

thoughtful wedding traditions

Whether you're already incorporating one of these touching traditions into your day or are on the hunt for a meaningful moment to add to your wedding, we're explaining a few of the sweet sentiments you may (or may not) be familiar with. >>

BY ALYSSA LONGBUCCO PHOTOGRAPH BY ANGELA NEWTON ROY PHOTOGRAPHY

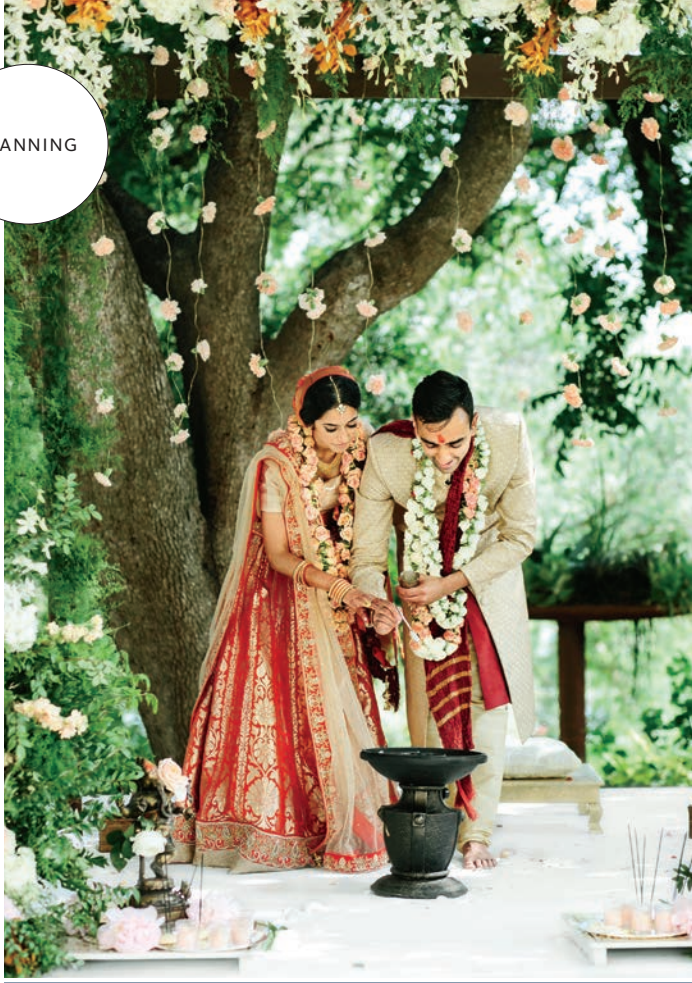


JEWISH

chuppah

A chuppah is the altar that Jewish couples stand beneath to exchange their vows. Made up of four corners and a covered “roof,” it’s meant to symbolize the new home the couple is building.

Traditionally, the posts are held up by friends or family of the couple, but today, many duos simply have their chosen loved ones join them beneath it. The structure itself can be simple or fancy, ranging from a family heirloom fabric (like a tallit) to a large installation of blooms. >>



INDIAN saptapadi

While Hindu weddings incorporate many rituals, one of the most recognized is the *saptapadi*, or seven sacred steps around a fire. “Each step represents a hope or wish for the couple’s future,” says Eleni N. Gage, author of *Lucky in Love: Traditions, Customs & Rituals to Personalize Your Wedding*. “The first is for the couple to provide nourishment for their household; the second, that they grow stronger physically, mentally and spiritually; and the third, that they prosper. The fourth is a petition to grow in joy, love and trust; the fifth, that they have children; the sixth, that they enjoy a long life together; and the seventh, that they remain lifelong friends and partners.” Couples circle the *agni* (fire) together while reciting the vows and are pronounced officially wed after their final lap around the flames.



FILIPINO veil and cord ceremony

Filipino wedding traditions put a large emphasis on family (their processions can sometimes include 50 people or more), and the cord and veil ceremony is no different. Couples looking to work in these rituals will first have to choose sponsors for both the veil and cord traditions (as well as the unity candle, which takes place last)—often these are godparents or other close family friends or relatives. During the ceremony, two sponsors drape a white veil over the couple’s shoulders as a symbol of unity. Another two sponsors then add a white cord (sometimes referred to as a *yugal*) atop the veil, further bonding the couple as they receive the officiant’s blessing. >>

CHINESE

tea ceremony

A quintessential Chinese wedding ritual, the purpose of a tea ceremony is to show respect for family. Traditionally, after exchanging vows, a couple would serve tea to the groom’s family (with the bride’s family served later in the day after the bride’s home visit). These days, modern couples often choose to honor *both* sides of their family tree by hosting a joint ceremony for their whole crew, either post-vows or even the day after their wedding (think: a tea ceremony instead of a day-after brunch). Tea is served in order of seniority, with popular flavors being sweetened red or black tea. Those participating often bring a *lai see*, or lucky red envelope, usually containing money or jewelry, to gift the couple.





AFRICAN AMERICAN

jumping the broom

What better way to start married life together than to jump right in? Jumping over a broom is a symbolic action, meant to sweep away the past and show a couple embarking on a new life together. “It became popular in the United States before the Civil War, when slavery prohibited African American couples from legally marrying,” Gage explains. “They would hold their own ceremonies that involved placing a broom on the floor and jumping over it together while holding hands. There’s also symbolism in the idea of sweeping away the past and stepping into the future.” Today many couples continue to honor that tradition, choosing to “jump the broom” right after they’re pronounced wed at the altar, or at the reception as the wedding party enters.

Make it your own by using a family member’s broom, decorating a new one to fit your wedding vibe or playing a signature song while you make the leap.

NONRELIGIOUS

planting a tree

Nature is symbolic in nearly every culture, which is probably why this ritual has gained such popularity among newlyweds. During their ceremony, couples can take turns covering a partially planted sapling with dirt—sometimes from a place that’s significant to them, like their joint alma mater or backyard. “To make it even more meaningful, pick a tree that’s rich in symbolism,” Gage says. “Orange trees represent fertility, olive trees symbolize peace and evergreens can remind you of everlasting love.” The rustic ritual is perfect for any couple hosting a nonreligious ceremony or outdoor affair—or really anyone who isn’t afraid of getting their hands dirty. Bonus points if you find cute gardening gloves.

SOUTHERN

burying the bourbon

Whether you’re from the South or not, chances are you’ve got your fingers crossed for sunny weather on your wedding day. Good news—you can think of burying the bourbon as a plea to Mother Nature. “The idea is to bury a bottle of bourbon upside down at your wedding venue in the hope of influencing nature to give you good weather,” Gage says. “It’s a tradition in the Southern US, and, like a lot of rituals, was developed to calm anxiety. It makes you feel like you’ve done what you can to influence the weather, so you can stop worrying about rain ruining your day and just enjoy the celebration.” Splurge on the good stuff, get the bottle monogrammed for a personal touch and get digging.



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