

We are doing it a little different. My husband's adopted sister is Iranian Armenian and her biological sister said that tradition has it that the future bride and groom receive money from their guests and each time it is put in their pouches, the bride opens her hand for a line of henna to be drawn for the decoration. At the end of the night depending on how much they've collected, the pattern is completed either simply or ornately. The more often money is put in their pouch, the more ornate the pattern will become.

My grandmother did it in the palm of the hand also, like the Iranian Armenians. So we will do it in the palm, but without the festivities of the money. Just Elizabeth will have the fancy henna design but anyone else who wants within reason can have a small design.

I found a woman from Kent State U, who did her PHD in the History of Henna and she said "there is a long Armenian Christian henna tradition" and she sent me patterns of Armenian henna designs. One was from Yeghnadzor and the other was from Noravank. My niece does henna art so she will do the design on Elizabeth.

It formerly was done the week of the wedding and the bride wasn't supposed to do any work. All the women in the family tended to her.

It's supposed to mean the darker the henna the more the husband loves the bride; or the richer they will be. If you know whether it means anything else, let me know. Anyway, everyone puts a different spin on it. We know that getting it wet fades the patterns, so it made sense back then that the bride shouldn't get it wet washing dishes, doing chores because it would fade. Nowadays with daily showering, the henna doesn't last long at all. Where Elizabeth works we will only put a small dot in her palm as a remembrance of my grandmother. She can have something more ornate on her upper arm or ankle so it won't be seen at work if she wants.

Talyn learned it in college as she was an art major. I didn't know that and hired an Indian woman and when she found out she said, "Aunt Joanne, I do henna. Why should you hire someone?" This is good to know in case anyone else in the Armenian community wants a henna artist. She said she'd do henna on her sister all the time just for fun and during snow storms in college when people sat around watching snow to fall, she'd spend the day doing henna. So she's got the technique down well.

Generally it is done the night before the wedding; but, I told the girls I thought it would cause too much commotion and I wanted Elizabeth calm for the wedding and I didn't want henna rubbing off on her gown. So, that's why they picked April.

There is a chemical in the henna which keeps the bride from perspiring and it is also a natural deodorant. It also drops body temp so the bride stays cool. All these are practical reasons to do henna where Armenians all originated.

I had a Henna Party too, but we used water soluble body paints. And we did it well before the wedding day also. We didn't have gifts either, just the fun of girls getting together and painting the bride.

Generally I am told the man puts his little finger in the henna, but we're not doing that either.

