

# With so many new ideas, plain rice is for the birds

BY PAUL R. HUARD

Copley News Service

Ouch!

That's what Traci Peugh thought when she and her husband Carl were showered with birdseed during their wedding send-off.

She knows that her friends and family were only showing their love for the couple. "But it hurt," said Peugh, 22, of Medford, Ore. "At least it does if you have some vicious throwers."

And more than three years after the wedding, the bird seed keeps turning up.

"It got everywhere," she says. "A bunch of it even was thrown through the open windows of the truck. Some of the locks still don't work."

What professional planners call "the wedding toss" is just another way to celebrate the festive mood and good cheer of your marriage. When choosing what your guests will toss, keep in mind many of the questions you already have about the rest of the wedding preparations. Will what guests throw match the mood or theme of the wedding? Will it be easy to clean up? Will it comb out of your hair?

There is no stopping the power of creativity if the bride tosses convention to the winds. In recent years, couples have used nearly anything that can be thrown,

blown or shown.

■ Couples have had their guests release live butterflies.

■ A favorite when weddings occur near the July 4 holiday or New Year's Day is sparklers in multiple colors.

■ Flower petals, either fresh or freeze-dried, have blossomed as a colorful way to shower the departing couple.

■ Soap bubbles blown by guests won't leave a mess and are popular with both children and adults.

And if you are a traditionalist, take note: Throwing rice is safe for birds.

Despite what happened on an episode of "The Simpsons,"

rice does not swell and explode in the gullet of a bird. According to the USA Rice Federation, the rice ordinarily thrown at weddings is harmless feed for song birds.

If that's not enough to dispel an urban legend, the organization says many migrating ducks and geese depend on winter-flooded rice fields each year to fatten up and build strength for their return trek to northern nesting grounds. And the birds do so without exploding in midair, according to the organization.

The rice-throwing ritual is an ancient custom that originally symbolized fertility and the

blessing of many children.

Today, it symbolizes prosperity and abundance. If you are at a loss concerning what to toss, here are some suggestions found at [www.weddingchannel.com](http://www.weddingchannel.com):

■ **Lavender:** In the language of flowers, lavender speaks of devotion. A 16-ounce bag of exquisite French lavender buds that are the size of rice will fill about 100 glassine envelopes, 60 tulle bags or two to three dozen cones. The cost is \$35.95.

■ **Designer Wedding Rice:** When the Uncle Ben's just won't do, celebrate by tossing this bird- and animal-safe rice. Romantic heart-shaped Designer Wedding Rice is

environmentally safe, easy to clean up, won't roll when stepped on and is beautifully packaged. Each package comes with a white scoop for measuring favors and makes approximately 100 favors. The cost is \$15.95 per bag.

■ **Bride & Groom Wedding Bubbles:** Tiny "pearlescent" bottles contain bubble solution and a wand that looks like a cake topper. The solution is nontoxic and will not stain, and the bottles can be decorated with a selection of tulle or ribbons. It is an ideal alternative to rice and messy confetti. The cost is \$9.95 for a pack of 24 bottles.



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