

# Irish Wedding Traditions

Some sentences have been removed from the text below. Choose from the letters A-H the one that best fits into each gap. There is an extra letter which you do not need to use.

- A It is improper to buy one for yourself; you should actually earn it as a gift.
- B Although Irish weddings are a lot of fun, they have a lot of superstitions that have to be observed and carried out for fear that the couple suffers the consequences.
- C Those metal pieces were a symbol of luck; people kept them in their houses to hold on luck.
- D With the spread of the Catholic religion, Sundays have become disrespectful choices for weddings.
- E Of course, the shoe must not hit the bride's head.
- F Once she is ready, a fancy limo collects her and drives to the church where the groom awaits.
- G It is a special handkerchief made of linen; in other cases, it is made of cheaper materials.
- H The Irish Government now allows couples to hire out national buildings for their wedding reception.

## *The Site of the Wedding Ceremony*

Aside from the fancy hotels and churches, there are other places to celebrate at. Nowadays, things have developed and offer people more options.  People are in love with this idea because they can go to interesting and heritage sites.

## *Specific Days for Irish Weddings*

This may sound weird enough, but actually, Ireland has specific days when people get married. Other cultures may not pay attention to what day of the week it is when it comes to weddings. They arrange days that are suitable for all parties. Despite that strange fact, it actually makes Ireland have a unique identity.

Long centuries ago, Ireland had people set their weddings on Sundays. Probably, the reason was that it was a weekend and people were free of responsibilities. It gave room for everyone to attend the wedding. Over the years, that notion has changed a bit. Naturally, cultures evolve and develop; they ditch some customs and keep others.  Catholic people usually dedicate Sundays to praying. On the other hand, setting weddings in May was against the Irish wedding traditions. Why? Well, because May is the start of the summer season and the Bealtane, a Pagan feast, is held. It was discourteous to set a wedding during the Pagan feast. Those beliefs used to reside in Ireland for a very long time. They actually derive from an old marriage song that people usually sang.

## *Special Days for Irish Weddings Currently*

Since Sundays became out of options, weddings nowadays take place on Saturdays instead. Usually, among the Irish wedding traditions, you should plan your wedding years in advance. In that way, you facilitate the attendance of your visitors and make sure the date is not close to any religious rituals. However, in modern days, weddings can take place on Sundays, but they are very rare.

## *The Wedding Day According to Irish Wedding Traditions*

On the wedding day, the bride starts getting ready early. The bridesmaids start attending the bride's place and get her ready. With the help of a hairdresser, the bride becomes the prettiest ever. There start the true traditions and customs of an Irish wedding.

### ***The Claddagh Ring***



Wearing a traditional Claddagh Ring is a common practice in an Irish wedding. Surprisingly, the groom is often the one to wear it. This ring is of two hands holding a crowned heart. The ring is actually a symbol of romance and marriage. Most commonly, mothers hand the ring down to their daughters and the cycle keeps going on and on. The name of the ring belongs to a fishing village. It is the Galway Village and it exists in Western Ireland.

The ring acts as the betrothal as well as the wedding ring. Before the wedding, the bride wears the ring facing inward toward the wrist. Once the wedding is over, the bride reverses the ring to face outwards, toward the nail. When the ring is facing outwards, it means that the person is in a long-term relationship.

### ***The Magic Hanky***



The magic hanky is another practice that the Irish wedding traditions embrace. The practice involves the bride holding the hanky on her wedding day. The symbol is for that piece to be converted in the future to a Christening hat/bonnet for the bride's first child. Later generations inherit the hanky and use it in the same manner.

### ***The Lucky Horseshoe***



The lucky horseshoe is a tradition that the whole world is familiar with. Ireland was not the only country which held that practice; England was famous for it too. At weddings, brides would walk down the aisle while holding the lucky horseshoe. The bride and the groom would take the horseshoe to their matrimonial home and the groom would securely pin it. Despite the rarity of this practice now, using ceramic and glass horseshoes in weddings became among the Irish wedding traditions.

In different cultures, like the Greek, for example, the horseshoe did not symbolize luck like in Irish culture. As a matter of fact, they believed that it was the symbol of fertility, along with the crescent moon.

### ***Wedding Bells***



Bells are popular in Christian religions. People believe that bells are capable of driving the evil spirits away. Naturally speaking, people would use them to keep their lives and marriages safe. Among the Irish wedding traditions, ringing bells is a sign of wishing you a joyful life. While ringing the bell, it is important that someone throws a shoe over the bride's head. This practice ensures good luck, as well as the bells, do.

## Now do the same with letters I-R.

- I People cheer for something great that is coming.
- J The couple would share the drink for one full moon after their wedding.
- K It is an ancient Celtic tradition where the engaged couple ties their hands together right before their actual wedding day.
- L That was the way that the guests used to ensure the groom goes through the ceremony rituals peacefully.
- M The trick involves marking the back of bachelors with chalk.
- N In fact, today's Irish weddings are quite comparable to weddings around the world.
- O Anyhow, you can choose a song that reflects more your background and your family's heritage.
- P However, it is still around when it comes to buying livestock.
- Q The phrase goes back to an old tradition that the Irish practised before weddings.
- R It was the Irish parents' way to secure their daughter's future.

## ***Cold Feet and Locked Doors***

A few centuries ago, people in Ireland used to believe that Irish men got cold feet. More surprisingly, it was something that they got specifically on wedding days. To solve the problem, guests would lock the door of the church.

## ***Wedding Toasts***



Toasts are important parts of any happy occasion.  Definitely, the Irish wedding traditions involve toasting where everybody gathers to drink wine, toasting to the health of the couple. There are many different toasts and sayings recited at weddings. SLAINTE is the traditional Irish toast; it means "to your health."

## ***Aitin' the Gander***

Aitin' the Gander is an old Irish phrase that actually means "the goose is cooked." Ireland, especially in Dublin, still uses this phrase. It means that the groom is already taken and there is no going back.  Before the wedding, the groom would visit the bride's house and the family would cook a goose for him. Cooking the goose became a symbol that the bride and the groom are officially together for good. Thus, people keep saying "His goose is cooked."

## ***The Ceilidh Dance***



If you are going to have an Irish wedding, you have to stick to the Irish wedding traditions. This means you need to learn the traditional Irish dance, Ceilidh. The name of the dance is an Irish term; however, it can change according to other locations in Ireland. Some people refer to it as the Seige of Ennis or the Kerry Set. The couple holds this dance on special Irish tunes like *Home to Mayo* or *Galway Shawl*.

To make things more fun, share the dance with your guests as well. New couples usually sign up for

lessons before their weddings. Some of them consider taking some of their significant guests along to ensure a fun dance.

### ***Hand Fasting (Tying the Knot)***



Seemingly, Irish wedding traditions are numerous and they are all equally exciting. Those traditions include Hand Fasting.  This practice is like giving the couple a chance to show that they are willing to commit to one another. It acts as a temporary marriage until their wedding day; the actual marriage. However, in modern times, the couple practices handfasting on the same day of their wedding.

Handfasting may be a symbol of commitment nowadays, but it was the legitimate way of marriage during the Middle Ages. When the Penal Laws were over, formal marriage acts took place instead. This act belonged to the Pagan and Wiccan traditions. It involved symbolic items, including crystals, silver boxes, marriage documents, candles, rocks, and a broomstick.

### ***The Dowry***



with no husband.

The dowry was one of the popular practices that the Irish wedding traditions included. Well, the term dowry means a wedding gift; it could be money or other valuable things. However, what exactly was the dowry in Irish wedding traditions? Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century or so, brides-to-be had always received wedding gifts from their parents. The family of the daughter who was about to get married would transfer money, properties, or other valuable goods.  They wanted to make sure she'd remain in a good financial status in case her husband happened to be irresponsible. In case the daughter's widowing, the dowry comes in handy when she's left

Moreover, the dowry sometimes is a gift for the newly matrimonial household. Some families agree to provide a gift for the new couple to settle at the beginning of their new life. On the other hand, some parents do not provide gifts; however, they make a personal gift to their precious daughter. When the gift goes to the household of the newlyweds, the parents of both parties should agree to it. In most cases, the parents pay the first half of the dowry on the wedding day. Later, they provide the rest of the payment when the first child comes to the world.

### ***Lent and Marriage Prohibition***

Lent is a time that Irish people consecrate. Among the Irish wedding traditions, wedding ceremonies shall not take place during Lent. To be clearer, Lent is that period that comes before Easter Sunday and it lasts up to 40 days. The day right before Lent begins is Shrove Tuesday, which means Pancake Tuesday. Shrove Tuesday is actually your last chance to get married before Easter starts. However, if you want to get married, then the period from Christmas until Lent is the best time for it. Again, Irish wedding traditions involve the importance of choosing a specific day of the week. Some days bring more luck than others do while weekends should be out of the chart. Irish people devoted so much to exchange the wedding vows, so the choice of the day is very significant.

As soon as Lent starts, the first Sunday is a fun day. People refer to it as Chalk Sunday and single men are the target of that day. Chalk Sunday is all about tricks and fun.  When people observe that guy

with the mark, they gather as if it is a Mass. That is actually the time when the guy has to run for his life. They all start running and have fun all day long.

## Luck Money



It seems like Irish wedding traditions are quite endless. Here is one more popular custom: Luck Money. In the past, the groom was responsible for giving the bride's parents money. This practice was one that the Irish people believe brought luck to the new matrimonial house. Luck money was also another reason for pride, especially if the amount of money was a big one. Though this practice has not stayed around for so long, some sources claim that it's still around for other reasons. Luck money is no longer one of the Irish wedding traditions.  The practice, in this case, is about giving back a certain amount of the money to the buyer. They believe it brings good luck.

## Honeymoon was an Irish Thing



as Mi na meala. The literal translation of the latter was "The month of honey."

People around the world use the term honeymoon; however, no one considered thinking about the truth behind it. Seemingly, Ireland was the first country to let out that term. It became a popular term that newlyweds around the world use. So, what is exactly the story of the honeymoon? Well, mead is an Irish word that means honey in English. People in Ireland used to name the month after the wedding

Ok, here is the story behind the reason of that name. After the wedding, the bride and the groom usually drank mead. It was a way of celebration and it was made of fermented honey. Over and beyond, the guests would give a satisfactory amount of mead to the couple along with special goblets. Those gifts were simple ways to verify a great beginning to the marriage.  From here, the term "Honeymoon" was combined. Mead and honey were sacred drinks in the Irish wedding traditions; people believed they bequeath fertility for a great marriage.