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Anastasia Zvyagina: “Wedding Festival Connects Hearts And Cultures”

In July 2026, the National Center RUSSIA in Moscow hosted the III All-Russian Wedding Festival, “Russia. Connecting Hearts”. Every year, this celebration for newlyweds serves as a platform to bring together couples from all regions of the Russian Federation. In her interview to BM.Moscow Foresight, Anastasia Zvyagina, Deputy Director General of the National Center RUSSIA, shared how original traditions are born at the festival, wedding fashion trends are set, and the most unbelievable dreams come true.

- Could you please tell us, who initiated the Wedding Festival and when was it launched?

- The concept for the All-Russian Wedding Festival was conceived during the “Russia” International Exhibition and Forum in 2024. As you are aware, this event showcases our nation's greatest achievements. It was at this exhibition on January 23, 2024, that President Vladimir Putin officially launched the Year of the Family, inspiring our idea for the wedding festival.

As our president once said: “The family in Russia has been and remains the highest value.” This is about family traditions passed down from generation to generation, about love for children and respect for elders, and about the value of love between a man and a woman. And so, we decided that we absolutely need a festival where Russian family values can be showcased in all their glory.

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And what occasion could be more perfect for this? A wedding, of course—a celebration that not only unites hearts but also highlights the harmony of family traditions and truly shapes the future, as new generations are born into these families.

- What is the core concept of the festival?

- The main idea of the festival is to unite hearts and cultures. Imagine this: more than 190 nations live in Russia, each with its own folklore, cuisine, and traditions, but no matter which nation you choose—family is the most important value for everyone. Family is what unites Russia.

The All-Russian Family Hearth "Heart of Russia" became the symbol of this unity. It was lit in 2024 at the "Russia" exhibition during the "Kin — Beloved" Forum.

The fire for the hearth was brought from Murom—the birthplace of Saints Peter and Fevronia, who are revered as the patron saints of family and marriage. From Moscow, sparks of this family hearth were carried across different corners of our country, the “family of families”, by planes and trains in just a few short months.

Passing a spark from the All-Russian Family Hearth to young couples is one of the warmest traditions of the wedding festival. The newlyweds receive this relic from the hands of couples who were married at previous festivals. In this way, the past intertwines with the future, wisdom is passed down, and a close-knit community of Russian families is born.

You know, passing the flame is a very moving moment for the bride and groom. I remember the newlyweds from North Ossetia, Anastasiya and Khetag Gozoev, sharing how incredibly nervous they were when receiving the flame of the All-Russian Family Hearth. And this is despite the fact that they both have amazing self-control: Nastya is a certified rescue worker, and Khetag is an EMERCOM junior sergeant.

And so many married couples want to come back to our festival to pass on a piece of the hearth fire to the newlyweds! The festival's atmosphere never lets you go because every single moment here is filled with warmth, meaning, and connection.

I know that in many established families, the flame of the family hearth is lit during wedding anniversaries. A year or two later, couples send us photos from these events, and we can see that our fire is still burning and our couples are deeply in love.

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- In your opinion, what makes the festival so appealing to couples today?

- Personally, I think it’s because of the unforgettable festive atmosphere. After all, a wedding is a perfect reason for a couple to be the center of attention. The very opportunity to say “I do” to each other at the National Center RUSSIA is a truly amazing experience.

You know, last year at the II All-Russian Wedding Festival, Dmitry and Tatyana Dronova from Kaluga got married. They are a beautiful, mature couple and parents of three children. And this year, their son Vyacheslav will come to us with his fiancée, Anastasia. The young man was among the guests at last year's festival and was so touched by the warm, festive atmosphere that he also wanted to have his wedding at the National Center RUSSIA. By the way, Vyacheslav and Anastasia's application was the very first one this year.

This is how the continuity of wedding traditions is born. Perhaps, years from now, the third generation of the Dronov family will join our festival too.

Our festival is not limited to the official ceremony alone. Couples travel to us from all across the country, and many have never visited the capital before. That is why we aim to show them the best of Moscow: we host river boat cruises, organize a festive parade, and arrange themed tours along with professional photo shoots. For two whole days, our stages come alive with incredible concerts and performances. Over the years, dozens of celebrities and public figures have taken to the stage to share their congratulations and words of wisdom with the newlyweds.

We’ve even had real miracles happen! For instance, at the II All-Russian Wedding Festival, we hosted the wedding of Diana Doonova and Aleksandr Vasilkovsky from the Krasnoyarsk Region. The bride had a dream: she wanted her brother, who is serving in the special military operation zone, to be by her side on this important day. And right on their wedding day, the SMO hero Valery Doonov walked up onto the stage to congratulate his sister and all the newlyweds. The decision to grant the soldier a short-term leave was made personally by Vladimir Putin. The entire massive hall shared the bride’s joy—it was deeply moving, sincere, and brought everyone to tears.

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- **Anastasia, who is the organizer of the All-Russian Wedding Festival?**

- The National Center RUSSIA is organizing the festival in partnership with the Government of Moscow and the Moscow Civil Registry Office (ZAGS).

From the very beginning, the city's leadership supported our idea and fully threw their weight behind the project. We are truly grateful for their immense support!

In the first year of the festival, the Moscow Government helped us organize a large-scale wedding ceremony and a concert program. And they still help us to this day: just look at how beautiful the couples' registration ceremony is, and how sensitive and attentive the registrars are. It is no wonder that this holiday inspires lovers all across the country.

We have heard stories from participants dozens of times where the decision to come to the festival was made after watching a video of a wedding ceremony organized with the support of the Moscow Government and the Moscow Civil Registry Office.

I would also like to highlight our partnership with the World Trade Center Moscow (WTC), our closest neighbor. This collaboration not only guarantees project participants convenient accommodation at the WTC hotels but also grants them access to a full range of on-site amenities—from cafes and restaurants to a beauty salon and flower delivery services. This makes the project more self-contained and comfortable for couples, saving them from the hassle of looking for additional services elsewhere. At the same time, it allows us as organizers to offer convenient event-related solutions right next to our venue.

- **The festival is being held for the third time this year. What has it managed to achieve over these years?**

- Our greatest achievement is hundreds of new families. Over the past three years, we have united so many couples in marriage that we can say with absolute certainty: the National Center RUSSIA truly brings hearts together. Moreover, at our festival, love literally knows no borders — this year, for the first time, interethnic and international couples said “I do” to each other at the National Center RUSSIA. It is wonderful to see that Russia is a center of attraction for everyone who believes in love and respects traditional values.

In today's rapidly changing world, traditions serve as a steadfast foundation rather than a mere memory of the past. They unite generations, safeguard core values, and reinforce the timeless importance of love, family, and fidelity. Consequently, in 2025, it

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was decided to establish the festival as an annual event dedicated to the Day of Family, Love, and Fidelity.

The scale of the event has expanded significantly, featuring a more diverse program, a broader lineup of speakers, and new activities.

This year, our regional branches also joined the celebration. A large simultaneous wedding ceremony took place in the Krasnoyarsk Krai, the Primorsky Krai, and the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra.

For some, the journey to marriage began right within the walls of the National Center RUSSIA. At the opening of the branch in the Primorsky Krai, Anastasia Borodina, a Muscovite, served as the host. She admired the beauty of the Wedding Festival, and her boyfriend, Artem Azarov, took it as a hint and proposed to her.

Artem is an artist and songwriter. At the II All-Russian Wedding Festival, he conducted a choir of young husbands, who ultimately inspired him not to delay his marriage proposal. And this year, they got married at our festival.

We are truly delighted that the families formed at our festival stay in touch with us. Many of them already have children—and this is perhaps the most joyful outcome of all.

We know that young parents are creating their own family traditions. For instance, after the birth of their baby, Timur and Elizabeth Badmaev from the Republic of Buryatia visit their ancestral village, where their grandparents grew up, every year on International Children's Day. They firmly believe in the importance of instilling a love for one's homeland and roots in their child.

Many couples share that they will definitely tell their children about their wedding at the National Center RUSSIA, as it is an unforgettable moment in their family history.

- Could you share with our readers how to become a participant in the festival?

-To participate in the festival, you need to fill out an application on the website of the National Center RUSSIA. We have no restrictions regarding profession, nationality, religion, or citizenship. And let me emphasize that all of this is completely free of charge.

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- They say you need to make a traditional folk costume to take part in the festival...

- Our festival reflects the unity of various cultures, so we welcome the desire of future newlyweds to get married in national costumes—the attire worn by their ancestors. However, this is not a mandatory condition for participation. That said, I must note that the couples gladly embrace our suggestion to add a touch of tradition to their wedding looks. They understand that it is not only beautiful but also awakens pride in their roots and their country.

At the 1st All-Russian Wedding Festival, Catherine and Nikita from Crimea tied the knot. The bride wore a burgundy sarafan and a magnificent kokoshnik, while the groom wore a white shirt with bright trim. Their matching look turned out so beautiful that visitors at VDNH stopped the couple several times just to take a photo with them.

It is not necessary to sew a wedding suit in the national style with museum precision — many couples masterfully use individual elements of national culture.

At the II All-Russian Wedding Festival, photographers were literally spellbound by the newlyweds from Yakutia: the bride, Kira-Lynn, wore a dress resembling a traditional Yakut khaladay, with a horsehair tassel at her belt, while the groom wore a traditional Russian shirt. Here you have contrast, harmony, and the union of two different cultures.

- What role does the festival's educational program play?

- The educational program is highly diverse, but its core mission is to showcase the family as a top priority and a space for passing down traditions, values, and life experiences.

Our speakers included historians, journalists, psychologists, stylists, beauty experts, wedding agency directors, and other specialists. During lectures and workshops, participants discussed how to become successful parents, maintain strong family relationships, and prepare for a wedding. They also talked about which books are a must-read for future and current parents.

A special focus was placed on the history of weddings and ancient traditions. This is truly fascinating, as a wedding is also a cultural phenomenon with a rich past. The culinary program introduced guests to ceremonial wedding dishes from different cultures. As it turns out, cooking can be more than just an engaging process with a delicious result—it can also be a journey into family traditions.

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In this way, the conversation about weddings and family expanded to bring different cultures together, which is especially important during the Year of Unity among the Peoples of Russia.

- **How else was the spirit of unity expressed at the festival?**

- One of the oldest wedding traditions is the first dance. We offered our own interpretation of this custom and invited the newlyweds to join a round dance, known as a khorovod. Our musical and choreographic parable, "Khorovod. Wedding," turned out to be perhaps the largest wedding round dance in history. Newlyweds, their relatives, guests, and basically all festival visitors in the hall held hands. People simply held hands, formed a circle, and began to move to the dance!

I believe that at the III All-Russian Wedding Festival, we laid the foundation for another tradition. Along with the passing of the family hearth fire, it will surely become an essential part of the festival.

It is important to note that “Khorovod. Wedding” is part of the Russian DNA and a key element of our country's cultural code. This is an amazing dance with no soloists or background dancers. Everyone is equally important, because if anyone lets go of a hand, the chain breaks. That is why “Khorovod. Wedding” is a symbol of unity, strong bonds, and the readiness to lend a helping hand. Our dance showed that these qualities are not forgotten and remain deeply important to the Russian people.

- Is a festival an event only for couples?

- Our wedding festival welcomes everyone who shares family values or is interested in wedding traditions. Join us for inspiration, insights, great examples, and a festive atmosphere!

Everyone is welcome to participate in our educational program and join the workshops. And, of course, our "Khorovod. Wedding" will gladly welcome everyone into its circle!

- What do you consider to be the most important outcomes of the III All-Russian Wedding Festival?

- For the first time, wedding ceremonies took place not only in Moscow, but also at the branches of the National Center RUSSIA in the Primorsky and Krasnoyarsk Regions and the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug – Yugra. We hosted dozens of educational events. As for how many couples we inspired to tie the knot next year, we will find out once the new application window opens. This year, 186 couples took part in the All-Russian Wedding Festival, 150 of whom got married at the National

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Centre RUSSIA in Moscow.

- Anastasia, what is your vision for the festival in the future?

- In a few years, our celebration may expand to even more regions. Every year, we expect to see a growing number of foreign and international couples. Russia naturally attracts everyone who shares traditional values, and our festival is truly one of a kind in the world.

Without a doubt, the future will bring new formats, traditions, and stories to the festival, and the families created here will become a reliable pillar of the country.

Yet, one thing will remain unchanged: the All-Russian Wedding Festival is a unique opportunity to hold a wedding in the very heart of the country, at the National Center RUSSIA. It is a chance to immerse yourself in the traditions of various cultures, get advice from wedding industry experts, and become part of a grand celebration of love and culture.

* Photos provided by National Center RUSSIA press service

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