discarding of bad habits which endanger married life.

wedding traditions

Sudanese Tradition

The groom is pronounced master of his house when the egg is broken. His bride cleans the his foot with water from a kendi, an earthen water jug which represents peace. Then she breaks the kendi and crosses over a log into the house, demonstrating willing obedience to her future husband. She is fed a dish of turmeric sticky rice with yellow spiced chicken to symbolize the last time the parents of the bride will feed their daughter. The groom remains outside for another ceremony, which is enacted before him by a couple who sing. During this ceremony, the groom, via the vocalists, requests to enter his bride's house, and she consents when he agrees to confirm his Moslem faith. Having done so, the couple is given a barbecued spiced chicken to pull apart on a signal from the 'maid of honor'. According to tradition, the one who gets the larger piece will bring in the larger share of the family fortune. The ceremony also portrays the importance of working together to acquire fortune.

Following the wedding ceremony, dancers shower the bride and groom with wedding flowers to insure a fragrant future for the couple. A sawer, made of turmeric rice, coins, and candy, is thrown at the couple. Rice is a symbol of prosperity, and yellow is for everlasting love. The coins remind the couple to share their wealth with the less fortunate, and the candy bestows sweetness and fragrance upon their marriage. Seven candles are lit representing the direction the couple should follow to bring about a happy married life. A betel nut set near the couple is a reminder that different customs should not spoil a harmonious marriage.

Swedish Tradition

In Sweden, the parent's of the bride- to- be practice an old traditional wedding custom. Before their daughter leaves for the church to be married, her mother gives her a gold coin to go in her right shoe, and her father hands her a silver coin to be placed in her left shoe. This way they know she will never go without. After a Swedish couple exchange their marriage vows on their wedding day, the new bride will wear three bands on her wedding finger. One is an engagement ring, another is her wedding ring and the third is a ring for motherhood.

Swiss Tradition

A girl getting married in Switzerland wears a traditional crown or wreath, which symbolizes her maidenhood. After the wedding ceremony, and exchanging of wedding vows, the wreath is removed and burned. If the crown burns quickly, the bride is considered lucky. Once the couple are newlyweds and are living in their new home, a pine tree is planted in their yard to represent fertility.

Turkish Tradition

The Turkish marriage celebration continues after the wedding ceremony for several days. The newlywed bride may return home the morning after her wedding vows to see her family and friends, who then might perform a henna ritual on her. A Muslim wedding program in Turkey lasts from four to seven days, starting with separate celebrations of the bride and groom's families. From this day on, the couple getting married cannot see each other until their wedding ceremony. A Turkish bride might wear a beautifully embroidered silk wedding dress with a red velvet cape.

Vietnamese Tradition

On the morning of a wedding in Vietnam, the groom's mother visits the bride's family and offers them two gifts. The first is a special plant, that represents respect, and the second is pink chalk, which is the color of happiness. On his wedding day, as the groom heads to collect his bride, he picks up friends and family along his way. They arrive at his future wife's house bearing wedding presents of jewelry, clothing and money.

Welsh Tradition

The Welsh Love Spoon

A courting tradition in Wales, that has been in practice for years, is the carving of a wooden love spoon. A man who wished to marry a particular girl carves various symbols, such as hearts, keys or bells, into a wood spoon, showing his intentions for engagement and marriage.

Traditional Kidnapping of the Bride

It is a marriage custom, in Wales, for the bride's family to kidnap her just before the wedding ceremony. The groom and his family follow in pursuit and whoever rescues the bride-to-be will marry within a year.

The Customary Bridal Bouquet and Wedding Dress Pin

A Welsh bridal bouquet usually contains myrtle, and the bride gives to her bridesmaids a cutting of myrtle -- a symbol of love -- to carry in their bouquets. Welsh tradition holds that if the bridesmaid plants her myrtle and it blooms, she will soon marry. A bride in Wales may wear a pin in her wedding gown, that she will remove and throw over her shoulder for good luck.

West Indies Tradition

Wedding receptions of the French West Indies are likely to feature curried goat and white rice. A traditional rum-flavored wedding cake is hidden from guests with a fine white table cloth. Wedding guests must pay for a lucky peek.