

Let Them Eat Cake

A civilized take on a time-honored wedding tradition

Story by Tamara Enz / Contributed photos

My auntie once told me I'm the only person she knows who has managed to get divorced twice without ever actually getting married.

I can't say I'm proud to have gone through this common American rite of passage — divorce — and twice, no less. I am, however, reasonably proud I have managed to, so far, avoid that other rite of passage, The Wedding.

Don't get me wrong. Someday it might be nice to get married. I think, well, I think I'm not old enough just yet.

As far as I can remember, I've attended 32 weddings. There are specific moments from each I remember clearly. At the first wedding I attended, I gave my grandfather a bloody nose for showing everyone my ruffled underwear (I was only 3).

My father was thrown into a pond in his tux at another wedding. One wedding I tried to talk the bride out of. (She divorced her new husband six months later).

Then came the chicken-dance wedding. At a wedding in Montana, I mooned a balcony full of men (there was a good reason, honest).

Another where I thought, "That should have been me next to him. But, good god, not in that dress!" (Although, in retrospect, I am glad it wasn't me in that dress — or any other.)

My sister's weddings — that I attended on crutches. Same sister, two weddings 14 years apart, both on crutches.

Oh, and of course, the wedding where I forgot my shoes.

I have attended ceremonies in Puerto Rico, New Orleans and Glacier National Park — actually, two in GNP. I've been to weddings with

seven attendees, and a couple with 300-plus.

The thing about weddings is: There are so many expectations; it has to be peeeerrrfect. That's way too much pressure.

Stepping into a new life with another person, committing to them, their flaws and family, this is huge for any thinking person. Even if you have absolutely no reservations about the

union you are forming, surely you must reflect on the life you are leaving and the one you are entering. What better way to throw that aside than to laugh, dance and eat cake?

The cake. Right. Let's talk about the cake. I believe the "tradition" of smashing wedding cake into your new spouse's face is not a wedding day passive-aggressive act. Rather, it is a small mercy and kindness. No matter how beautiful, no matter how many layers or how many icing flowers or swirlies and decorations, most wedding cake is awful.

Of course, any cake can be decorated to perfection, but if the beauty of the presentation is only skin-deep and the cake doesn't deliver on flavor, what's the point of having cake?

The phrase "We eat with our eyes first" was drilled into my head in culinary school. Most wedding cakes have made me wish I only ate with my eyes.

The one exception was a carrot cake made by the groom using flaxseed instead of eggs (the Puerto Rico wedding). It was delicious. Kudos to the couple for: thinking outside the box, accommodating vegan guests and making their own

cake.

There is no law that states wedding cake has to be white. If you must have a white cake, try something more substantive than the standard flavorless fluff: maybe a pound cake with lemon curd or a lemon pound cake with white



The author, at her brother's wedding in 1984, caught off-guard by a cute boy and the photographer.

The whole point of a wedding is for two people to come together with family and friends to celebrate their union. Whether you have a fancy church wedding or a simple sunrise service, I would hope, above all else, the couple getting married enjoys the day.



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chocolate mousse — but don't tell anyone I suggested that; I have a moral opposition to white chocolate. Spread raspberry or blackberry preserves on one layer along with the curd or mousse or scatter toasted crushed pistachios for crunch.

Chocolate is my preference. Flourless. Dense, rich, decadent, what more do you need in a cake? And it would be suitable for all our newly gluten-free friends and family.

Add espresso; rum; cherry, orange or raspberry liqueur; lavender; hazelnuts or macadamia nuts ... the possibilities of dressing up this cake are endless and all delicious.

One trend in wedding cakes is actually cupcakes. A small cake is presented for the couple to cut, and the guests receive cupcakes that match.

This opens the possibility of serving a variety of cake flavors — perhaps for couples who don't agree on the best type of cake. This has to be one of the easiest ways to finish a wedding party happily.

We all know that, technically, it is impossible to get divorced without ever getting mar-

ried. However, after 10 years in a relationship, splitting up is the equivalent of getting divorced, even without a marriage license and divorce court; dividing belongings, sorting finances, there is no less impact. I think I've met my statistical requirement on the divorce rite.

Some day, when I am old enough, I might try The Wedding rite. I am hopeful that not only will I be mature enough by then to skip the cake-smashing bit of the ritual, but that the cake will be so devastatingly delicious neither my new spouse nor I would even think of such a thing.



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