



Wedding Customs Around the World

羅美貞／原銘傳大學

There is a lesson in the book introducing the wedding customs around the world. I found it quite interesting. Weddings are the ceremony where our love will be sung and our souls and hearts will be loved (and legally protected, too.) So what are those different parts and what do they mean? Does each and every step down the aisle represent a different token of our love? Here are some weddings around the globe. Let us take a look and indulge in the romantic happiness.

Belgium

The unique characteristic of a Belgian wedding is the handkerchief tradition. The family of the bride has a handkerchief made with the bride's name sewn on it. That handkerchief is taken to the wedding and afterward is displayed proudly in the family's home. When the next daughter in the family ties the knot, her name is then sewn on it, as well. It is then displayed in the home again.

England

An English wedding tradition is one of playing bells in the church. When the bride and groom enter the sanctuary, bells are played in hopes of fending off evil. The bells play again on the couple's exit from the church. Another English tradition is that of laying flower petals on the path of the bride and her court when they walk to the church.

Finland

People in Finland have a tradition very similar to that of the throwing of the bouquet in the United States. Finnish brides are crowned with a hand-made gold crown during the ceremony to symbolize her "bride" status. After the ceremony, the bride is blindfolded and spun around. She is then told to pick one of the single ladies in the group surrounding her to pass the crown on to. That girl is said to be the next woman in the group who will marry.

France

The French have a tradition that saves the families of the bride and groom a lot of money. Instead of the wedding families supplying the flowers for the ceremony, the guests bring all the flowers with them. Another interesting French tradition is one of drinking from the "coupe de mariage," a wedding cup. This is a silver cup that is passed down through generations of French families for their wedding days. The couple drinks from the "coupe de mariage" during the ceremony.

India

Indian ceremonies are generally very colorful, with brightly colored gowns and flowers. While Americans traditionally throw uncooked rice at the end of their ceremonies, Indians puff their rice



and throw it on the bride and groom as a symbol of fertility, and the brother of the groom traditionally throws flower petals on the newlywed couple. After the ceremony, the couple dips their hands in dye and puts their handprints on the outside of their house in an effort to bring them long-lasting luck.

Japan

If you thought it was difficult picking out one wedding gown in an American wedding, get a hold of this. Japanese wedding tradition calls for the bride to actually change gowns several times during the wedding, while the groom typically wears a simple black kimono. If you're a guest at a Japanese wedding, you often get quite a deal. It is a tradition for the families of the bride and groom not only to serve food to and entertain guests, but also give them gifts that are often quite valuable.

Russia

Being a guest in a Russian wedding truly pays. While in American weddings, guests bring gifts to the new bride and groom, in Russian wedding the tradition is quite the opposite. The families of the newlyweds provide small gifts to each guest to express sincere gratitude in honoring the new couple.

Germany

And finally, let us take a look at the German wedding which I actually went to when my daughter was studying in Germany. Their delicate sense of being traditional and modern at the same time is indeed very impressive. My daughter also taught me that the word "wedding" in German is "Hochzeit" which means "high-time." We both find that very interesting and true.





A traditional wedding in Germany lasts three days. On the first day, the couple is married in a civil ceremony, which only family and close friends attend. On the second day there is a big, informal party to celebrate. On the third day the religious ceremony and reception takes place.

During the big party that takes place on the second day, plates and dishes are smashed in a tradition called Poltrabend. The broken pieces are thought to bring good luck to the couple. The couple must then clean up the broken pieces together, symbolizing that nothing will be broken in their house again.

Before the wedding, a wedding newspaper is made by the couple's families. The newspaper includes photos, articles, and stories of the bride and groom and is sold at the reception to help pay for their honeymoon. A few nights before the wedding, the groom and his friends go out to drink at a local pub, which is called Junggesellenabschied.

An older custom is for the father of the bride to pay for the whole wedding. Nowadays, as in the U.S., the couple and the brides' parents may also pitch in on the cost. Brides must carry salt and bread as an omen of good harvest while grooms carry grain for good luck and wealth.

Brides do not have any wedding attendants except for the flower girl. The bride carries white ribbon in her bouquet which is tied to the antenna of their car after the ceremony.

During the ceremony while the couple is on their knees, the groom may keel on the brides dress to show who will be "wearing the pants" in their family. However, when they stand, the bride may step on his foot to show differently.

Wedding rings are worn on their right hand.

As the bride and groom exit the ceremony, guests throw rice at them. They say that the bride will have as many children as the grains of rice that stay in her hair.

As the newlyweds leave the ceremony location, they toss coins to the children. On the way to the reception location, the couple along with their guests create a car procession through town honking their horns.

At the wedding reception, it is customary for the best man to steal the bride and bring her to a local pub until the groom finds them, often called "kidnapping the bride". The groom must then pay for all they drank.

The money dance, or veil dance, is a tradition where guests have to pay the bride and groom to dance with them.

Friends of the couple block off the exit of the reception with ribbon. When the newlyweds leave they must pay a toll, which is usually a promise of another party.

Friends often play tricks such as loosening the headboard of the bed, hiding the alarm clock, or filling the room with strange things to make the first night as husband and wife difficult.

As I was observing the wedding customs all over the world, I found out a lot of interesting similarities between the wedding customs in the West and here in the East. Weddings are where we celebrate the ultimate love, make it official and share our happiness with the whole world. So I guess it is true then, love is the international language that is spoken without boundaries, without difficulties and without differences. ❄️