

# 76 Ways To Make Your Wedding Unique

**Add a Special Touch To Your Ceremony  
and Reception With These Engaging  
Wedding Customs and Ideas**

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## **Meaningful Traditions For Your Wedding Ceremony**

The Unity Candle is a common element often used in most wedding ceremonies. Traditionally, there are three candles set up at the altar – two smaller taper candles which are lit and one larger un-lit candle placed in the middle. The bride and groom each take one of the lit tapers and light the middle candle together signifying that although they are two individuals (the two single tapers) they are now united together as one in marriage (the larger unity candle).

Although this is a lovely tradition, there are other variations that you may want to consider that will make your ceremony more unique and personal.

1. If you are having a fairly small wedding ceremony, give each guest an unlit candle. Light the first guest's candle. They in turn light the candle being held by the person next to them, and so on until all the candles are lit. Finally, the bride and groom light their unity candle together. This variation is a wonderful way to include your friends and family in supporting the union.
2. A beautiful ceremonial touch is to have the bride and groom exchange roses rather than lighting candles.
3. Wine is also a fairly common element found in weddings. Some couples commit their marriage by each taking a glass a wine and pouring the contents together into a single glass. Then they each take a sip of wine from the common glass. In France, the custom is to drink together from a "coupe de mariage" (wedding cup) made of silver. What's makes this extra special is that this particular cup has often been passed from generation to generation in many French families. You could start your own tradition on this.
4. For those interested in the Celtic ritual of Handfasting, you can incorporate a portion of this ceremony by having the bride and groom's wrists bound together with a piece of velvet cloth, rosary beads, or rope while the ceremony is being performed.
5. An Indian custom that is quite interesting is called the "salt ceremony" where the bride passes a handful of salt to her groom without spilling any. He needs to pass the salt back to her, also without spilling. The ritual is repeated 3 times. Once this is done, the bride then performs this same salt exchange with the members of the groom's family who are present. The passing of salt symbolizes the bride's blending into her new family.

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6. If you are having a beach wedding (or even if you're not), a lovely idea is to have a sand ceremony where you both pour different colored sand into a glass or bottle, mixing the two colors together.
7. You can do the same as above with each of you using different colored water. When pouring the colored water into a single glass, you'll be creating a third color, signifying your joining together.
8. A lovely Hawaiian tradition has the bride and groom exchange leis with one another showing your love and respect for one another as well as your unity.
9. To signify your first steps together as husband and wife, you could borrow from an Eastern European tradition of circling the altar three times.
10. Jumping the Broom is a custom often found in African American weddings and which first originated in the present-day West African country of Ghana. Since slaves were not allowed to marry, this custom was often used to solidify marriages among their communities.
11. For those couples wishing to represent a strong commitment to one another, you could take a tradition found in Hindu ceremonies where the bride and groom circle a fire seven times, sealing their bond to each other.
12. An old Celtic Scottish tradition had the couple draw a circle around themselves which would symbolize their unity with God. As they drew the circle together, they would repeat the following saying:  
  
*The Mighty Three, my protection be, encircle me.  
You are around my life, my love, my home.  
Encircle me. O sacred three, the Mighty Thee.*
13. Instead of just having the bride's parents answer the question: "Who gives (or supports) this woman in this marriage?" reword it so the Officiant asks "Who gives (or supports) this couple in their marriage?" Have both sets of parents answer "We do!"
14. Your family and friends are an important part of your lives. Honor them with a prayer or blessing, acknowledging and thanking them for their support on your wedding day and in the future.
15. An old Greek tradition has the best man placing a crown on the heads of the bride and groom. The crowns are usually white or gold in color.

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- Sometimes they were made of orange blossoms or constructed of twigs and vines wrapped in gold or silver paper. The crowns are usually attached together with ribbons, giving the outward sign of the ties that bind the bride and groom together.
16. Another Greek tradition has the bride and groom sipping wine from a common cup three times to symbolize the Trinity.
  17. A Spanish custom has the groom presenting thirteen coins to the bride, called the “giving of the monedas.” The coins symbolize his ability to support her. The bride then carries the coins in a special purse during the ceremony. Sometimes the coins are given to a young girl who carries them on a pillow or handkerchief.
  18. To incorporate an Italian custom into your wedding ceremony you could tie a ribbon across the front of the church doors which is used to symbolize the bonding of two lives together.
  19. A lovely tradition to the end of the ceremony originates in India. The brother of the groom (you could use the Best Man instead), sprinkles flower petals over the heads of the bridal couple in order to ward off evil spirits.
  20. In the Philippines the bride and groom are “lassoed” over the head and shoulders with a white silken cord by members of the wedding party while the couple are knelt in prayer. A veil is then placed over their shoulders to signify their unity. Once the prayer is over, the veil and the lasso are removed.
  21. Here’s an interesting concept. In Switzerland, junior bridesmaids are given colored handkerchiefs to carry. The wedding guests may then buy a handkerchief from a bridesmaid, which in turn helps to begin building the couple’s “nest egg.”
  22. This may appeal to many women in today’s culture: in a Quaker wedding ceremony, the bride “gives herself away” to the groom (rather than having her father or other male member walk her up the aisle). This is because the Quaker’s believe that the bride belongs to no one except herself.

23. Another quaint Quaker custom is to have all the guests sign the register at a wedding. Take the idea of this custom and have a poster made of your wedding vows or wedding invitation, which the guests can sign as they enter for the ceremony. For those that might have missed out, put the poster up at the entrance to the reception after the ceremony.
24. Although this is not a tradition of long standing, it is still a wonderful concept. Instead of having each bridesmaids bouquet look the same, choose a particular flower for each bridesmaid and have a bouquet made using that flower. Then use each of the different types of flowers in your own bouquet.
25. Include both sets of parent in the ceremony by purchasing a three wick candle instead of a single unity candle. Have one set of parent's light one wick, the other parent's light the second wick, and as the bridal couple, you light the third wick.
26. If you will be incorporating some cultural traditions into your ceremony, help guests to understand what is going on by adding an explanation to the wedding programs.
27. Here is what my husband and I did in lieu of traditional wedding programs. We put together a 4 page "wedding newsletter." In it, we added our birth announcements, our wedding program order, some tidbits about the people in the wedding party, lyrics to the songs used during the ceremony, as well as "reporters" (with funny made up names) who "interviewed" us about our wedding attire, upcoming honeymoon plans, how we met, etc. The guests loved it.

## **Out-Of-The-Ordinary Wedding Reception Customs**

28. Not everyone has a traditional wedding cake. In France, a croque-en-bouche is used instead which is basically a tall pyramid of caramel-coated cream puffs.
29. Instead of using cake toppers, couples in Bermuda top their cakes with a tiny sapling tree. After the wedding, the couple will plant the tree in their yard where they can watch it grow over the years.
30. A unique Chinese custom is to present the bride and groom with goblets filled with wine and honey. The two goblets are tied together with red string signifying their joining. The color red is a symbol of joy.
31. In Finland, the bride wears a gold crown which is later used in much the same way as our typical bouquet toss. During the reception, the bride is blindfolded and the single guests dance in a circle around the bride. As they dance, the bride removes her crown and places it on someone's head. The person who receives the crown is supposedly the next to be married.
32. Here's a fun tradition for the bride. At an Italian reception, the bride gets to be kissed by all the men present for good luck. It's also done to make the groom jealous.
33. A more profitable custom comes from Cuba where each man that dances with the bride must pin some money to her dress for the pleasure of dancing with her.
34. Would you like to know how many happy years you will have together? In Italy, just as the bride and groom are preparing to retire for the night, they will break a vase or a glass. The number of broken pieces is counted up and that's how many happy years you have in store.
35. To celebrate a Scottish heritage, tie tartan ribbons around the stems of champagne and wine glasses. Use the same type of ribbon to tie around cloth napkins and to decorate favors.
36. At a Mexican reception, the guests will form a "circle" around the bride and groom in the shape of a heart. The bridal couple will then dance their first dance within the heart.

## **Unique Wedding Reception Ideas**

37. Set up a slide show featuring photos of the bride and groom growing up in a dark corner of the room.
38. For a summer wedding, place bottles of plain and sparkling waters on each table with ribbons tied around the necks of the bottles.
39. Serve a few specialty dishes or wines that honor your heritage.
40. An interesting decoration for an outdoor reception would be to place a couple of birdbaths near the tent opening. Fill with water and float flowers such as lilies along with floating candles.
41. If you're having a themed wedding, a fun idea would be to sew up some aprons and bow ties in your color scheme or theme pattern for the wait-staff to wear.
42. Have a few of your attendants or designate a couple of friends to walk around the room taking Polaroid pictures of each guest. After the picture is taken, have the guest write some advice or give their best wishes on fancy note paper. Use a paperclip to secure the paper to the picture for later. Once you get home from your honeymoon, you can put together a neat scrapbook with little tidbits from each guest to remember them by.
43. For a garden wedding theme, purchase straw hats and turn them upside down. Line the hats with thick plastic and place a florist's foam block in the bottom. Wet down the foam and create an arrangement of wildflowers for table centerpieces.
44. Enhance your punch bowls by having an edible flower frozen into the center of each ice cube.
45. Either during the ceremony or during the reception, have some helpers go outside and secure a paper flower to the car aerals of the guest cars as a festive wedding surprise.
46. Set up a bubble machine near the entrance to the reception hall for a festive flair as guests enter.

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47. If you happen to have several generations of guests at your reception, have the DJ play a series of songs starting with the oldest to the youngest. This is a wonderful way to bring back memories of days long ago.
48. Instead of throwing your bridal bouquet, hand each single woman a pretty flower such as a carnation or rose bud. That way no one is left out in “catching the bouquet.”
49. Here is another great idea to try instead of the bouquet toss. Find out who the oldest married couple is at the reception and present them with the bouquet.
50. If you can sing, consider serenading your new spouse during the reception with a love song that is special to both of you.
51. Here’s a little twist on the “tinkling of spoons on glasses” to get the bride and groom to kiss. Have a hat or box ready prior to the reception with the names of all the older couples that have been married at least 5+ years. When it comes time to kiss, the bridal couple draws a name out of the hat. The couple chosen can either choose to kiss each other or if they are too shy, they can elect to have the bride and groom kiss instead.
52. Instead of a regular guest book, here’s a unique – and practical - idea I came across. Buy a very nice address book instead. As they arrive, the guests can flip to the correct letter and fill in their address information. The bride and groom will then have an up-to-date address book of all their guests.
53. Pass around a blank journal book and have guests write down advice, thoughts and wishes for the happy couple. At the end of the evening, present the journal to the bride and groom.
54. For a Christmas wedding, make or buy gingerbread houses to use as table centerpieces.
55. Use tulle or netting and hang it above the dance floor. Fill with multi-colored balloons. Release the balloons during a special point in the reception.
56. A charming idea that also adds a personal touch is to place framed photographs of the bride’s and groom’s parents (preferably their wedding photographs) on the guest book table.

57. If this is a second marriage for one or both of you, and if you have children from the previous marriage, a beautiful way to honor your blended family is to set up a photo tree at each guest table as your centerpiece. Feature photos of the children, yourselves and some special times you've all had together.
58. Buy yourselves a lovely wedding quilt. Have friends and family sign the back of the quilt using fabric pens. This is a great idea for a treasured keepsake that will remind you of your special day for years to come.
59. Another wonderful keepsake idea is to purchase a silver tray and an engraving tool. Guests can sign the tray instead of a guest book.
60. Keep young children occupied during the reception. Set up an area (or another room) with smaller children's size tables and chairs. Decorate the chairs with balloons and streamers. Put together packages for each child which contains coloring books, crayons, colored paper, scissors, stickers, small puzzles and games, etc. You can pick most of this stuff up inexpensively at the dollar store.
61. Hand out sparklers to each guest just before the first dance (make sure there are a few lighters and/or matches on each of the tables). Have the MC or the DJ announce the first dance for the bridal couple and have all the guests light their sparklers.
62. As the newly wedded couple begins their first dance, have a photo slide show happening on a large wall or screen behind them. The show should start off showing them as babies and work on up through the years, finally ending with the engagement photo.
63. Instead of the usually "wishing well" set up for gift cards, a unique idea is to take a picture of the outside of the chapel where you will be marrying. Then have a woodworker make a miniature replica of the chapel for you with a slot cut out in the roof. This will make a wonderful keepsake that you can either display in your home or place outside in your garden. In fact, cut out the doorway, add a small dowel peg and turn it into a bird house!

64. When you send out your wedding invitations, request the invited guests to send a favorite recipe along with their RSVP response. Create a special recipe book from all the recipes you receive. Then photocopy all the pages and bind them in between decorative stock paper or small binder. Hand these out as favors to your guests when they arrive. What a pleasant surprise it will be to see the recipes that they contributed inside.

### **Suggestions For Gifts and Wedding Favors**

65. A lovely custom for gift giving can be taken from the Victorian era. Brides would make up friendship pillows for her bridesmaids. The pillows were designed as a patchwork of material with the bride and groom's name, plus their wedding date embroidered on the front. The pillow was then embellished with beading, embroidery, or braiding. What a lovely keepsake for your attendants.

66. A common custom is for the bride and groom to give each other a gift on their wedding day as well. One endearing Victorian custom was to present each other with a cedar tree which would then be planted side-by-side in their garden to grow together as their love grows over the years.

67. Give both sets of parents a special gift of framed collages as a remembrance of your special day. Use your wedding invitation, a small wedding picture, along with some lace, beads, ribbons and pressed flower petals to decorate it.

68. Instead of giving your guests a frivolous favor, a lovely idea would be to make a donation to a special charity of your choice then make up certificates to place at each place setting letting each guest know that a donation was made in their name.

69. Looking for a very special gift for your other half on your wedding day? How about naming a star after them. The International Star Registry has been naming stars for years and will even provide you with a beautiful full color parchment certificate. Visit <http://www.starregistry.com/> for more information. This would also make a wonderful thank you gift for your wedding attendants.

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70. Men really don't care much about favors so this one is for the women. Create small, mini flower bouquets (tie 2 or 3 flowers with some greenery together with a pretty ribbon). Attach a charm that has a symbolic meaning to the ribbon and hand one out to each lady at the reception. You can also try to match up the flower meaning with a complimentary charm.
71. Hire a caricaturist to do caricatures of your bridal attendants then present them with their pictures at the end of the evening. This would make a very unique "thank you" gift.

## After The Wedding Traditions

72. Dutch families in Holland often plant a tree outside the home of the newlyweds. The tree symbolizes fertility and good luck for the couple.
73. Love continues to grow with this charming ritual. After a Dutch couple has wed they will plant lily-of-the-valley flowers in their garden. This is to symbolize a renewal of love each year when the plant blooms.
74. Prepare a large picnic hamper with champagne, two glass flutes, chocolates, crackers, cheese, jam, biscuits, and other such snacks. Have someone take the hamper to your hotel room earlier in the day so it is there waiting for both of you when you arrive.
75. Not sure what to do with all those flower arrangements once the day is over? Have them delivered to a nearby nursing home. The seniors will be delighted.
76. Make yourself a Victorian shadowbox as a keepsake of your wedding day. Use items such as your wedding invitation, program, printed napkin, ribbons in your wedding colors, some pressed flowers from a bouquet, and other such small mementoes.

### About The Author

Rose Smith is an online entrepreneur who resides in Calgary, Alberta with her husband Ian.

She has an interest in many diverse subject areas such as Halloween, animals, crafts, scrap-booking, reading science-fiction fantasy and murder mysteries, along with her passion for creating and planning theme parties.

For over 25 years, she has helped organize many theme parties and corporate events, while working in the government and private business sectors.

In 2000, Rose made the decision to “leave the rat race” and focus on growing her own home business. She started out with the idea of producing cost-effective, theme ideas for weddings through the use of the Internet. She believes a wedding should not only be elegant, but reflect the personalities of the bride and groom, along with the enjoyment of the guests and the wedding party.

She is the author of numerous successful wedding e-books including:

[How To Create A Beautiful Medieval Wedding](#)

[Sensational Seaside Weddings](#)

[Wild West Wedding Roundup](#)

[Sure Fire Ways To Slash Your Wedding Expenses](#)

For additional wedding ideas, tips and advice, be sure to visit her website (Wedding Themes and More) at <http://www.wedthemes.com> .

Rose would love to hear any comments you may have about “*76 Ways To Make Your Wedding Unique.*” You can contact her through her website at: <http://www.wedthemes.com/contact.shtml>