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Ethnic Wedding Traditions

By George Meszaros

Members of the Navajo nation have been using corn to symbolize the marriage union. A pudding of white and yellow corn is presented at the wedding reception. The bride enters the reception with the basket of corn pudding and sits next to the groom. The corn ceremony includes the cleansing of the bride and groom's hands by each other, and the sharing of the corn pudding. Then the bride and groom feeds the corn pudding to each other.

Mexico is a Roman Catholic country; therefore, weddings happen within a nuptial Mass. Godparents have a significant role in the wedding ceremony. The madrina de lazo carries a rope or a rosary symbolizing fertility. The rope is placed on the bride and groom's head in a figure eight as they take their vows. The madrina de arras holds 13 coins (for Jesus and his 12 apostles) that are blessed by the priest and represent the sharing of finances between the couple. Some godparents may hold wine glasses for the wedding toast. During the nuptial Mass, the couple may kiss a cross to show faithfulness to each other and the God. Mariachi music is an essential part of Mexican wedding celebrations. Before the first dance, the guests enclose the couple in a heart-shaped ring. One Mexican wedding tradition that should excite any child attending the wedding is the ceremony piñata. Piñatas are part of Mexican wedding celebrations.

Broom Jumping is one of the most popular African American traditions at weddings celebrations. According to Harriette Cole in her book, "Jumping the Broom." Our ancestors created the ritual itself during slavery. Because slaves were unable to perform legal marriages, they created their own wedding rituals to honor their unions. The jumping of the broom symbolizes the sweeping away of the old and welcoming the new. In other words, it is a symbol of a new beginning. In modern times, the ceremony is usually performed at the wedding after the minister pronounces the couple man and wife or at the reception just after the bridal party enters the reception area.

Be sure to explain your wedding tradition in your wedding program. Your ethnic traditions are better understood and enjoyed with proper explanation.

George Meszaros

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Asian Wedding Traditions

By George Meszaros

Incorporating ethnic traditions into your wedding can create a more intimate environment for you and your family.

While we most associate the color white with wedding in this country, the color red is the color of weddings in China. Red is the color of luck and joy, and it makes perfect sense that it is such an important color for weddings. You can incorporate the red color in a variety of ways such as the tablecloth, candles, napkins, and other decorations. You may change into a red dress during the wedding reception. You may choose red wedding flowers, or your bridesmaids may wear a red dress. You can create a Chinese feel without red by dressing in a traditional Chinese dress. White is not a color used in Chinese traditional weddings. White is used at funerals, so avoid white on your invitations, decorations or bridal clothing. Do not use red ink on white paper, because white implies death and is used at funerals. Gold on reddish paper or cream color paper works well.

Chinese couples honor their ancestors with a tea ceremony. It is not only a beautiful ceremony, but it could be very educational and entertaining for your guests.

Another Asian tradition, from India, is having the brides and groom's hands and feet painted with henna. The tradition is normally performed by a henna professional. The hand and foot henna stains the skin for up to a few weeks.

Japanese weddings include a sake ritual. It is also known as the sake sharing tradition. This ritual represents building a strong bond between the families. The sake ritual can be part of the wedding ceremony or the wedding reception. Sake cups can make great wedding favors for a Japanese wedding ceremony.

There is no law that you have to have an ethnic wedding, but it may add sentiment to your big day.

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