

# Wedding Traditions: A Look at the Past

When today's modern couple decides to unite in holy matrimony, the happy he and she have years and years of traditional customs and etiquette to guide them, step by step, through the wedding festivities. Nearly everything from the bride's white gown to who sits where has roots in a bygone era. Folk magic and ancient superstition have bequeathed to us most of the outward symbols associated with weddings while etiquette is still dictated by the more traditional view of proper behavior.

The first image that usually comes to mind when one thinks of weddings is a bride attired in a lovely white gown. Contrary to popular belief, the color white is not meant to indicate purity but rather it symbolizes joy. The early Romans wore white when attending feasts, births and other joyous celebrations. And to the ancient Greeks, a single white rose was considered the supreme symbol of joy.

Credit for inventing the wedding ring belongs to the early Egyptians who looked upon the circle shape as a symbol of eternity, a sign that life, happiness and love have no beginning or end. Placement of the ring on the third finger of the left hand stems from the ancients who believed the vein in that particular finger ran directly to the heart — the most direct route for love to travel.

Another familiar practice, tossing rice at the newlyweds, hails from the days when nearly everyone lived off the land and mere existence depended upon a good harvest and having plenty of children to help with the work. These more primitive people believed the bride and groom spread good luck on their wedding day and anyone or anything that touched them would absorb some of that luck. Because of this, the guests showered the couple with ripe grain or nuts, wishing an abundant harvest for themselves and a large family for the newlyweds.

Although Marie Antoinette's "Let them eat cake" was not said to an inquiring caterer trying to plan her

wedding reception, it would nevertheless have been an appropriate remark in her time just as it would be today since wedding cakes have been around nearly as long as weddings themselves. Guests in Elizabethan England piled up little cakes over which the bride and groom had to kiss without causing the stack to fall. When it did, the guests would then bombard the couple with crumbs and eat the pieces. It was, at the time, a way of passing luck and fertility back and forth between guests and newlyweds. When a creative French baker decided to ice all the little cakes together in one stack the modern tiered wedding cake came into existence.

## A Catered Affair

A nicely catered affair makes it easy for wedding guests to feel like beautiful people. It takes the burden of stress off the bridal parents and lets them enjoy themselves, too, during an off-spring's hour of glory.

Since few people can live on love, the guests and relatives who travel long distances to attend a wedding should not be expected to subsist on tidbits and champagne.

A caterer's refreshment table is a thoughtful way to show appreciation for their coming, and an easy way to

feed the bridal party with little fuss and bother while entertaining.

The casual buffet serves its purpose well — allowing unstructured and easy hosting, encouraging intermingling of guests who might like to know one another — and it is surely an improvement on stuffy formality.

The caterers provide the banquet table for serving, chafing pan, racks, table service, silver and napkins, and personnel to prepare, serve and clean-up.



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