

# Filipino Wedding Traditions

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Filipinos still adhere to numerous widely-held folk beliefs that have no scientific or logical basis but maybe backed-up by some past experiences (yet can be dismissed as mere coincidence). Below are just a few that concerns weddings. Some are still practiced to this day primarily because of 'there's nothing to lose if we comply' attitude while the others are totally ignored for it seemed downright ridiculous.

Brides shouldn't try on her Wedding dress before the wedding day or the wedding will not push through. Knives and other sharp and pointed objects are said to be a bad choice for wedding gifts for this will lead to a broken marriage.

Giving arinola (chamberpot) as wedding gift is believed to bring good luck to newlyweds. Altar-bound couples are accident-prone and therefore must avoid long drives or traveling before their wedding day for safety.

The groom who sits ahead of his bride during the wedding ceremony will be a henpecked husband. If it rains during the wedding, it means prosperity and happiness for the newlyweds.  
- A flame extinguished on one of the wedding candles means the one on which side has the unlit candle, will die ahead of the other.

Throwing rice confetti at the newlyweds will bring them prosperity all their life.

The groom must arrive before the bride at the church to avoid bad luck.

It is considered bad luck for two siblings to marry on the same year.

Breaking something during the reception brings good luck to the newlyweds.

The bride should step on the groom's foot while walking towards the altar if she wants him to agree to her every whim.

A bride who wears pearls on her wedding will be an unhappy wife experiencing many heartaches and tears.

An unmarried woman who follows the footsteps (literally) of the newlyweds will marry soon.

Dropping the wedding ring, the veil or the arrhae during the ceremony spells unhappiness for the couple.

In early Filipino custom, the groom-to-be threw his spear at the front steps of his intended's home, a sign that she has been spoken for. These days, a ring suffices as the symbol of engagement.

## The Engagement

After the couple has decided to marry, the first order of business is the pamanhikan, where the groom and his parents visit the bride's family to ask for her hand in marriage. Wedding plans are often made at this time, including a discussion of the budget and guest list. Don't be surprised if the groom-to-be is expected to run some errands or help out around the bride's house. This tradition is called paninilbihan, where the suitor renders service to his future wife's family to gain their approval.

## The Wedding Outfits

The white wedding dress has become popular in the last hundred years or so with America's influence in the Philippines. Before that, brides wore their best dress, in a festive color or even stylish black, to celebrate a wedding. Orange blossom bouquets and adornments were a must during the turn of the last century. For men, the barong tagalog is the traditional Filipino formal wear.

It is a cool, almost transparent, embroidered shirt, made from silky pina or jusi, two native ecru fabrics. It is worn untucked, over black pants, with a white t-shirt underneath. These days, a Filipino groom might wear the conventional black tux, but Filipino male wedding guests will usually show up in their finest barongs.

## The Ceremony

In pre-colonial days, a wedding ceremony lasted three days. On the first day, the bride and groom were brought to the house of a priest or babaylan, who joined their hands over a plate of raw rice and blessed the couple. On the third day, the priest pricked the chests of both bride and groom and drew a little blood. Joining their hands, they declared their love for each other three times. The priest then fed them cooked rice from the same plate and gave them a drink of some of their blood mixed with water. Binding their hands and necks with a cord, he declared them married. The majority of Filipino weddings are now Catholic weddings, but some native traditions remain. Most have special "sponsors" who act as witnesses to the marriage. The principal sponsors could be godparents, counselors, a favorite uncle and aunt, even a parent. Secondary sponsors handle special parts of the ceremony, such as the candle, cord and veil ceremonies. Candle sponsors light two candles, which the bride and groom use to light a single candle to symbolize the joining of the two families and to invoke the light of Christ in their married life. Veil sponsors place a white veil over the bride's head and the groom's shoulders, a symbol of two people clothed as one. Cord sponsors drape the yugal (a decorative silk cord) in a figure-eight shape--to symbolize everlasting fidelity--over the shoulders of the bride and groom. The groom gives the bride 13 coins, or arrhae, blessed by the priest, as a sign of his dedication to his wife's well-being and the welfare of their future children.

## The Food

The Filipino wedding feast is elaborate. One feast celebrated at the turn of the last century involved these foods: First was served cold vermicelli soup. The soup was followed by meats of unlimited quantity--stewed goat, chicken minced with [garlic](#), boiled ham, stuffed capon, roast pork and several kinds of fish. There were no salads, but plenty of relishes, including red peppers, olives, green mango pickles and crystallized fruits. For dessert, there were meringues, baked custard flan, coconut macaroons and sweetened seeds of the nipa plant.

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