

## **The History of Wedding Traditions**

Virtually every part of a wedding, from the engagement to the honeymoon, has rich history. Cultural roots, ancestry, and religious beliefs have shaped marriages for thousands of years. The following descriptions will provide you with a brief history of various wedding elements.

### **The First Marriage Rites**

From the time of Adam and Eve, the relationship between a man and a woman has been unique and ordained by God. Eve was created for Adam and to complete his need for companionship. Our earliest records of history depict unification between a man and a woman and their respect for a higher being. It wasn't until Abraham disobeyed God that other women came into the picture and left generations of unrest for those who chose to take more than one wife.

### **The Bachelor Dinner**

More commonly known today as the bachelor party, this celebration in the groom's honour was originally called the bachelor dinner, or stag party. Like many other wedding traditions, the custom has stood the test of time. It first came about in the fifth century, in Sparta, where military comrades would feast and toast one another on the eve of a friend's wedding. Even today, a bachelor party customarily takes place quite close to the actual wedding date, as it has become known as the groom's last taste of freedom. Despite the risqué entertainment that is associated with stag parties today, bachelor parties have not always entailed this controversial element. Although rowdy and boisterous, bachelor parties are traditionally organized to allow the jittery groom and his wedding attendants to release some anxieties before the big day.

### **The Wedding Party**

During the "marriage by capture" era, close friends of the groom-to-be assisted him when he kidnapped the bride from her family. The first ushers and best men were more like a small army, fighting off the brides angry relatives as the groom rode away with her.

Bridesmaids and maids of honour became more common when weddings were planned. For several days before the marriage, a senior maid attended to the bride-to-be. This maid or matron of honour, as we know her today, ensured that the bridal wreath was made and helped the bride get dressed. All bridesmaids helped the bride decorate for the wedding feast.

For a long time, bridesmaids wore dresses much like the bride's gown, while ushers dressed in clothing that was similar to the groom's attire. This tradition began for protection against evil rather than for uniformity; if evil spirits or jealous suitors attempted to harm the newlyweds, they would be confused as to which two people were the bride and groom.

### **Wedding Flowers**

Before the use of flowers in the bridal bouquet, women carried aromatic bunches of garlic, herbs, and grains to drive evil spirits away as they walked down the aisle. Over time, these were replaced with flowers, symbolizing fertility and everlasting love. Specific flowers have special meanings in many cultures. In Hawaii, the bride and groom wear leis; newlyweds in India don floral headdresses.

### **The Wedding**

The wedding is one of life's primeval and surprisingly unchanged rites of passage. Nearly all of the customs we observe today are merely echoes of the past. Everything from the veil, rice, flowers, and old shoes, to the bridesmaids and processions, at one time, bore a very specific and vitally significant meaning. Today, although the original substance is often lost, we incorporate old world customs into our weddings because they are traditional and ritualistic.

Old world marriage customs continue to thrive today, in diluted, disguised and often-upgraded forms. Customs we memorialize today were once "brand new" ideas. Although historical accuracy is hard to achieve, the historical weight attached to old world wedding customs and traditions is immense. While reading through these pages, feel free to use, reinterpret, or omit them in your own wedding.

Remember, as you plan for your wedding, to create new family traditions and customs to be handed down to your children and their children. Just think, maybe someday, your "new custom" will be as unique and exciting as these presented here.

### **Wedding History**

Up to and during the Middle Ages, weddings were considered family/community affairs. The only thing needed to create a marriage was for both partners to state their consent to take one another as spouses. Witnesses were not always necessary, nor were the presence of the clergy. In Italy, for example, the marriage was divided into three parts. The first portion consisted of the families of the groom and bride drawing up the papers. The bride didn't even have to be there for that. The second, the betrothal, was legally binding and may or may not have involved consummation. At this celebration, the couple exchanged gifts (a ring, a piece of fruit, etc.), clasped hands and exchanged a kiss. The "vows" could be as simple as, "Will you marry me?" "I will." The third part of the wedding, which could occur several years after the betrothal, was the removal of the bride to the groom's home. The role of the clergy at a medieval wedding was simply to bless the couple. It wasn't official church policy until the council of Trent in the 15th century that a third party (i.e., a priest), as opposed to the couple themselves, was responsible for performing the wedding. In the later medieval period, the wedding ceremony moved from the house of the bride to the church. It began with a procession to the church from the bride's house. Vows were exchanged outside the church (by the way, the priest gave the bride to the groom...I don't think she was presented by her father) and then everyone moved inside for Mass. After Mass, the procession went back to the bride's house for a feast. Musicians accompanied the procession.

### **"Let's Tie the Knot" or 'Let's Get Hitched"**

Tying the Knot, an old term for a ritual now being renewed in our weddings today. Not new age or western-slang about 'hitchin' up yer gal like a horse'. Although the term hitching was a rope making process used for tying up horses with ancient old world roots, it is undoubtedly associated with 'tying the knot'. These terms are analogous with a proposal of wedlock. The term Tie the Knot came from the Renaissance Ceremony called "Handfasting". 'Handfast' and its variations are defined in the Oxford English dictionary as "to make a contract of marriage between (parties) by joining of hands." This could also be interpreted today as a proposal of marriage for a specific period of time, traditionally a year and a day. A Hand Fasting ceremony is incorporated into formal wedding ceremonies and sometimes done at or as an Engagement Party.

### **Handfasting**

The old way in Great Britain for couples to pledge their betrothal was for them to join hands, his right to her right, his left to her left, so from above they looked like an infinity symbol. Done in front of witnesses, this made them officially "married" for a year and a day, following which they could renew permanently or for another year and a day. This was called "handfasting" and was used extensively in the rural areas where priests and ministers didn't go all that often. Sharing a cup and pledging their betrothal in front of witnesses used to accomplish the same thing (usually done in taverns) but was eventually outlawed in most of Europe. In fact, the reference I got that from mentioned only Switzerland because that country was one of the last to stop recognizing it as a legal marriage. Handfastings (ancient word for weddings) were traditional before weddings became a legal function of the government or a papal responsibility taken over by the formal religions in the early 1500's. The very word Handfasting derived its origin from the wedding custom of tying (or hitching; see section below) the bride and groom's hands (actually their wrists, not hands) together, as a symbol to their clan, tribe or village of their decision to be bound together in family living. The traditional length of time was a year and a day, or 13 moon cycles. If

the marriage proved to last over this period of time, then the vows would be renewed for a lifetime or they renewed them for "as long as love shall last". Often during this (trial) period of time the bride would be referred to as a Virgin, or 'a woman not owned by a man'. The wedding would be best arranged during the time of the new moon, for the new moon symbolizes new beginnings, the beginning of a new cycle and also looks like the Moon Goddess smiling down on them in the night sky.

### **Vow Renewal**

The Handfasting Renewal was the original Vow Renewal Ceremony. Hand-fasting is the old Celtic tradition of binding two people in love together (like matrimony). It was traditionally performed on May 1st (although any day that the couple wishes is fine too), and those who were handfasted renewed their vows if they chose to stay together and were accepted into their community as a new family, which is what our culture does upon the initial Wedding Ceremony.

Why are more people renewing their wedding vows?

- After the birth of a child or recovery of traumatic event or illness;
- Because of a pending separation by distance or call of duty;
- Because of tender wishes to revisit their commitment to each other;
- Because of a "quickie" marriage that didn't hold much meaning;
- Because of separation or problems and desiring to reconcile with ceremony;
- Because it is a fun way to celebrate your anniversary, regardless of the number of years.

If you choose to send out invitations, "Bride's All New Book of Etiquette," recommends the following wording: "The honour of your presence is requested at the reaffirmation of the wedding vows of Mr. and Mrs. John Smith" etc. (the same as a wedding). Handwritten notes could be written for a less formal event. Wilderness Weddings also issues a Special Renewal Certificate at the end of the ceremony.

Have you thought of bridesmaids? If you decide on bridesmaids, choose dresses that could be reused. What is the ceremony like? The same as a wedding with the same or new vows, an outdoor wedding or indoor, quiet, traditional or wild and crazy! You can still wear your first dress or your mom's dress or a whole new look with any colour you wish! What about the ring part? You can use your first rings or have new ones for the special occasion. Your kids can be a part of it, as ring bearer and flower girl, maid of honour, best man, etc. Your budget and formality will dictate selection of a disc jockey or band. Don't forget the photographer, flowers, and favours. Consider having a table set up at the reception with family photos, and mementos of your marriage.

### **The Bouquet**

The earth laughs in flowers;  
A flower is love looking for a word.

At its inception, the bouquet formed part of the wreaths and garlands worn by both the bride and groom. It was considered a symbol of happiness. Originally bridal wreaths and bouquets were made of herbs, which had magical and meaningful definitions for the couple's future life. Traditional Celtic bouquets included ivy, thistle and heather. Ancient uses included herbs, not flowers, in bouquets because they felt herbs -- especially garlic -- had the power to cast off evil spirits (can you imagine walking up the aisle holding a clump of garlic!). If a bride carried sage (the herb of wisdom) she became wise; if she carried dill (the herb of lust) she became lusty. Flower girls carried sheaves of wheat, a symbol of growth, fertility, and renewal. Later, flowers replaced herbs and took on meanings all their own. Orange blossoms, for example, mean happiness and fertility. Ivy means fidelity; lilies mean purity.

## **The Best Man**

Many centuries ago, before the women's rights movement, men who had decided upon a wife often had to forcefully take her with him (or kidnap her) if her family did not approve of him. The tradition of a "best man" probably has its origin with the Germanic Goths, when it was customary and preferable for a man to marry a woman from within his own community. When women came into short supply "locally," eligible bachelors would have to seek out and capture a bride from a neighbouring community. As you might guess this was not a one-person operation, and so a male companion who would help would accompany the future bridegroom. Our custom of the best man is a throwback to that two-man, strong-armed tactic, for, of course the future groom would select only the best man he knew to come long for such an important task.

The role of the best man evolved. By 200 AD his task was still more than just safeguarding the ring. There remained a real threat that the bride's family would attempt to obtain her return forcibly, so the best man remained at the groom's side throughout the marriage ceremony, alert and well armed. He continued his duties after the ceremony by standing guard as sentry outside the newlywed's home. Much of this is German folklore, but is not without written documentation and physical artifacts. We have records that indicate that beneath the altars of many churches of early peoples (the Huns, Goths, Visigoths, and Vandals) there lay an arsenal of clubs, knives, and spears. The indication is that these were there to protect the groom from possible attack by the bride's family in an attempt to recapture her.

Traditionally, the bride stands to the left side of the groom. This was much more than meaningless etiquette. Among the Northern European barbarians (a name given to them by the Romans), a groom placed his captured bride to his left to protect her, as he kept his right hand free to use for defence. Also originating from this practice of abduction, which literally swept a bride off her feet, sprang the later symbolic act of carrying the bride across the threshold of her new home. It may well be that even the honeymoon had its origin with this capture scenario. It may well have served as a cooling-off period for the bride's family. It was the groom's hope that when the newlyweds returned from their honeymoon that all would be forgiven.

## **Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue, and silver sixpence in her shoe.**

This good luck saying dates back to Victorian times and many brides try to arrange their wedding attire accordingly. Something old represents the link with the bride's family and the past. Many brides choose to wear a piece of antique family jewellery or a mother's or grandmother's wedding gown. Something new represents good fortune and success in the bride's new life. The wedding gown is often chosen as the new item. Something borrowed is to remind the bride that friends and family will be there for her when help is needed. The borrowed object might be something such as a lace handkerchief. Something blue is the symbol of faithfulness and loyalty. Often the blue item is the garter. A silver sixpence in her shoe is to wish the bride wealth.

## **Giving Away The Bride**

The father who "gives away" his daughter at her wedding ceremony is following an ancient tradition that has evolved over hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The custom dates back to the time when a daughter was considered property, and the groom had to pay a price to her family before he could be permitted to marry his intended.

Another theory is that it symbolized the transition of authority from the bride's father to her husband as she moved from the parental home to the conjugal home. Today, many brides follow this custom, but it's meaning has emerged as an outward approval of the groom by the parents or family of the bride.

In old times, female children were deemed to be the property of their fathers. When it came time for the daughter to marry and her father approved of the arrangement, he was actually

transferring ownership of his daughter to the groom. Today, the act of giving the bride away is symbolic of her parents' blessing of the marriage to the chosen groom.

Women who consider this tradition archaic, or who have lived independently for years before their wedding, can eliminate this custom entirely or revise it to include their mother, brother, stepfather or any other significant member of the family. Some brides even elect to walk down the aisle alone.

### **Shoes Tied on the Car Bumper**

Brides' shoes once were considered to be symbols of authority and possession. They used to be taken from her when she was led to the wedding place, and given to the groom by her father, effecting the transfer of his authority to her husband and as a sign that the husband now had possession of her (and she couldn't run away). The new husband then tapped her on the head to show his new role as her master.

It is obvious why this doesn't continue, but it helps to explain why we tie shoes to the back of the get-away car. Incidentally, the ever-popular horn honking has its beginnings in the days when brides traveled in open carriages. They were an easy target for evil spirits, so defenders would use bells and firecrackers to scare them away. No chance of any spirits getting in your way -- it's honeymoon or bust!

### **Carrying The Bride Over The Threshold**

Generations ago it was considered lady-like for the new bride to be, or to appear to be, hesitant to "give herself" to her new husband, whether or not she truly was. At the threshold to the bridal chamber, the husband would often have to carry the bride over to encourage her to go in. An older meaning is that during the days of "Marriage by Capture," the bride was certainly not going to go peacefully into the bridegroom's abode; thus, she was dragged or carried across the threshold.

### **Veils**

The veil originally symbolized the bride's virginity, innocence, and modesty. The veil can be traced back to Roman times when it was a complete head to toe cover (that was later used as her burial shroud!). This symbolism has been lost over the years but the veil is still customarily worn. In some Middle Eastern and Asian cultures, the veil was worn to hide the bride's face completely from the groom who had never seen her. Only after they were married would the groom be allowed the lift the veil to see his new wife's face.

### **The White Wedding Dress**

In biblical days, blue (not white) represented purity, and the bride and groom would wear a blue band around the bottom of their wedding attire (hence "something blue"). The Greeks are often associated with white for the wedding dress - they used white robes to symbolize youth, joy and purity. Despite this, white wedding dresses have not always been the fashion. In the Middle Ages the white wedding dress was once again made popular by Anne of Brittany, in 1499 -- they were again supposed to symbolize virginity. Today, white is an ever-popular colour but pastel shades, stronger colours and even tartans are also worn.

### **Diamond Engagement Rings**

In medieval times, the groom would most often pay for the bride's hand in marriage. Precious stones were often included in this payment as a symbol of his intent to marry. While this practice eventually stopped, the gift of the precious stone as a symbol of intent remains today.

### **The Ring Finger**

All wedding and engagement rings are worn on the fourth finger of the left hand. The vein in this

finger was once believed (by ancient Romans) to go directly to the heart. Pretty obvious symbolism there.

Medieval bridegrooms placed the ring on three of the bride's fingers, in turn, to symbolize, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (thought of as God the Mother or Goddess). The ring then remained on the third finger and has become the customary ring finger for English-speaking cultures. In some European countries, the ring is worn on the left hand before marriage, and is moved to the right hand during the ceremony. However, in most European countries the ring is still worn on the bride's left hand. A Greek Orthodox bride wears her ring on her left hand before marriage, and moves it to her right hand after the ceremony.

### **Wedding Rings**

In ancient times, when life was much harder and oftentimes shorter, husbands practiced a superstitious ritual to ensure their wives' spirits wouldn't leave too soon. The husband would wrap the bride's ankles and wrists with ropes of grass believing this would keep her spirit within her. Over the years, as religious beliefs evolved, the meaning (and material) of the bonds evolved as well. Today, brides thankfully don't bind their wrists and ankles, only their ring fingers, and grooms have adopted the practice as well. The grass gave way first to leather, then stone, then metal, and finally to gold and silver. Today, the rings symbolize the love and bond between husband and wife.

### **The Bride's Garter**

The garter from the bride comes from the ancient custom of witnesses at the marriage bed (to make sure the couple consummated the marriage); the witnesses would bring it forth as a sign of the witnessing. It became such a violation of privacy that eventually the bride would have the groom throw it to prove consummation. This is one of the oldest customs surviving wedding rituals.

### **The Wedding Cake**

You might find it interesting that; originally, the cake was not eaten by but thrown at the bride! It developed as one of the many fertility traditions surrounding a wedding. Wheat too, is traditionally a symbol of fruitfulness and was among the earliest grains (predating rice) to be ceremoniously showered on the bride and groom. In its earliest origins, the unmarried young women attending the wedding were expected to scramble for the grains to ensure their own betrothals, much as they do today for the bridal bouquet.

Early Roman bakers, we are told, changed the "throw it" to the "eat it" tradition. These bakers were distinguished and respected in their trades. Somewhere around 100 BCE they began taking the wedding wheat and creating small, sweet cakes with it; the cakes were eaten while the service was in progress.

Following the tradition of eating the crumbs of the wheat, sweet meat cakes spread throughout Europe. In medieval England the tradition broadened to include the practice of washing down the cakes with special ale called "bryd ealu," translated as "bride's ale," words that eventually became the word "bridal."

In the Middle Ages when food tossing became rice tossing, the once decorative sweet meat cakes evolved into small biscuits or scones. Guests were encouraged to BYOB (bake/bring your own biscuit) with them to the ceremony. After the wedding, leftovers were distributed among the poor. It is those very simple biscuits and scones that became the forerunner of the elaborate multi-tiered wedding cake we know today. Legend has it that throughout the British Isles it became customary to pile the biscuits, scones, and baked goodies on top of one another in one huge heap. The taller the pile, the more the future prosperity of the young couple, who exchanged a kiss over the mound. It is told that in the 1660's during the reign of King Charles II, a French

chef (whose name, unfortunately, is now lost) visited London and was appalled at the cake-piling ritual. It was his idea to transform the messy mound of bland biscuits into a beautiful work of art, an iced, multi-tiered wedding cake.

### **The Wine/Champagne Toast**

Throughout the ages, wine has been used for celebration. Often and among many people, wine has signified life, vitality, love, and a life of plenty. Often and among many people, drinking wine from a common cup has been the intimate mark of deep sharing. "Entwined as the Vine. . . ." It is also in remembrance of Jesus turning the water into Wine as his first miracle at the Wedding of Cana in Galilee. It can be celebrated intimately during the Ceremony between the bride & groom or it can be at the Reception or both.

The feeding of the wedding cake and the wine toast is a derivation of the Wedding Eucharist nuptial wherein a part of a ceremony is their giving each other a sup from the Cup of Love and to eat from the Bread of Life and Health (also see reference under Handfasting for wedding toast nuptial).

### **The Wedding Candle**

The side tapers are the family or individual candles. These flames represent you and your ties to your family. The middle or unity candle represents your marriage and your new family. As the two flames merge into one and can no longer be separated, so are the bride and groom joined as one in marriage. The side tapers may be blown out to represent the start of your life as a couple or remain burning to signify the continued ties to your family or the retention of your individuality.

The unity candle is not necessarily a religious symbol and is not identified with a particular religion or denomination, although religious readings or prayers may be incorporated within unity candle ceremonies.

### **The Blessing Stones**

When a wedding is outside and near water, Blessing or Wishing stones are either gathered at the site or provided by the couple not only for themselves but for the wedding party and guests as well. After the ceremony all follow the bride and groom's recessional to the water, make a wish or blessing for them and cast their stone into the water. The ripples that are made represent the love and good wishes for not only the couple, but for all the world... as our ripples cross and re-cross one another's, so do our love and good wishes touch and retouch all around us and those with whom we come into contact.

### **Bridal Showers**

This event has its roots in Holland. When a bride's father did not approve of the husband-to-be, he would not provide her with the necessary dowry. The bride's friends would therefore "shower" her with gifts so she would have her dowry and thus marry the man of her choice. While dowries are long gone today, the practice of giving gifts to the bride-to-be remains.

### **Honeymoons**

In ancient times, the Teutonic people began the practice of the honeymoon. Teutonic weddings were only held under the full moon. After the wedding, the bride and groom would drink honey wine for one full moon cycle (thirty days). This "moon" (i.e., "month") became known as the "honey moon." While the name survived, the purpose of the honeymoon changed. After the wedding, newlyweds would leave their family and friends to go and do what newlyweds are supposed to do. Today that purpose survives, only now a vacation is incorporated, usually to a romantic get-away locale.

### **Flower Ceremony**

An ivy wreath is used as the base (introduced by the minister who will relate it to ivy's traditional meanings, including the marital connection). Various friends and family members will add sprigs

of various plants/flowers with their traditional or symbolic meanings related to marriage... building a wreath of flowers in the centre of a circle ceremony or on the altar before or beside the bride & groom.

### **Crossed Broom and Sword**

Another old tradition is for the couple to jump over a crossed broom and sword (held by the best man and the maid of honour). This symbolizes the cutting of ties to their parents and the ties being swept away.

### **Celtic Weddings**

Many of the Celtic wedding customs of our ancestors do not travel very well to our present times. If you break short bread over the head of the bride or groom as they leave the church what are the chances that the unmarried youths present will scramble to eat a bit of it off the ground to insure a good match for their own marriage? Cutting the cake over the seated bride's head at the reception has replaced this tradition. It was also customary to salute the bride and groom by firing guns in the air outside the church. Try that in the suburbs. If you did have your wedding at a venue where you could use firearms, what statement would you be making? Chances are at least some of your guests would think you are a gun nut rather than a traditionalist. Honking the horns of the cars in the procession from the church replaces the guns.

### **Russian Weddings**

Russian weddings last two days. The official ceremony is just a part of the wedding. The Bride and groom arrive in separate cars and are lead into separate rooms where they are to wait until they are called. When they are called they are greeted by the receptionist in the entry of the registration hall with bread and salt. Then they are lead into the hall where the actual rites are to be held, they stand on a special carpet and the official reads a short speech and then asks the bride and groom if they do. Then there is an exchange of rings, the couples sign in the registry, and then the witnesses sign and the couple are pronounced man and wife.

The bread symbolizes the hope for health, long life and prosperity. In one part of the ceremony (at the reception) the bread is bitten into by the bride and groom, the one who takes the largest bite wears the pants in the family!

After the wedding, it is customary for the wedding party to hop in their decorated cars and make a tour of their town's historical sites, leaving flowers at each. There is also "stealing the bride", when the groom takes his eyes off the bride, she might get stolen and the groom will have to pay ransom!

### **Chinese Wedding Tea Ceremony**

Tea is used because it is China's national drink and serving it is a sign of respect. Using tea is practical because not everyone can drink alcohol. Lotus seeds and two red dates are used in the tea for two reasons. First, the words "lotus" and "year," "seed" and "child," and "date" and "early," are homophones, i.e. they have the same sound but different meanings in Chinese. Secondly, the ancient Chinese believed that putting these items in the tea would help the newlyweds produce children early in their marriage and every year, which would ensure many grandchildren for their parents. Also, the sweetness of the special tea is a wish for sweet relations between the bride and her new family.

On the wedding day, the bride serves tea (holding the teacup with both hands) to her parents at home before the groom arrives. She does this out of respect and to thank her parents for raising her. The tea at this time does not need to have the lotus seeds or dates, and the bride does not need the assistance of a "lucky woman." She pours and serves the tea by herself without the groom. Traditionally, after the wedding ceremony, the newlyweds serve tea (holding the teacups

with both hands), inviting the groom's elders to drink tea by addressing them by formal title, e.g. first uncle or third aunt.

The general rule 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 bride and groom kneel. For example, when the newlyweds 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. The newlyweds serve tea in order, starting with the groom's parents then proceeding from the oldest family members to the youngest, e.g. the groom's parents, then his paternal grandparents, then his maternal grandparents, then his oldest uncles and aunts, and all the way to his older brother.

In return, the newlyweds receive lucky red envelopes ("lai see," which means "lucky") stuffed with money or jewellery. The helpers, who are usually women blessed with a happy marriage or wealth and chosen by the fortune-teller or bride's mother, also get lucky red envelopes stuffed with money from those being served. These envelopes are placed on the platter, which holds the teacups.

### **Irish**

The bridal party has many origins, one of which comes from the Anglo Saxon days. When the groom was about to capture his bride, he needed the help of his friends, the "bridesmen" or "brideknights". They would make sure the bride got to the church and to the groom's house afterwards. The bride also had women to help her, the "bridesmaids" or "brideswomen".

### **Traditions & Trends**

Do you know where the ideas for favours at the wedding came from? I don't think anyone has pinpointed where they came from for sure, however, they have become common tradition at most weddings you see now days. Here are a few traditions that you might find fun and interesting:

- Jordan almonds, a favourite at most weddings, are centred on Middle Eastern weddings. This favour dictates that you give 5 pieces to each guest to represent the five wedding wishes: fertility, health, wealth, happiness and longevity. The almond is candy coated representing the bitter and the sweet of marriage.
- Decorated eggs are a symbol of fertility for the couple with this Malaysian tradition.
- Glass charms in the shape of an eye were given on the couples wedding day in this Greek tradition to protect them from bad luck.
- "Bridal Sugar" is a Dutch favour tradition. It is given in sets of 5 cubes to represent: prosperity, virility, happiness, loyalty and of course love!
- In the Victorian Era, "party crackers" were very popular.