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White Doves at Weddings – Bringing Back an Age Old Tradition

By Tamara Baker

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For thousands of years, white doves have been a traditional symbol in wedding ceremonies.

To the ancient Egyptians, the dove represented quiet innocence.

The Chinese saw the dove as a symbol of peace and long life.

To early Greeks and Romans, doves symbolised love, devotion, and caring.

The dove was the sacred animal of Aphrodite and Venus, the goddesses of love.

In these ancient cultures, the groom would give a dove to the bride, symbolising his promise to help care for her and for the family.

These days, Doves are regularly released at weddings as a blessing for the bride and groom.

Doves pair up for life, so they are a true representation of love and the eternal commitment that a couple have made.

This tradition has become hugely popular at weddings in the United States, Canada and the UK in recent years. It is also quickly gaining popularity in Australia. There are many bird fanciers that have put their expertise to providing doves for release at events in their local area.

It is easy to have a spectacular white dove release at your own wedding that is just as enchanting as it would have been for people that participated in the weddings of ancient times (probably much more!).

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White dove releasing is an art–form. There is much more to it than meets the eye. In order to explain this, I am going to reveal a secret to you. (SHHH! Don't tell anyone!)

The White Doves that go to weddings are actually white racing pigeons. Doves and Pigeons are a bit like cousins in the animal world.

They are not exactly the same, but they are very similar. Only a bird expert would be able to spot the difference at a wedding.

It is important that only pigeons are released at weddings. The reason for this is that the pigeons have a homing instinct, the ability to fly back to their home after they are released.

Whereas real doves would just fly up into a tree. You can't get them back so they'd have to fend for themselves. How very cruel!

That is where the "art–form" I was talking about comes into it. Professional Dove Releasers start by selectively breeding the most beautiful white pigeons, with the pigeons that have the strongest homing instinct. This happens long before they attend your wedding, taking everyone's breath away. There is a lot of effort involved to get the birds with just the right mix of beauty and brains! These birds then go through an intense training period for the first year of their life –just like athletes preparing for the olympics. After this we are confident that they will be able to fly home from anywhere within a 80km radius. In my case, birds from the Heavenly Doves loft must be able to fly home from anywhere in Sydney. (Racing pigeons can fly back to their home loft from hundreds or thousands of kms away). Using racing pigeons is the only humane way to release "doves" because the birds will always go home to be well cared for with plenty of food, water and security after the ceremony is over.

We also choose the birds with a good nature and get them used to being handled by people (especially nervous newlyweds)so that you can be confident that the doves will be relaxed at your ceremony – No pecking Birds!

The other aspect of the "art–form" is the way that the doves are presented and released at your wedding. It is essential to have an experienced dove release attendant at the wedding. Firstly because we have a whole assortment

of ornamental cages and baskets that you can choose to have your doves displayed in, plus you have the choice of releasing the doves from your hands or directly from their cage or basket.

Secondly, an important part of a good dove release is the placement of the doves and the timing. By this I mean performing the dove release at the best location and during the part of the ceremony that makes it a memorable experience for the bride, groom and guests. We make it a high priority to ensure good photos and video footage too. Professional Dove releasers have to go to many weddings to learn good placement and timing.

You may have seen an email going around recently. It is a picture of a pair of newlyweds releasing their doves by hand.

The groom is in a pin-striped coat and the bride is wearing a strapless

white satin dress.

The couple are enthusiastically tossing their doves into the air. But it's not only the doves that find their freedom.

The bride's breasts managed to escape from her dress when she threw her dove into the air.

Their photographer managed to capture the event perfectly!

I am telling you this story because it is another reason to hire professional dove releasers.

I know it feels great to hurl the doves into the air at the end of your wedding ceremony. But we have always recommended to our clients that you only have to open your hands to let the doves free (even if the bride is wearing a cast-iron bra and a dress with straps of steel so there is no danger of exposing herself).

The reasons we tell people NOT to throw the doves are, firstly, the doves need no encouragement to fly away.

They love to fly and can't wait to get out of your hands.

But more importantly, when you see the photos of the dove release in months to come, you will probably think that you look ridiculous with your hands up in the air doing the "hallelujah" pose.

These are all the aspects that professional dove releasers consider when taking doves to your wedding.

Another thing, if you are considering incorporating a white dove release into your ceremony,

don't (I repeat DON'T) let one of the groom's know-it-all mates organise it for you!

These are the kinds of blokes who would try to get the best deal with everything by taking short-cuts

....do you know anyone like that? The problem is that they know nothing at all about birds.

I occasionally get calls from guys like this who want to "buy some birds on the cheep" (pun intended).

I always tell them that we never let our birds go to an event without a dove release attendant.

If these guys ever do manage to get hold of some cheap white birds, I certainly wouldn't want to go anywhere near them – you never know what sort of diseases they might have. Plus, you would be lucky if they don't go splat on the ground when they are released because they don't have the fitness to fly very far.

Professional Dove Releasers always have clean, healthy, fit birds.

They are bathed regularly and because we know a sick bird when we see one, we are always checking our pigeons for lice, worms and other bird diseases.

By hiring a professional white dove releaser, it's the only guarantee that the doves at your ceremony will be perfect.

White Dove releasing is a gorgeous and elegant expression of peace and

love. So follow in the footsteps of brides and grooms from ancient times and experience it for yourself.

Contact your local professional white dove provider or visit our website <http://www.heavenlywhitedoves.net> and go to the dove links page to find someone in your area.

Owner of Heavenly Doves, Sydney, Australia. Publisher of "Putting the Art in Your Party" a free monthly ezine bringing you zillions of ideas to plan a special event with a difference.

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 tradition Chinese dress. White is not a color

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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.

George Meszaros



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