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The Chinese Wedding Tea Ceremony Exposed

By Angela Sorros

The Chinese wedding tradition is in the first place as varied and complex as China is vast.

Throughout the ages, it has evolved and changed due to a myriad of regional and cultural influences. However, although several adjustments occur and more and more Chinese opt for modernity, the most popular Chinese wedding tea ceremony still exists. It is still being practiced by the Han Chinese in the south of the country.

The Chinese wedding tea ceremony is usually considered when the bride arrive the groom's home. The bride and the groom will gather before the parents and the immediate relatives and the bride will serve tea for his in-laws.

The type of tea that can be used during the Chinese wedding tea ceremony usually range from oolong tea to jasmine tea. This ceremony takes place on the day of the wedding itself. After the serving of the tea, the guests (usually the parents first) would then give their approval to the couple and they would respond by giving them red packets. These red packets contain money to wish the couple a blissful life ahead.

Importance of the Tea

Probably, tea is served during the Chinese wedding because it is the national drink of China and serving it is a sign of respect. Well, using tea is somewhat practical as not everyone can drink alcohol.

During the Chinese wedding tea ceremony, lotus seeds and two red dates are used in the tea for two main reasons. The first reason lies on the fact that the words "lotus" and "year", "seed" and "child" and "date" and "early" are homophones, that is, they have the same sound but different meanings in Chinese. Secondly, it is an ancient Chinese belief that placing lotus seeds and two red dates in the tea would help the newly weds produce children early in their marriage and every year, which would ensure many grandchildren for their parents. Also, the sweetness of the special tea used in the Chinese wedding tea ceremony is a wish for sweet relations between the bride and her new family.

Serving of the Tea

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On the wedding day, the bride serves the tea by holding the tea cup with both hands. The tea is served to her parents at home before the groom arrives. According to Chinese belief, this is done out of respect and to thank the bride's parents for raising her. The tea at this time does not need to have the lotus seeds or dates, and there's no need for the bride to ask for an assistance of a "lucky woman". She serves the tea by herself without the groom.

After the wedding ceremony, it is a tradition in China that the newlyweds serve tea by holding the tea cups with both hands. This is what signals the Chinese wedding tea ceremony. During this event, the newlywed will invite the groom's elders to drink tea by way of addressing them by formal title. For example, first uncle and third aunt.

There is one general rule applied during the Chinese wedding tea ceremony, that is, to have the

woman on the left side and the man on the right side. The people being served will sit in chairs, while the newlyweds kneel. For instance, when they serve tea to the groom's parents, the bride would kneel in front of her father in-law, while the groom would kneel in front of his mother.

It is further worth noting that the newlyweds serve tea in order. The serving will start with the groom's parents then proceeding from the oldest members of the family to the youngest. In return, the newlyweds welcome lucky red envelopes that are stuffed with jewelry or money. The helpers, who are usually women, are the ones who blessed with a happy marriage or wealth. They are also chosen by the fortune teller or the bride's mother, and they also get lucky red envelopes stuffed with money from those being served. The envelopes are usually placed on the platter which holds the tea cups.

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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

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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 tradition 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 know 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.

George Meszaros

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