

## **African Wedding Traditions**

jumping the broom." It is a tradition stemming back to the days of slavery when slaves were forbidden from marrying. They created this ritual to represent the beginning of their new life together. In modern ceremonies, couples jump over a broom, often decorated with ribbon and tulle, after they're pronounced married.

During the ceremony, there is a tradition that involves tasting the four elements: lemon for sour, vinegar for bitter, cayenne pepper for hot, and honey for sweet. The four tastes represent the different times or moods of married life. In some tribes, the couple's wrists were bound with plaited grass for the ceremony and the walk down the aisle. Many couples incorporate this tradition by simply holding hands.

African dancers or a drummer for the reception and traditional foods are also ways to incorporate the heritage.

## **Chinese Wedding Traditions**

The wedding date is picked carefully according to astrological signs and birthdates, and the ceremony begins on the half hour to cement the couple's good fortune.

## **Czech Wedding Traditions**

Traditionally the bridesmaids make a wreath of rosemary for the bride to wear—it symbolizes the wish for wisdom, love, and loyalty. In the Czech Republic the tradition of wearing something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue is strictly followed; however, the borrowed item must belong to a friend who is already married and the something old must be a family heirloom.

After the ceremony, friends of the groom would hang a rope decorated by flowers, ribbons, and empty bottles. The groom needed to pay his friends in order to pass through the rope and pay himself out of the sins of his youth. Throwing rice at the newlyweds was a way to ensure fertility.

## **Dutch Wedding Traditions**

Before the ceremony, the bridesmaids would fill the bride's basket with green garlands and flowers as well as decorate the groom's pipe with garlands and ribbons. During the ceremony, the bride and groom walk on a bed of flowers to the altar and flowers are tossed at them as they depart.

## **Filipino Wedding Traditions**

Traditionally the groom's family pays for the wedding and the grandparents act as the primary witnesses or sponsors. The bride's gown is often custom made and both the bride and groom wear white. It is bad luck for the bride to try on her dress before the wedding day and to wear pearl jewelry, which is considered a bad omen. The groom wears a sheer, long-sleeve button-up shirt (barong tagalog) that is worn un-tucked over black pants with a white t-shirt underneath.

As in Spanish weddings, the groom presents his bride with 13 gold pieces as a pledge of his dedication to his wife and the welfare of his children. These are carried in by a coin bearer who walks with the ring bearer. A white cord is draped around the couple's shoulders as a bond of infinite marriage and veils of white tulle are draped on the bride's head and groom's shoulders to symbolize two people clothed as one.

Another tradition that symbolizes the unity of the couple is the lighting of a unity candle by two separate candles held by the bride and groom to represent the joining of the two families and invoke the light of Christ. The bouquet is not tossed and rather offered to a favorite saint, the virgin, or on the grave of a loved one.

Raindrops are lucky because they bring prosperity and happiness, and when the rice is tossed at the newlyweds it represents the rain. The groom should always arrive before the bride; otherwise it will be bad luck.

## **French Wedding Traditions**

The groom customarily walks his mother down the aisle before arriving at the altar to be married. Traditionally, the groom will pick up his bride at her house and walk to the chapel. Children block their path with white ribbons, which the bride cuts to symbolize breaking through these obstacles.

## **German Wedding Traditions**

Breaking dishes, pots, or anything that will break into pieces and then cleaning it up together is said to bring good luck to the bride and groom just before the wedding. The idea is to prepare the bride and groom for facing life's trials together.

Instead of wearing a veil, German brides wear tiaras or flowery headbands and they also wear dresses with no trains. After the ceremony, the bride and groom must saw a log in half to symbolize overcoming life's tough challenges together and the guests throw rice at the couple. It is said that whatever amount stays in the bride's hair is the number of children the couple will have.

As the couple makes their way to their car after the ceremony, the path is laid with fir boughs to symbolize hope, luck, and fertility. The hood of the wedding car is decorated with flowers and as the car procession drives through town, they honk their horns and others honk back to wish the couple good luck.

### **Greek Wedding Traditions**

During the engagement, the bride and groom wear their rings on the left hand and after they are married, the couple switches their rings to the right. Before the ceremony, musicians accompany the groom and his attendants to the church and then they make their way back to pick up and accompany the bride.

In the Greek tradition, the bride and groom are honored as queen and king for the day, and so during the ceremony they wear crowns made of either gold or orange blossoms that are connected with a ribbon to signify the union.

During the ceremony, the best man places the crowns on the couple's heads. He also exchanges the rings between the bride and groom 3 times to remind the couple that in married life, the weaknesses of one are compensated by the strengths of the other and vice versa.

When the ceremony is complete, the bride and groom walk around the altar three times to symbolize the trinity and their first walk as a married couple.

### **Indian Wedding Traditions**

Indian weddings are traditionally multi-day affairs, and involve many intricate ceremonies, such as the painting of the hands and feet of the bride called a mehndi. Garlands are presented to guests of honor instead of corsages, and lots of flower or rose petals are thrown for good luck.

The parents give the bride away, but they do not eat before the wedding to remain pure for the occasion. The bride's saree is tied to the groom's scarf to symbolize the union of the souls. During a similar ceremony, a cord is tied around the couple's necks to protect them from evil and they are typically tied by elders of the bride and groom.

In Indian weddings, the Mangala Sutra is tied around the bride's neck instead of exchanging rings. The mangala sutra is a cord with two gold pendants and is tied in three knots by the groom to symbolize the bonding of the two souls for 100 years. This necklace lets others know that the bride is married.

One fun ceremony is called mangal pheras. This is when the bride and groom circle the sacred fire four times to represent dharma, artha, kama, and moksha and they run to their seats—whoever gets there first will rule the household.

### **Irish Wedding Traditions**

The traditional wedding ring is called a claddagh, and depicts two hands holding a heart bearing a crown. The hands represent faith, the heart love, and the crown honor.

The brides typically wore wildflower wreaths in their hair and in their bouquets—especially lavender—and they braided their hair to symbolize feminine power and luck. Another accessory for the bride is a lucky horseshoe, which is tied around her bouquet. However, the points must face up so that it can catch and hold all the good luck.

The magic hanky is a tradition where the bride carries a special handkerchief that with a few stitches can be turned into a christening bonnet, which can then be turned back into a hanky for that child's wedding day.

Bells were thought to keep evil spirits away, so for your exit have your guests ring little wedding bells or use them instead of clinking glasses at the reception. To insure good luck, someone must throw a shoe over the bride's head as she is leaving the church; just make sure not to hit her.

A popular Celtic design is the love knot. It is a pattern created by using continuous, unending lines that intertwine. The design represents eternity, unity, and fidelity and is an important part of the ceremony. A four-leaf clover depicts hope, faith, love, and luck. A fun way to incorporate the lucky clover is to include mini pots of shamrocks for décor.

Bunratty mead is the oldest drink in Ireland and this honey drink is probably where the term honeymoon came from. Drinking honey mead during the ceremony is thought to bring fertility and encourages the family to accept the marriage.

In ancient Ireland, the harpists were said to be the best musicians, so walk down the aisle to the ethereal sounds of the harp.

### **Italian Wedding Traditions**

Italian wedding festivities usually start in the morning. Sundays are common days for Italian weddings because Saturdays are reserved for widows marrying again and Fridays and Tuesdays are considered bad luck to leave for your honeymoon.

Brides are commonly dressed in white and wear a veil to protect her from evil spirits. The veil also represents her chastity. Grooms often carry a small piece of iron during the ceremony to ward off evil spirits.

Just after the ceremony, the couple will shatter a glass vase. The number of pieces is said to represent the number of years they will be happily married.

Another ceremonial tradition is for the wedding guests to setup a log and double-handed saw. The couple will then saw through the log to show how they will work together in their new marriage.

### **Japanese Wedding Traditions**

The Japanese ritual of "san-san-kudo", the three by three exchange is rich with meaning. It is performed by the bride and groom and both sets of parents; each person takes 3 sips of sake from each of 3 cups. The first 3 represent three couples, the bride and groom, and their parents. The second 3 represent three human flaws: hatred, passion, and ignorance. The final 3 represent a lucky deliverance from the three flaws.

Another highlight of this ceremony is a rosary with 21 beads that represent the couple, their families and the Buddha all joined on one string to symbolize the union of the families. Part of the ceremony involves honoring the parents with offers of flowers, a toast, or a letter expressing their love and gratitude.

The crane is a symbol of longevity and prosperity and so 1,001 gold origami cranes are folded to bring luck, good fortune, longevity, fidelity, and peace to the marriage.

The bride traditionally wears two outfits: the shiro, which is a white kimono worn for the ceremony and the uchikake kimono which is a patterned brocade worn at the reception. The hair is worn in a bun with colorful kanzashi accessories and a white wedding hook called the tsuno kakushi is worn to hide the two front golden tsuno horns to symbolize obedience. The bride also carries a tiny purse (hakoseko), a small encased sword (kaiken), and a fan that is worn in the obi belt that represents happiness and a happy future.

### **Jewish Wedding Traditions**

Before the ceremony, the groom will see his bride and veil her face. This is called bedeken, or veiling. This represents their distinct individuality and his love for her inner beauty.

During the ceremony, the ketubah is read to the guests. A ketubah is a Jewish agreement that outlines the groom's responsibilities to his bride, any conditional terms, the bride's rights and protections, as well as a plan should the marriage end in divorce.

The groom is traditionally escorted down the wedding aisle by both his parents.

A chuppah is used at the wedding alter and has 4 corners with a covered roof. This represents the new home they are building together. Some traditions have friends or family members hold the four posts during the ceremony, showing support for the life the couple is building together. The chuppah is also blessed during many Jewish ceremonies.

The bride and groom walk in 3 to 7 circles under the chuppah to symbolize the creating of a new family circle, while demonstrating independent and complementary orbits.

Sheva Brachot, or The Seven Blessings, are read by a variety of family and friends in English or Hebrew. These blessings are focused on joy, celebration, and the power of love. They begin with the blessing over a cup of wine, then progress to more grand and celebratory statements, ending with a blessing of joy, peace, companionship, and the opportunity for the bride and groom to rejoice together.

Near the end of the ceremony, the groom will step on a glass wrapped in a cloth and shatter it. There are many meanings for the shattered glass. Some claim it represents the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, while others believe it demonstrates that marriage holds sorrow as well as joy. The breaking of the glass is a representation of the commitment to stand by one another even in hard times. Once the ceremony is over and the glass is broken, guests will cheer "Mazel tov!" as a congratulatory cheer of good luck and well wishes.

Following a Jewish wedding ceremony, the couple should spend 18 minutes in yichud (seclusion). This custom allows the new couple to reflect privately on their new relationship and allows them precious time alone to bond and rejoice.

### **Korean Wedding Traditions**

The groom often presents his new mother-in-law with a wooden goose to represent his fidelity. The bride wears a sash with Cranes incorporated on it to represent the hopes of a long life. The bride wears two dresses which are said to be from the noble class, a light green wonsam and an elaborate hwarrot or flower robe. Underneath, she wears a traditional robe. On her head, she wears a black gem-studded cap and she wears white socks with embroidered shoes. Her make-up is simple with three red nickel-sized circles to ward off evil spirits. The groom wears the dress of nobility as well, and it is made of dark green damask with embroidered auspicious symbols in gold and a tall black cap headdress made of silk.

The wedding ceremony takes place in front of a table and one important part is the sharing of a special white wine (jung jong) which is poured from cups made from two halves of a gourd made by the bride's mom. The bride and groom sip from their own cups, mix the wine, and then pour it out and sip again as a wedding vow.

Another ceremony which is only attended by close family members is when the new wife offers the in-laws dried dates and jujubes that represent children. They offer the bride tea and at the end of the ceremony they toss dates and chestnuts at her while she attempts to catch them with her skirt.

### **Spanish and Latin-American Wedding Traditions**

The groom is not allowed to see his bride before the wedding and it is the bride's father's job to keep her hidden before the wedding and of course give away his daughter. As in France, the groom escorts his mother down the aisle.

The flower girl and the ring bearer traditionally dress as miniature versions of the bride and groom. One important part of the ceremony is the arras (gold coins). These are 13 gold coins that represent Jesus and his 12 apostles, which are blessed by the priest and are given to the bride with the groom's promise to care for and support his wife.

The wedding is paid for by different "sponsors" or god-parents who are all recognized in different parts of the ceremony. They are the ones who will carry the arras or the rope into the church. The rope or rosary is another tradition where it is placed over the bride and groom to insure protection of the union.

During the ceremony, the bride has someone hold her bouquet while she carries a rosary and a bible. Orange blossoms are the flowers of choice for Spanish brides because they symbolize happiness and fulfillment and can be seen in the bouquet, decorations, and even in the bride's hair.

The mantilla veil is common and in Spain brides wear black silk dresses to symbolize their devotion until death; however, in recent years Spanish brides have worn white dresses as well. In Spanish and Latin American culture, the bride and groom wear their rings on their right hand.

After the ceremony, a festive mariachi band, salsa music, or a Spanish guitarist would bring an abundance of fun to the reception.

### **Scottish Wedding Traditions**

On the day of the wedding, the bridal party would make their way to the church strewing flower petals on the way, but if they encountered a funeral or a pig it was considered bad luck and they would have to turn around and start over. The clergyman would then meet them and during the mass he would bless the food brought by the guests and kiss the bride.

The bag pipes or traditional Gaelic hymns are typically played or sang in the ceremony. Traditionally, the groom wears a kilt, a kilt jacket, and a sporran in his clan colors and the couple participates in a hand fasting ceremony where their wrists are bound together by a cloth or string.

At the end of the ceremony, he adorns his bride with a sash in the same colors to welcome her to his family (clan), he presents his bride with an engraved teaspoon to ensure that his bride will never go without food, and he may also present the bride with a family sword to be given to their first born son or the bride's family might present the groom with their sword as an act of acceptance into the family.

As the bride walks out of the church, a toddler would hand a horseshoe to the bride for good luck, and the bride and groom would then scatter coins for the assembled children to collect, so that their kindness would be returned to them throughout their marriage.

### **Swedish Wedding Traditions**

An old and adorable Swedish custom is for the bride to carry coins in her shoes. One silver coin in her left shoe from her father, and one gold coin in her right from her mother are used to ensure that she will never go without.

Traditionally a Swedish bride will wear three bands, one for her engagement, one for marriage, and one for motherhood, she will also wear a tiara to symbolize her virgin status, although in the past these tiaras were actually crowns made of myrtle leaves.

The bride's bouquet was typically made of the strongest smelling flowers to ward off trolls and other evil creatures.

During the wedding, the bride and groom typically entered the church together and the head of the household was determined by whoever stepped over the threshold first or said "I do" the loudest.

### **Vietnamese Wedding Traditions**

It is customary for the mother-in-law to bestow upon the bride pink chalk, which symbolizes a rosy future for the couple. The date and time of the ceremony is usually determined by a Buddhist monk or fortune teller.

The wedding consists of several ceremonies including asking permission to receive the bride, the procession to receive the bride, the procession to the groom's house, the second ancestor ceremony, and the banquet party.

In the morning, the groom's mother and a few close relatives would walk to the bride's house with a gift of betel to ask permission to receive the bride at her house. This ceremony was often done in the times of arranged marriages to ensure that the bride had not fled from the home and that the wedding was still taking place.

In the procession to receive the bride, the groom and his family often carry decorated lacquer boxes covered in red cloth to represent his wealth and which include various gifts for the bride's family. There are either 6 or 8 boxes, but never 7 because it is bad luck.

After paying their respects to their ancestors, the bride and groom will serve tea to their parents who will then give them advice regarding marriage and family. During the candle ceremony, the bride and groom's families' union is celebrated and the mother in law of the bride will open the boxes filled with jewelry and dress her new daughter in law in the jewelry.