



back up the aisle after the ceremony.

2. Dress the men in black tie rather than morning suits, very sexy and smart.
3. Introduce a Unity Candle rite to the ceremony as a perfect way to involve the families. Prior to the ceremony, a large single Unity Candle and two slimmer tapers are placed in holders and arranged near the wedding ceremony location. After the exchange of vows and rings, the bride and groom move to the area where the candles are. Two guests, one representing each side of the family come forward and light the individual tapers for the bride and groom. The bride takes her lighted taper; the groom takes his lighted taper. Simultaneously, the bride and groom use their individual tapers to light the single large Unity Candle between them.

ITALY

The most important things to Italians when marrying are families, food and wine, and religion. Italian weddings are big family affairs with lots of good food and wine flowing, no-one leaves hungry. Italians don't marry on Tuesdays or Fridays as they have a saying 'don't marry or leave on Tuesday or Friday' as it is considered bad luck. Traditionally couples walk to the church rather than hiring cars, passers by wish them good luck and a party atmosphere is created from the outset. Guests shower the couple outside the church after the ceremony with rice to wish the couples prosperity. In the South of Italy, money is pinned onto the bride's dress or sometimes she will carry a satin bag (la borsa) and money is collected in place of a gift list. Alternatively friends and family give treasured gifts like family heirlooms to the bride and groom. The favours are still the traditional five sugared almonds in small boxes. The sweet and sour of the almond and

sugar represents the bitter/sweetness of life, and the uneven number of five symbolises: wealth, fertility, long life, happiness and health that the couple wish for their life together...

STEAL

1. Put the emphasis on a relaxed, informal banquet. Enjoy five courses spread out throughout the evening, with entertainment on hand to entertain guests.
2. Wear a beautiful lace coat over your wedding dress; this can be taken off in the evening to reveal a more sexy number to dance the night away.
3. Toasts throughout the day to the bride and groom by a male guest whenever there is a lull in celebrations. Guests should respond with a huge applause and cheering.

For weddings in Italy contact Deborah at Just Get Married www.justgetmarried.com

FRANCE

To marry in church you need to have a civil ceremony first, either the same day or on separate dates. After the ceremony is a cocktail ("Vin d'honneur") where both families can invite many people, often more than at the reception. This is normally held at one of the parents' homes. The wedding breakfast is frequently a dinner as opposed to lunch, and is followed by an evening party, popular choices for venues are castles and it is very normal for weddings to last till 4/5am. We all know the image of a well-groomed French woman so it is no surprise that the fashion is still very classical and men would never wear tuxedos. Surprisingly, bridesmaids and best men are not as identifiable as in the UK or US: the bride and groom have one or two "témoin" who can be males or females.

STEAL

1. Introduce the elegance of French weddings with classical white roses, crystals and silver in your décor.
2. Probably the one image we all think of with French weddings is the "Piece montée" a traditional French wedding cake made of "choux à la crème".

For weddings in France contact Alex and Paul at www.ouiandyou.com

GERMANY

German brides tend not to have any attendants except flower girls. According to tradition it is good luck for guests to bring old dishes to break at the reception, the newlyweds then sweep up the broken pieces confirming that nothing will ever be broken in their house again.

STEAL

1. A unique German custom is the wedding newspaper made and designed

by friends and family. It is filled with photos and articles about the bride and groom. Why not display this next to your guest book?

JAPAN

The predominant religion in Japan is Shinto which means "the way of the Kami" (Gods). Shinto wedding ceremonies are very private with only family and close friends in attendance. While the bride and groom exchange their wedding vows their families face each other. This is because the marriage is viewed as two families coming together, not just the bride and groom. The bride wears a white kimono and an elaborate headpiece covered with ornaments for good luck. For the wedding reception the bride changes into a red kimono and again later into a western-style dress. The groom will wear a black kimono to the wedding ceremony. At the reception guests are expected to offer the couple money in a decorated envelope called Shugi-bukuro with the guest's name written on the front.

STEAL

1. Take inspiration from the Japanese and give the ladies hand-made Japanese paper wrapped a red silk, this is a beautiful memento.
2. Why not change into a traditional red kimono for the evening?

CHINESE

Red is central to weddings in China, it signifies love, joy and prosperity and is used in a variety of ways, most frequently the invitations, gift boxes, attire and flowers. The bride's wedding gown is often red, as are the wedding invitations, and wedding gift boxes or envelopes for cash gifts. Prior to the wedding a tea ceremony takes place where the couple serve tea to both sets of parents while kneeling in front of them. The tea is a symbolic gesture of asking for permission to wed. The ceremony is usually attended by immediate family. Most Chinese receptions are standing only with only the elaborate receptions having a sit down meal. The wedding cake however is outstanding, with many layers. The layers symbolize a ladder with the couple 'climbing to success', therefore couples cut the cake from the bottom and work their way up.

STEAL

1. Take a tip from Chinese brides and change your outfit for the reception, why not select a red cocktail dress to stand out?

USEFUL CONTACTS

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