

# For the Most Traditional Wedding...

June, Saturday, good weather, a white gown, a wedding cake, rice, rings, and a lift over the threshold are the basic ingredients for the ideal American wedding. Duncan Emrich, professor of folklore at the American University, explained in his book, *The Folklore of Weddings and Marriage*, that although it wasn't always quite so, these traditions do come from the past.

The belief that June is the happiest month for a wedding dates back to the days of Rome. Juno, wife of Jupiter, patroness of the young, and goddess of marriage was honored during the month of June. The Romans felt that prosperity came to the man and happiness to the maid who married them. The Anglo-Saxons had traditions for each month, with May being the least desirable month to marry. Professor Emrich quoted the following old rhyme:

Marry when the year is new,  
Always loving, kind and true,  
When February birds do mate,  
You may wed, nor dread the fate,  
If you wed when March winds blow,  
Joy and sorrow both you'll know,  
Marry in April when you can,  
Joy for maiden and for man,  
Marry in the month of May,  
You will surely rue the day,  
Marry when June roses blow,  
Over land and sea you'll go,  
Those who in July do wed,  
Must labor always for their bread,  
Whoever wed in August be  
Many a change are sure to see,  
Marry in September's shrine,  
Your living will be rich and fine,  
If in October you will marry,  
Love will come, but riches tarry,  
If you wed in bleak November,  
Only joy will come, remember,  
When December's snows fall fast,  
Marry and true love will last.

Wedding months may be picked accordingly, but Lent must be avoided. "Marry in Lent, you'll live to repent."

Beware! Saturday, the most convenient and popular wedding day is unlucky. So is Friday, its close second. Again from Duncan Emrich's book:

Wed on Monday, always poor,  
Wed on Tuesday, wed once more,  
Wed on Wednesday, happy match  
Wed on Thursday, splendid catch,  
Wed on Friday, poorly mated,

Wed on Saturday, better waited.  
Or in a slightly different tradition:

Monday for health,  
Tuesday for wealth,  
Wednesday the best day of all,  
Thursday for losses,  
Friday for crosses,  
And Saturday, no luck at all.

Time of day is also important when marrying. Early morning and evening weddings used to be strictly tabooed. It was feared that the groom would appear at a morning wedding unwashed and that well-wishers would drag the couple to an ale house following an evening wedding. It is bad luck to marry between the hour and half hour and good luck to marry between the half hour and hour when the clock's hands are rising. It is also good luck to marry when the moon is nearly full or waxing.

Weather, Emrich Duncan points out, was important when weddings were performed on the steps of the church. "If it rains on the wedding, the bride will cry all her married life." Snow meant happiness for the couple. "If it snows on your wedding day, you will get a dollar for every flake that falls on you."

The wedding day was con-

sidered the bride's day. If the weather was fair in the morning and stormy in the afternoon, it meant good fortune in the beginning of marriage and declining fortune later. The day following the wedding was the bridegroom's day; its weather indicated his wedded fortunes. And on this day, the bride could ask what she would from her new husband, and she was honor-bound to grant it.

The white wedding dress, a symbol of purity and innocence that dates back to the Greeks, has been in vogue only since the late 18th century. Prior to that, any color could be worn, except red and black, symbols of devilry and witchcraft.

Married in blue, love ever true.  
Married in white, you've chosen right.  
Married in red, you'll wish yourself dead.  
Married in black, you'll wish yourself back.  
Married in gray, you'll go far away.  
Married in brown, you'll live out of town.  
Married in green, ashamed to be seen.  
Married in pink, if you only he'll think,  
Married in pearl, you'll live in a whirl,  
Married in yellow, jealous of your fellow.

The wedding cake and rice have evolved from the Roman tradition of the bride holding three wheat ears in her left hand while the priest broke and divided a wheaten cake between the bride and groom. Both were symbols of fertility and fruitfulness.

Later, in England, brides carried ears of wheat and wore chaplets of wheat spikes in their hair. Kernels of wheat and corn were tossed over her head as she left

the church and then eaten by the guests for luck and prosperity. It was not until the late 19th century that white rice was used.

The wedding ring, whose circle symbolizes eternity and stands for the endless love of the couple, has long been used. In the days of Rome and through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the only ring possessed by the lower classes was the greatly prized wedding ring.

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