

Interesting Traditional Marriage Customs around the World

Part 2

Being one of the most important events in the lives of people from all parts of the world, weddings have been marked by fascinating customs relating to food, clothes and music. Learning about these customs gives us valuable insights into other cultures.



Fun Facts about Marriage

- In 1228, Scotland became the first European country where women gained the right to propose to a man they want to marry. Although this is still very rare, it is legal throughout Europe.
- Wedding rings have traditionally been worn on the fourth finger of the left hand. It is believed that this practice started because the Romans called the vein located in this particular finger the *vena amoris*, or the vein of love, leading directly to the person's heart.
- Although exchanging wedding rings originates from Rome, it was in 1477 that the Archduke Maximilian of Austria started the practice of giving a diamond engagement ring to one's fiancée.
- Some people claim that the wedding cake tradition comes from a custom practiced in the 18th century England, where a small loaf of bread was broken over the bride's head as she was leaving the church. Unmarried couples would collect the pieces of bread, hoping they would marry soon.

- Some people divorce after only a few hours. Yet, the longest recorded marriage in the world lasted for 90 years and 291 days.



Moroccan Wedding Celebrations

In Morocco, wedding celebrations were historically always held on Sundays, at the end of the harvest in the fall, because that is where people in villages had most food to serve to their guests.

While in many Western cultures the bride wears a white dress, Moroccan brides usually pick very colorful attire. For example, yellow is commonly worn to scare away evil, while green is believed to bring good luck. Traditional Moroccan wedding can last for up to seven days. The first three days are spent on preparing the bride, including massages and milk baths.



Chinese Wedding Celebrations

The more traditional Chinese couples consult a fortune-teller to decide on a favorable date for their wedding.

Like in many other cultures, on the wedding day, the groom comes to the bride's home to negotiate the amount of money he will leave there in exchange for his bride. Once the price is agreed on, the bride's parents and the groom sit down for a cup of tea, served by the bride.

At the wedding, the happy couple and their guests sometimes perform the so-called *lion* dance meant to scare away the evil spirits.



Italian Wedding Ceremonies

Many Italian couples get married on a Sunday. An old folklore story suggests that no weddings or honeymoons should begin on a Tuesday or Friday, otherwise the couple will have bad luck.

The bride wears a white dress and covers her face with a veil, to hide from any negative influence. Sometimes, the groom also keeps a piece of iron in his pocket to repel the evil spirits.

After getting married in the church, the couple should shatter a vase together. According to the popular belief, the number of broken pieces represents the years they will spend together in happiness.

During the celebration, there is a particularly interesting ritual called *buste*, when the bride carries a bag around so that the guests can put money in it.



Mexican Wedding Ceremonies

Mexican brides dress differently in different regions, although simple white dresses prevail. Sometimes, the bride sews three different ribbons – yellow, blue and red - on the inside of the dress to symbolize food, money and passion.

During traditional ceremonies, the bride receives 13 gold coins from the groom. The couple then exchanges their vows, after which the priest wraps a rope or a band of flowers in the shape of the figure "8", which symbolizes the couple's eternal unity.

Usually, a *mariachi* (traditional Mexican music) band provides lively music for the wedding. As the couple enters the reception, the band plays the traditional dance called *La Marcha*.



Comprehension Exercises

Vocabulary Questions

1. What does "sew" mean?
 - A. tie a knot
 - B. join two pieces of cloth together
 - C. make a wedding dress

2. What does "attire" mean?
 - A. wedding decorations
 - B. jewelry worn by the bride
 - C. clothes, especially formal ones

3. What does "harvest" mean?
 - A. the period when crops are gathered
 - B. the period when trees are planted
 - C. the period when most weddings are held
4. What does "fiancée" mean?
 - A. the bride's main bridesmaid
 - B. a man to whom a woman is engaged
 - C. a woman to whom a man is engaged
5. What does "repel" mean?
 - A. invite someone to the party
 - B. force someone away
 - C. dance with much energy

Collocation Questions

6. Archduke Maximilian was the first one to give a diamond _____ ring to his fiancée.
 - A. engagement
 - B. love
 - C. commitment
7. When it comes to wedding dresses, white dresses _____.
 - A. prevail
 - B. win
 - C. triumph
8. As the couple _____ the reception, the band starts playing La Marcha.
 - A. accesses
 - B. enters
 - C. joins

9. Italian brides hide their faces under a _____.
A. hood
B. cover
C. veil

10. The fortune teller helps the couple decide on a _____ date for the wedding.
A. successful
B. favorable
C. beneficial

11. The lion dance scares _____ the evil spirits.
A. away
B. out
C. of

12. The Chinese groom leaves money in _____ for his bride.
A. return
B. trade
C. exchange

13. Sometimes Italian couples _____ a vase after the ceremony.
A. shatter
B. crush
C. break

14. Traditionally, Chinese couples _____ a fortune teller.
A. advise
B. consult
C. consider

15. In England, they used to break bread _____ the bride's head.
A. on
B. in

C. over

Wh Questions

16. **Why** were traditional Moroccan weddings held in the fall?

- A. because it was better for the wedding photos
- B. because the weather was perfect
- C. because people had a lot of food to feast on

17. **Where** are wedding rings normally placed?

- A. around the neck
- B. on the left hand
- C. on the right hand

18. **How** do Chinese couples scare away the evil spirits?

- A. by dancing
- B. by painting their faces
- C. by wearing blue ribbons

19. **What** is *buste* according to the Italian tradition?

- A. the custom whereby the bride receives money from guests
- B. the custom whereby the groom buys the bride
- C. the custom whereby the bride makes tea for the groom

20. **When** does the band play La Marcha in Mexico?

- A. when the couple exchanges rings
- B. when the couple is about to leave
- C. when the couple enters the reception

Evaluating Statements

21. Based on the information in this lesson, which statement is **true**?

- A. It is illegal and uncommon for a woman to propose to a man.

B. It is legal but uncommon for a woman to propose to a man.

22. Based on the information in this lesson, which statement is **false**?

- A. Both in Morocco and in Italy, something is added to the attire to scare away the evil spirits.
- B. Unlike in Italy, in Morocco something is added to the attire to scare away the evil spirits.

True or False?

23. Based on the information in this lesson, is the following statement true or false?

"If the Italian couple breaks the vase into only three pieces, that means they will not stay happy for long."

- A. True
- B. False

24. Based on the information in this lesson, is the following statement true or false?

"The Romans believed that the vein of love connected the groom's heart with the bride's heart."

- A. True
- B. False