

Debut a la Filipina

Turning Back the Hands of Time . . .



Finally, after seventeen years, comes the moment of reality -- the moment to say farewell to my childhood days and dreams, but never goodbye, for I will still look back to these memories that helped me become into what I am now.

It is time to lead my life towards maturity, where decisions are not made for me, but by me, and towards adulthood where bigger challenges and greater ambitions await me.

Thank you, my Lord for the gift of life you bestowed upon me and for the opportunity of experiencing the wonders of your creations. Thank you for giving me my parents.

My father and mother, thank you so much for being with me, for loving, caring, and supporting me throughout my life. To my relatives, dear friends, and close friends, thank you for growing with me.

This day will forever be cherished . . . the day I turn Eighteen.

V e n u s

Lady at Eighteen: Debut a la Filipina

Introduction



In the olden days, a young woman belonging to an aristocratic or upper class family, upon reaching the age of maturity, was introduced to society through a formal banquet . The occasion was known as her "debut". The purpose of the celebration was to expose the young lady to eligible bachelors and their families, with the hope of future marriage with one of these bachelors in the upper class circle.

The tradition continued and was adopted by various regions and later by other countries. Then, generation after generation, the celebration evolved and was tailored according to the norms, customs and traditions of the society that adopted it.

Debut, the Filipino Way

The Dreaming Stage



Filipina women regard their debut as one of the most important milestones of their lives. Not throwing a lavish party upon reaching the age of eighteen creates a vacuum in a lady's life cycle. Planning (or at least daydreaming) starts once the young lady witnesses the event even at a very young age. My youngest daughter, Venus, started dreaming of her debut at 13 after witnessing the excitement during her elder sister Evangeline's 18th birthday. Although it seemed too early to plan, I enjoyed doing so, because it served as our bonding moment everytime we talk about it. For four

years, she settled for very simple birthday celebrations; sometimes even without a birthday cake, implying that the budget be saved for her eighteenth birthday. The excitement became more intense as she started to receive invitations to attend several debuts.

After her 17th birthday, the big preparation started. On my part, I had to attend to the ocular inspection, selection, reservation of the venue, and of course paying for the required downpayment. Also, I started calling catering services to take care of the food and physical arrangement. I also reserved for a mobile sound system, because young visitors usually expect deafening music as an integral part of any party. Add-ons were bubble machine, smoke (fog) machine, and follow-spotlight to add dramatic effects to the ceremonies.

Planning ... and more planning



For months, I made follow-up calls for the services we needed, reviewed my checklist to make sure that all details of the tasks assigned to me were implemented as per timetable. I found it silly, time-consuming, impractical and expensive. But since this is a once-in-a-lifetime event for my daughter, and everyone in the family was enjoying doing the tasks assigned to each of them, all I could say was AMEN ... so be it ... the show must go on.

Finally, after months of meticulous preparation, everything was almost ready for my daughter's big day. Here are some of our accomplishments:

- venue - (paid)
- lights & sounds and other add-on machines for special effects - (reserved and paid)
- food (menu has been selected, downpayment paid)
- photo-video coverage - (ready, deposit given to operator)
- debut gown - (final fitting and final touches done and awaiting delivery)
- matching pieces of jewelry, shoes and other accessories (ready)
- makeup artists (ready)
- cotillion rehearsals - (ongoing under the supervision of a choreographer)
- invitations - (75% distributed)
- souvenir giveaways - (90% complete)
- debut cake - (ordered from a famous bakeshop, paid, for just-in-time delivery)
- coordination meeting with emcees, event director, usherettes, and other concerned - (finalized)
- storyboard (edited)
- special guests (invited)
- transportation for the debutante and her cotillion court (arranged)
- and other minor details ...

The Big Day - The Lady Turns Eighteen

Ceremonies and more . . .



Finally, the big night came. An opening prayer led by an elder in the community marked the start of the celebration. It was then followed with a [Grand Cotillion Waltz Dance](#) by selected peers of the debutante who painstakingly practiced for months. The debutante also took part in the cotillion occupying a conspicuous place in the group.



Debutante's Grand Entrance

The Presentation of the Debutante and Her Escorts

After the cotillion, the debutante needed to rush to the dressing room discretely to change outfit. Her cotillion gown was replaced with her debut gown. Assisted by her couturiere, dressing up had to be in a hurry while the emcees were resorting to delaying tactics by introducing each of the members of the cotillion court and adding necessary ad libs.

Thanks to the skills of the event director; the emcees, lights and sounds technicians, smoke and bubble machine operators, and those in charge of video and photography, were well-coordinated.

The dimming of lights with the spotlight focused at the far-end of the hall, the playing of soft background music, fogging the area, soap bubbles flying all over the hall, and the appearance of a dancing nymph showering the red-carpeted aisle with rose petals signaled the debutante's entry.



During the Grand Entrance, a [recorded speech](#) of the debutante was played as a "voice-over" while she was being ushered to her gazebo by her two escorts and the torch bearers. The entrance signifies her entry to adulthood and into the society.



Ceremonies and Symbolisms . . . Everything must be in 18s

The 18 Roses



In this ceremony, a budding rose is popularly used to symbolize the blooming debutante; thus this portion is dubbed 18 Roses. Red is the common favorite because of its availability and lower price compared to other varieties. In my daughter's debut, she preferred the yellow roses to match with the motif. Thanks to the caterer; the flowers turned out to be part of their freebies. Aside from being a symbol of love, the thorns of the roses also remind the debutante of life's ups and downs. She may be in a bed of roses, but the thorns (problems, trials, all the negatives you can think of) are there to give her discomfort.

The offering of the roses likewise symbolizes society's acceptance (particularly of men's world) of the celebrant. The debutante's father offers the first rose. The waltz is usually danced for few minutes. The eldest son in the family follows, and so on. Close male friends are usually chosen by the debutante. The escort offers the last rose who then guides the debutane to her gazebo.



The 18 Roses Dance

is one of the most significant segments of a debut, a la Filipina. A debut party may not have the other parts, but never the 18 Roses Dance. In this segment, 18 roses are offered to the debutante; usually preceded by the debutante's father. After the memorable "Father and Daughter Dance, the elder brothers take their turn, followed by the rest of the chosen debutante's male-friends.

Why Roses and not other flowers? Aside from being a tradition, the answer could be due to the flower's rich and colorful history. There is no exact date as to when the flower was first cultivated for domestication purposes, but according to fossil evidence, this flower is already 35 million years old. Likewise, history records that as far back as 3000 B.C., the Egyptians have chosen the flower to replace their beloved lotus. Since then, the flower was offered as a gesture of great admiration and love.

The rose has also a special place in religion. In Greek mythology, the roses existed during the time when the gods and goddesses started to rule the earth. It was believed that the flower existed when the Greek Goddess of Beauty, Aphrodite, was born, (*counterpart of the Roman Goddess of Beauty, Venus*). The Greeks regarded the flower as the "King of Flowers".

Likewise, in the Roman Catholic Church, it is believed that the thorny stem of the rose was used as Jesus Christ's crown to mock Him as King of the Jews. In the litany after the recitation of the Holy Rosary, there is the mention of the Mystical Rose.

Meanings as to the color of the rose is not merely an invention of the modern times. In the 15th century, the two factions fighting over the control of England used the rose as their symbol. The white rose symbolized York, while the red rose symbolized Lancaster. The conflict became known as the "War of the Roses".

In commerce, this flower also played an important role during the 17th century when roses and rose water were decreed as legal tender, thus these were used for payments and barter.

The modern world is indeed lucky to have the chance to see this beautiful flower, with over 150 varieties. Our foreparents deserve not merely thanks for saving the rose from extinction, but they do deserve the respect for the high value placed on this particular flower, otherwise, they will only be visible on pictures.

No matter how different people give significance to the giving of roses, to the debutante, this means her acceptance by the society where she belongs, and at the same time a reminder that life is like a rose --beautiful and attractive in its blooming stage, but sooner or later it has to wither.

The thorns are reminder as well of life's ups and downs.

More Ceremonies and Symbolisms

Other ceremonies are listed below.

18 Toasts

18 Candles

18 Song Lines

18 Nuggets of Wisdom

18 Symbolic Gifts

As mentioned earlier, the debut had evolved to various variations according to creativity of the organizer. No matter what pattern it may follow, the tradition will live on as long as there are people who will cherish the said tradition.

Ref.: <http://www.squidoo.com/debut>