

# The Party

## A Customary Reception

Similar to a wedding reception, quinceañera parties have three parts. There is a presentation of the girl and her court, a dinner, and a party with dancing. The exact order and style of the presentation ceremony varies from country to country.

Sylvia Solheim of Quinceañera-Boutique.com remembers her daughter's quinceañera, saying, "For my own daughter, we wanted her quince to be focused on the religious aspect of the celebration. We did all of the recognition of her leaving her childhood at the mass. But at the reception, it was just fun. A family can choose customs that have meaning for them and those are the customs they should follow."

## A new pair of shoes

In general, during the program, the quinceañera, her court of honor, her family and padrinos will be presented to the guests in a short, but very symbolic, ceremony. Her godparents might hand her a scepter to replace the bouquet of flowers she left at the altar that morning. She might be given a Bible, rosary and other gifts that were blessed during the mass service.

During some presentations, the father helps the quinceañera change from the flat shoes she wore to the church to her first pair of high heels, another symbol of her leaving childhood and becoming a young woman. Of course, her first dance as an adult is with her father, traditionally a waltz. "Sobre las Olas" and "A Ritmo de Bals" are both popular choices.

## The court waltz

In the past, the father/daughter dance was followed by a choreographed dance of the entire court of honor, usually another waltz. That happens less often now, but the practice is still popular in some areas.

"Some churches might not allow the girl to do everything she wants to during the mass, like the coronation ceremony. Move those elements to the party, which is much more flexible than the church service," says Isabella Wall of Bella Quinceañera, who works with 100s of quinceañeras each year.

During the evening, the girl's parents and godparents toast the quinceañera, commenting on her new adult role, her growing faith or their pride and love for her.

## The last doll and the first dance

Some girls also receive their "last doll" at the party, while others receive that gift during the church service earlier in the day. Certainly, there are thank-you toasts, made by both the girl and her parents.

In the past, quinceañera traditions put emphasis on the girl's father. He walked the girl down the aisle, had the first dance with her and made the evening's toasts. Other options are sometimes replacing that tradition: having both parents escort the quinceañera down the aisle or making the toasts. If a girl's father has passed away or lives away from the family, it's common for the mother or an older brother to complete all of the usual fatherly duties.

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