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## **Mexican Wedding Traditions**

Mexico is recognized for loving parties, and weddings are excellent occasions to celebrate and enjoy in company of family and friends. The main religious faith found in Mexico is Roman Catholic, and the ceremony is usually in a church.

### ***The engagement***

Couples usually get engaged after having a relationship of about one to three years. The most common age to get married is in the twenties.

The man gives to his girlfriend a solitary ring in a romantic way or in a special occasion (San Valentine, Anniversary, Christmas). If she accepts, then they organize a meeting with both families. The man's family asks to the woman's family for her hand. In this way the engagement is official.



Catholic couples have to go to talks about marriage in a church. They also need to have all the sacraments like Baptism, first communion and confirmation of faith. Also, the church posts the pictures and the names of the couple so the community knows about the engagement and talk if there is any impediment to the marriage.

### ***Bachelor and Bachelorette parties***

The bachelorette party for women is only with female friends and family. The guests are invited give a little gift or money in an envelope. Games are played and a simple meal is served.

The bachelors party for men is only with male friends and family. They usually go to a bar to drink beers and have fun.

Some couples now have their parties together, so they avoid the expense of two parties, and they enjoy the experience together.

### ***Wedding preparation***

The weddings are very expensive. Therefore it is common that family and friends help with the expenses such as music, food, beverages, wedding cake, photos, and little gifts for the guests, among other things. These sponsors are called “padrinos” or “godparents”.

The couple also can set up a “gift table” (like a gift registry) in a departmental store, by adding the store information in the wedding invitations. In this way, the couple selects the gifts they want.

The engaged couple (mainly the bride) selects the church, the place for the civil ceremony, the place for the reception, flowers and decoration, the musical group, the food, among other things. The woman searches for the perfect white dress, bridal veil and all the accessories that she needs. Wedding planning can take more than ten months in big cities, because of the demand. In small cities and towns, it takes at least three months.



### ***The big day***

The bride goes to a beauty salon to get her make up, hair and nails done. Afterwards, she goes to her home to get dress with the help of her mother, sisters, aunts or cousins. For the groom is much easier because he just wears a tuxedo.

A driver and the groom go to pick up the bride in a car decorated with flowers. A photographer and a video cameraman follow the couple from the moment they meet at the door until the end of the party.

Then they go to a professional studio to have more pictures taken. Many studios have a garden to take outdoor pictures. Some couples go throughout the city to have pictures taken in several scenarios.



### ***Civil ceremony***

In Mexico, the state doesn't recognize the religious ceremony as an official wedding. Therefore, the legal wedding takes place before or after the religious wedding. Usually, couples get married by the state and by the church the same day.

In the ceremony, a judge gives a little speech about marriage, and then the judge, groom and bride sign the document. At least four witnesses must sign, too. Only the closest family and friends attend to this event.

### ***Religious ceremony***

The religious ceremony is considered the most important by the Mexican society. The groom enters to the church and waits for the bride at the altar. The bride enters with her father, while the wedding march is being played. Then the priest starts the blessing of the marriage.



The couple says their vows and “I do”, and then they both put on the rings on one another. The groom gives thirteen gold coins named “arras” to the bride, which symbolizes trust, hard work and good administration of their income. A large loop of rosary beads is placed around shoulders, this symbolize the unity and love. The priest gives the final blessing. The bride puts a bouquet in front of the Virgin of Guadalupe image to thank and pray for their marriage. At the end of the ceremony, the guests cheer and congratulate the happy couple.



### ***Reception***

In a wedding, more than five hundred guests can be invited. After the guests arrive to the party, the couple enters to the place, walks around the dance floor as husband and wife. They dance to their song, then with their parents, and afterwards other guests join them.



After one or two hours of dancing, the food is served. In the big cities, the food is fancy. First is a soup made by cream and vegetables, the main dish can be meat or poultry served with stem vegetables and mashed potatoes (sometimes decorated). The dessert varies from ice cream and creamy pies made up of various kinds of pastries. In small towns, the food is prepared in big casseroles made of pork, chicken or beef, rice and refried beans. The wedding cake is served at the end of the party.



The bride and groom continue dancing with their family and guests. They play some games like: “the sea snake”; two lines, one of women and one of men, which have people running all over the place. There is the “money dance”, where the guests can dance with

the couple and attach a bill to their clothes. The bride tosses the bouquet to all single ladies, and the groom takes the garter of the bride and tosses it to the singles guys.

Mariachis, which is a group that plays traditional Mexican music, sings for one hour at the end of the party, everybody dances and sings.



### *After party*

The “after party” is usually at the bride’s parent’s house. Only the closest friends and family members attend this party. The people talk, laugh, sing and eat again. Then the bride and groom say goodbye and go on their honeymoon.

Different regions across the country have their own traditions, but there are common elements, such as music, dancing, food, great joy and wishes for happiness.