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Brazilian Wedding Customs

Brazil marriage traditions are very ancient. As most of the Brazilians are the adepts of Christianity, many traditions which can be observed at a Brazil wedding have much in common with those in other Christian countries. However, there are still differences that make Brazilian marriage traditions unique. A good example is that in Brazil, the bride usually carries the groom's family name as her new last name. Although this tradition has lost some strength, as have many others, it still is followed by many.

Both Brazilian grooms-to-be and brides-to-be wear engagements rings that are not necessarily diamond rings. In fact diamond rings as engagement or wedding rings are not as common in Brazil as they are in the U.S. for example. When you are engaged, you should wear your engagement ring on the right hand, and when you get married, this switches and you should put an engagement ring on your left hand.

Some time before the wedding, usually about one month, either the bride, or her best friends, organizes a "kitchen shower" (wedding shower) with the purpose of giving the bride an intimate reunion with her closest friends. This party used to be a "girls-only" event, and was usually a small intimate party. Nowadays not only have the parties gotten bigger, but they also have started to admit men to the event. The person that is invited to this kind of party usually gives the bride something for her kitchen; hence the name "kitchen shower", and not wedding shower.

To officially marry by the Catholic traditions in Brazil, the church requires the bride and the groom to go through a course given by the church community to learn the "real meaning" of marriage. This is required if the bride and the groom are Catholics, which most of them are in Brazil. Other religions have similar celebrations and usually also have some kind of a religious ceremony, and an after party for the guests. In this case they follow their own religious traditions with different customs and ceremonials.

The entire marriage experience in Brazil usually is very expressive. The wedding ceremony and party are usually paid by the wife's family, although this is a tradition that is not always followed, understandably because of the high costs involved. The wedding day is a very busy day. The bride and her family usually take an entire day off in order to get ready for the ceremony. It is common for the bride to reserve a "bride's day" at a local beauty spa where she can relax with massages, and where she can get prepared (makeup, hair, nails, etc) for her big day.

The religious ceremony in the church usually takes around one hour, depending upon the priest who is officiating the wedding. After the religious ceremony, the newlyweds usually throw a big party were they receive the compliments from all the guests. The party usually happens in a different place, a private party house that in Brazil is called a "ceremonial." In some cases the church where the marriage is held has a sufficiently big space that allows the party to happen there. The party has no time to finish, except explicitly expressed by contract. A lot of singing and dancing goes on usually after the couple dances a Waltz.

Another unique thing about the weddings in Brazil is a sweet called "bem casado" (well married), which is given to the guests on their way out. It is considered to bring good luck to the couple. Usually towards the end of the party or before the married couple leaves, the bride throws her flower bouquet to her unmarried friends. The belief is that whoever catches the bouquet will be the next one to marry. One other tradition for offering fortune to the couple is for the bride's friends is to write their names on the inner part of the bride's dress. This is also said to help the unmarried bride's friends to find a husband for them.

The Brazilian culture is very rich with its numerous traditions, celebrations, and in many cases superstitions. Wedding celebrations are definitely inserted in this context. Although these traditions have many similarities to those of major catholic countries, there are many particularities and cultural influences brought from other religions and racial diversity that make marriage traditions certainly unique. This is considered a festive event for the Brazilian society and thus it is usually celebrated with a lot of music, dances and overall happiness.