Romanian Wedding Traditions

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History

- A wedding was a reason for celebration and joy for the entire village.
- All participants were dressed in traditional costumes.
- Traditionally, Romanian weddings have always had a great social impact.
- In "Descriptio Moldaviae" (written in Latin between 1714 and 1716), Dimitrie Cantemir was the first writer who described in detail wedding rituals which were almost similar for the landowners and the peasants - the peasants’ weddings used to last for three days and had a local significance, while the landowners’ weddings were organised for two weeks and had political implications in addition to alliances between families.
• Asking in marriage was the starting point (the girl's parents talked about the dowry and established general details about the wedding with the groom's parents);

• The ritual of giving away the dowry chest was a special one and the people used to sing, play and shout so that the whole village should know the bride’s wealth;

• Another ritual is that of the fir tree which was adorned and the proudest boy in the village would keep it at the forefront of the wedding procession – all the young men singing special songs and dancing in a circle.
Rituals

- Today, a wedding in Romania is a mix of old and new.
- Before the wedding, the bride and the groom must choose their godparents – a married couple (friends, cousins or other relatives) who will have the role of advisors; next to the bride and groom, they play the most important role in a Romanian wedding.
- The godparents have to buy gifts for the groom and the bride which included the decorative white flower for the groom’s lapel, the bridal veil and the candles; traditionally, the godparents used to wear folk towels arranged diagonally over the body.
- A maid of honour and a best man must also be chosen. There could be other bridesmaids and groomsmen.
• When the wedding day arrives, the best man assists the groom in preparing for the wedding (ritual of shaving) and the maid of honour assists the bride, helping her with the veil.

• A band will have been hired for the wedding and their job starts early during the groom’s morning preparations.

• Once they are finished, the groom as well as his family and friends will all go together, first of all to the godparents and then to the bride’s house.

• The godmother will put the veil on the bride’s head while listening to other traditional songs (such as "Ia-ti mireasa ziua buna" meaning “Say goodbye, bride”). According to the tradition, the bride was required to cry at this moment.
• Once the groom arrives, he has to pay something for her in order to get his bride; the groom is also required to bring a gift which is usually a piece of jewellery that the bride will wear.

• **Iertaciunea** – asking for their parents’ forgiveness and their blessing for the wedding. The person whose job was to organise the wedding (called “vornic”) would say the traditional words.

• The bridesmaids are responsible for placing decorative white wedding flowers on the clothes of the rest of the wedding party, while everybody dances **Hora Miresei**.

• After this dance, the godmother breaks **Colacul miresei** (traditional braided wedding bread shaped in the form of a ring) on top of the bride’s head and shares it with the people present.

• **Hora** is danced by the entire wedding party now together – bride, groom, godparents, parents, best men and bride’s maids, but anyone can join. The music is played by **lautari** (the traditional music singers) on accordion or using brass instruments.
Religious Ceremony

- Nowadays couples get married at the Town Hall (on a separate date) and on Saturday or Sunday the bride and the groom will go to church for the religious ceremony.
- The wedding procession: in front there should be a bridesmaid and a best man who carry the candles; behind them there are the bride and godfather and after them the groom and the godmother, followed by the parents and the others.
- The religious ceremony is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church, uniting a young man and a girl of the same orthodox faith; it is forbidden to organise weddings during fast days.
- In church, the godmother stands by the bride’s side, holding a tall candle (decorated with flowers) and the godfather stands by the groom’s side with another identical candle.
- The ceremony usually lasts one hour while the priest reads from the Bible and sings prayers. At a certain moment during the religious ritual, the bride and the groom will wear ceremonial crowns (made of metal).
• The priest is helped by the godfather and the godmother to put the rings on the couple’s fingers.

• The bride and the groom are also given three bites of bread and are supposed to drink some wine, representing the fruitful life they are about to embark upon together. These two elements symbolise our spiritual and bodily being and are icons or prototypes of the Body and the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

• In the final part of the wedding, the priest takes the godfather by hand (with the candle), followed by the groom, the bride, the godmother with the other candle for the traditional wedding dance dance around the Holy Table.

• When the couple leaves the church the people present throw with wheat and rice as a symbol of abundance and fertility.
Romanian Superstitions

- Rain means luck in marriage.
- The bride should cry before the wedding so she would be happy in her marriage.
- It is a good sign if a relative sneezes before the ceremony.
- On the wedding day, no woman should stay between the bride and the mirror. If this happens it means that the other woman could steal the groom’s heart.
- A spider found in the creases of the dress means good luck.
- To drop the wedding rings means death.
- No weddings are allowed during fast days.
- It is really bad luck to see another bride on your wedding day.
Gastraonomy

A Romanian wedding has a menu of four dishes plus dessert:

- appetiser (cheese, bacon, eggplant salad, tomatoes, sausages, meatballs etc.);
- fish (in regions where they do not organise the wedding at night, fish can be served with sour soup);
- Moldavian stuffed cabbage rolls (a traditional dish), usually with warm polenta, sour cream and chilli peppers;
- steak (of pork or beef);
- dessert – a traditional dessert is the Romanian sponge cake (cozonac), other sweets, fruits and the wedding cake (usually at the end);

At the bride’s house, guests could be served with the traditional braided wedding bread and in some regions with jam. They drink wine and plum brandy (a traditional strong alcoholic drink called “tuica”). Other spirits that are produced from other fruit or from a cereal grain are called “rachiu”.
Decorations

- **Traditional decorative elements** - Authentic Romanian interiors are decorated with woven colourful textiles, having floral or animal motifs that differ in shape depending on the region.
- Other elements used traditionally were pottery and wooden objects (such as spoons and the dowry chest).
- Nowadays, apart from floral decorations, there is the custom of choosing wedding favours (small boxes or bags with candies) which are the young couple’s gifts to the guests.
- They usually contain five candies wrapped in marzipan or caramelised sugar, symbolising health, happiness, fertility, long life and abundance.
- These small gifts can be given to the guests in church or at the restaurant, by placing them on the table for each person separately.
Dance and Music

- Generally, a big modern wedding will have a band that will play all night – international music, traditional Romanian music and some wedding specific music. For a small wedding a DJ is also accepted.

- The new couple meets the guests at the entrance and they serve a glass of champagne and some sweets while the musicians sing the Meeting March ("Mars de intampinare“).

- They wish the bride and groom "Casa de Piatra" (Stone house) which symbolises a solid marriage.

- After all the guests have arrived, the bride and the groom start the wedding reception with a special song, usually a waltz.

- Later on, the main chef performs the traditional chicken dance ("Dansul gainii"): a roasted chicken is decorated and put on a platter. The chef dances with it in front of the newlyweds and the godparents and it continues until the godfather pays the person holding the chicken.
• Kidnapping of the bride: she is “stolen” by some friends and taken to an important landmark (the city hall, the local pub); the groom has to pay a ransom to get back his wife.

• At the end of the wedding ceremony, the bride will sit on a chair and the godmother will take her veil and will replace it with a scarf or a head kerchief.

• The last important moment of the wedding reception is when an unmarried girl, who caught the bride’s bouquet, will assume the role of the next wife to be and will also receive the bride’s veil; another dance begins around the future bride to be.
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