



By Krystal Sato

国際交流員コ－ナ－

CIR's Corner

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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

This Month's Topic: Weddings

It's June! I'm sure you all have heard of the term, "June bride," since June is a very popular month for weddings. So, this month, I will write about some of the customs surrounding weddings.



First, why are so many weddings held in June? It started in ancient Rome. In Roman mythology, there is a goddess called Juno. She is the goddess of marriage and childbirth. In many European languages, the word for

the month of June comes from the name Juno: English *June*, French *Juin*, Spanish *Junio*, German *Juni*, Italian *Giugno*, etc. Brides who married in the month of June were believed to receive Juno's divine protection. In addition, almost all Europeans were farmers. If a woman was married in June, and then became pregnant soon after the wedding, she would still be well enough to work the fields through summer and fall. Her baby would be born in the spring, so her body would have recovered by the following summer and fall months. Therefore, a June wedding would not greatly affect the harvest. Nowadays, no one but farmers considers the farming schedule when setting their wedding date,

but June continues to be a popular month for weddings. I believe it's because June weather is pretty good. Not too hot, not too cold; just right.

Western-style church weddings have caught on in Japan, but there are some big differences between weddings in Japan and America. One difference is that most Americans don't use wedding planners. The couple (usually the bride) searches the internet and asks around for a recommended wedding venue, officiant, photographer, florist, caterer, bakery, band, DJ, etc. They also sometimes ask friends and families for special service to save money. For example, my cousin made her younger brother's wedding cake. My uncle is also a minister, so he officiated at all four of his children's weddings. American couples are able to DIY their own weddings, so they tend to be less formal and have more individuality than Japanese weddings.



"Naked wedding cakes" were popular in America in the 2010s. Since there's no frosting on the sides, it's a relatively easy cake to make by yourself. My cousin made this kind of cake for her younger brother's wedding.



Wedding venues are also more varied in America. Many Christians get married in church, but there are so many other places to get married. In the warmer months, outdoor weddings are extremely common. Parks, gardens, forests, mountains, and beaches provide a stunning natural backdrop for wedding photos.



A scenic wedding at the Columbia River Gorge, Washington State

Another difference is in the paperwork. In Japan, people register their marriage at the city hall first and hold their wedding ceremony on a later date. In America, the couple must obtain a marriage license before the ceremony. However, simply obtaining the marriage license does not make the marriage official. During the wedding ceremony, the bride, groom, and officiant sign the marriage license, and then it is the officiant's job to file it with the county to make the marriage official. Unlike Japan's system, the American marriage license costs money. It depends on the state, but usually it costs around \$50-\$150. The processing time also varies by state. In places famous for elopements, like Las Vegas, Nevada, you can get your hands on a marriage license the same day you apply. Some states can take up to a week. One thing I like about the American system is that the ceremony date and marriage date are the same. It makes it easier to remember your anniversary.



Newlyweds enjoying their first dance at a wedding reception in the UK

The wedding reception takes place after the ceremony. American wedding reception customs such as the grand entrance of the bride and groom, toasts, cutting the cake and feeding the first bite, and tossing the bouquet have become standard in Japan as well. However, compared to Japanese wedding receptions, American ones are very long, and average four to six hours. What are Americans doing all that time? They're dancing! The couple has their "first dance" as husband and wife. After that, there are the "father-daughter dance" and the "mother-son dance." The bride and groom carefully choose the songs for these three dances. After they finish, the dance floor opens and the band or DJ start taking requests. It's a nice time for the newlyweds to mingle with their guests. American brides don't usually change dresses like Japanese brides do, so in order to dance, they button up the long train of their wedding dress so it isn't stepped on. Some brides choose a short white reception dress to change into. If it gets late, sometimes another light meal is served.



A bride, a groom, and their wedding party

By the way, many Japanese speakers call the wedding reception a "wedding party," but in America, a "wedding party" is the group of attendants chosen by the bride and groom. On the bride's side, there are the bridesmaids and the maid of honor. On the groom's side, there are the groomsmen and the best man. They help with wedding preparations and make sure the big day goes smoothly. The wedding party walks down the aisle after the groom but before the bride, and they stand alongside the bride and groom during the ceremony. They enter the wedding reception before the grand entrance of the bride and groom.



The wedding party serves an important role, so the bride and groom usually choose people they can rely on, such as their closest friends and siblings. The wedding party generally wears dresses and suits coordinated with the wedding colors.



Our Japanese-style wedding photo

Finally, I'll tell you about my own wedding. Since our families are scattered across two countries, and there were people who could not attend no matter where we held our wedding, we decided to get married in Hawaii, just the two of us. We chose to get married on

Maui, because we wanted a simple, informal wedding, surrounded by beautiful scenery. Luckily, there aren't many Japanese tourists on Maui! I planned the wedding with the help of a local Maui company. We were able to get our marriage license in the morning, and have a sunset ceremony on the beach later that evening. The photos turned out amazing, and the wedding was unlike anything we could have experienced in Japan. We had a fancy French dinner, and spent the rest of the week enjoying our honeymoon, so overall we saved money by not having a traditional wedding and reception. My in-laws ended up throwing a small "after-party" for us in a restaurant after we came back, but it was mostly just friends and coworkers. Eight years later, and we're still going strong. ★



Popular Wedding Songs

Diamonds Factory, a UK-based online wedding ring retailer, has compiled a list of the most popular wedding songs based on Spotify playlists. The top 15 are below.

1. Marry You – Bruno Mars
2. Love on Top – Beyoncé
3. Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm Yours) – Stevie Wonder
4. Thinking Out Loud – Ed Sheeran
5. I Wanna Dance with Somebody (Who Loves Me) – Whitney Houston
6. All of Me – John Legend
7. Everything – Michael Bublé
8. You Make My Dreams (Come True) – Hall & Oates
9. Perfect – Ed Sheeran
10. Just the Way You Are – Bruno Mars
11. Crazy in Love – Beyoncé, Jay-Z
12. We Found Love – Rihanna, Calvin Harris
13. I Gotta Feeling – Black Eyed Peas
14. My Girl – The Temptations
15. A Thousand Years – Christina Perri

Our After-party Songs

Here are a few of the songs my husband and I chose for our "wedding after-party" playlist.

- Stand By Me – Ben E. King
- Lovesong – The Cure
- Candy Rain – Soul For Real
- Treasure – Bruno Mars
- The Light – Common
- There Is a Light That Never Goes Out – The Smiths
- Ribbon in the Sky – Stevie Wonder
- This I Promise You – *NSYNC
- I Do (Cherish You) – 98 Degrees
- I Swear – All-4-One
- Never Gonna Give You Up – Rick Astley



Wedding Clothes around the World

When Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom wore a white lace dress at her wedding to Prince Albert in 1840, she forever changed wedding fashion in the West. While the white wedding dress has become standard in many countries, many others have kept their traditional wedding attire. Let's take a look!



A Hindu couple in India



Cambodia



Vietnam



A Yoruba couple from Nigeria



A Scottish groom (right) with his best man



A Minangkabau couple from Indonesia



An Akan bride from Ghana

Pictures: irasutoya.com, Wikimedia Commons, bryllpsklar.dk, Aralani Photography, Craig Payne Photography, Mango Studios, Watabe Wedding, Simple Maui Wedding

Contact Information

Ebetsu City Board of Education
Takasago 24-6, Ebetsu, Hokkaido 〒067-0074
Tel: 011-381-1049 Fax: 011-382-3434