

a SOUTHERN *yankee*

By Lori Lamore

Lifting the Veil on Southern and Yankee Wedding Traditions

When a Southerner and a Yankee marry – and it does happen, as I am the offspring of such a mixed marriage – everyone involved will need the patience of Job.

Fortunately, regional heritage doesn't dictate the wedding ceremony. That's determined by the religious affiliation of the betrothed couple. As any Southerner knows, politics and religion are not discussed in polite society. 'Nuff said.

One wonderful, time-honored Southern tradition comes as a huge surprise to Yankees – the Groom's father as the Best Man. But isn't it true that every daddy is the Best Man in the eyes of a Southerner?

The real jaw-dropper for those on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line is what each side thinks a wedding reception is. For a proper Southern reception, all you need are cheese straws, sweet tea,

coffee and two cakes – a traditional white one and a groom's cake. The groom's cake, which is foreign to a Yankee, reflects the groom's personality or hobby, such as a chocolate flavored, exact replica of UGA the bulldog for the Georgia fan, or a nice Mississippi Mud Catfish Cake for the fisherman.

Regretfully, we must broach a delicate topic — alcohol consumption or prohibition. "The recipe," as discretely referenced by that fine Southern TV family The Waltons, is rarely served at a Southern soirée. A traditional Southern reception is tea-totaling dry.

"Say it ain't so," says Yankee Groom Joe. Ninety-nine percent of all Northern receptions have an open bar. Spirited debates over spirits have been the straw that has broken many Yankee/Southern engagements.

At a Southern reception, usually held in a church hall or the family home,

guests nibble on finger foods as the newlyweds mingle with their 500 guests. To a Southerner, there's no excuse to snub anyone – just bake enough cheese straws. Everyone is invited, including, but not limited to, Second Cousin Clem's ex-wife Sue Beth the beautician who has been doing every female's head of hair in the family since the Farrah Fawcett hairdo, your mama's garden club, and the entire church congregation.

I must offer words of warning: Be careful combining traditions. It could spell trouble. Take, for example, my dear friend Katie whose brother Beau is an LSU graduate. He loved the New Orleans tradition of wedding cake ribbon pulls. Ribbons are attached to charms that are hidden under wedding cake icing. Each attendant holds a ribbon and waits for the signal for everyone, in unison, to pull out their charm. Each charm has a meaning and foretells the future.