

Alan Wenger 477-2091



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Chinese wedding traditions center on respect, love, emotion, student says

By Kristine Long
Staff Reporter

In a Chinese wedding the bride wears a white wedding gown, the groom wears a tuxedo, and family and friends are invited to celebrate as the couple begins their life together.

But that is where the similarities to a traditional American wedding stop. Yuk Peng Lee, a UNL student from Malaysia, said that Chinese couples have some very different wedding day traditions.

Lee said most Chinese couples don't follow the American engagement tradition. Some couples get engaged early, she said, but most just decide to get married and actually get engaged the day before the wedding.

Chinese weddings, however, are far from spontaneous.

When a Chinese couple decides to get married, they must first have permission from the bride and the groom's family, Lee said.

If both families agree to the wedding, the couple must consult the Chinese calendar to find an appropriate wedding day.

"Chinese are very particular about this," Lee said.

She said couples believe that because each person's fate is different, marrying on a "bad day," they may lead to a troubled marriage.

Another important tradition occurs the night before a Chinese wedding. An elderly, happily married lady visits the bride, combs the bride's hair and tells her the secrets of being a good wife, Lee said.

The Chinese wedding feast is usually elaborate and expensive, Lee said. Normally eight entrees are served and the meal lasts two or three hours.

After this emotional tradition, the bride's parents place a veil over their daughter's head and watch her leave for the groom's house.

Unlike the American wedding ceremony, Chinese couples have the celebration first. Chinese couples don't invite friends and family to the formal union in marriage. Chinese couples formally sign the marriage papers after the wedding.

The Chinese wedding celebration is more like the American wedding reception. It takes place at the groom's house where the couple is met by friends and relatives. Lee said the older guests give the couple red packets containing money, and the younger guests give presents.

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During the meal, the bride and groom stand and greet each guest. Lee said the guests usually try to get the groom as drunk as possible during the meal.

Then after the long day, the bride and groom are ready for bed. Their friends lead them to their bedroom, but try to delay the couple as long as possible.

Before the bride and groom go to sleep, however, Lee said the couple must place a hen and a rooster under their bed. If the hen runs out first, the couple is expected to have a female child and vice versa if the rooster runs out first.

Then, Lee said, the bride prays to her ancestors to tell them she is getting married and to ask for their help in making her marriage happy.

On the wedding day, the Chinese bride has a maid of honor and friends who help her dress and prepare for the ceremonies. The groom, dressed in a formal suit, drives to to get his bride with a group of his friends. Just like the American tradition, Lee said, the groom's friends decorate his car with streamers and tin cans.

When the groom and his friends arrive at the bride's house, they are met by the bride's friends and family. Lee said the girl's tease the groom and try to make him late for the wedding feast. Then the groom must pay to actually get his bride.

Before the bride and groom leave the bride's house, the couple kneels before the bride's parents and serves them tea as a symbol of respect.

This is a very emotional and sad part of the wedding, Yuk Peng said, because when a bride gets married, she must live with and serve her husband's parents.

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Wedding party duties

Maid or Matron of Honor's Duties:

- Helps bride with shopping and other details such as invitations and flowers
- Organizes a shower for the bride
- Helps coordinate bridesmaids and dress fittings
- Helps the bride dress before the ceremony and assists with train and veil
- Is a member of the receiving line and is seated near the bride at the reception

Best Man's Duties:

- Drives groom to the church and helps him dress for the ceremony
- Helps coordinate groomsmen and ushers and their tuxedo fittings
- Keeps the bride's ring until it is needed in the ceremony
- Toasts the bride and groom at the reception
- Sees that all arrangements are made for the honeymoon, including transporting the luggage and double-checking that reservations, itineraries and traveler's checks are in order.

Source: Planning a Wedding to Remember by Beverly Clark

Scott Maurer/DN

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