

Robyn Ashley Weddings

NYC WEDDING OFFICIANT

THE OFFICIANT'S CUT

The Whiskey *Unity Ceremony.*

The full ritual to read at the altar: the words for each pour, the barrel prep that decides whether the blend survives, the delivery cues, and the swap if one of you does not drink.

AS SEEN IN

Tamron Hall · Brides · The Knot

FROM ROBYN'S DESK

The ritual you *taste a year later.*

The first whiskey blend I officiated almost opened to an empty barrel. The couple shook it the week before their anniversary and it rattled. What was left tasted like furniture.

Two things had gone wrong, and both are easy to avoid. The barrel was far too small, so most of the spirit had gone to the air. And they had poured a finished bottle into fresh oak, which the wood promptly overpowered.

So this is the whiskey unity ceremony with the prep on the same page as the script, the way I run it now. The words for each pour are set in large type, so whoever is reading can do it at arm's length. In the margins are the cues I have learned over 300+ ceremonies.

Read it once out loud in your own voice. Cut anything that does not sound like you. The ritual is yours.

Robyn

ROBYN ASHLEY WEDDINGS · BROOKLYN ·
NYC



What you'll *actually need.*

Two spirits, chosen for the plan. If you are aging the blend, buy unaged, higher-proof white rye spirit, the raw material a barrel is built to mature. If you are blending to drink that same day, two finished whiskeys you genuinely love are exactly right.

A vessel sized to your milestone. A barrel near ten litres if you are aging to a first anniversary. A decanter or carafe if you are pouring to drink in the moment.

A small table, a tray, and a reader. Set the two bottles and the open barrel on a tray so nothing tips. Pick a trusted reader to deliver the words, so the two of you can look at each other and pour.

ROBYN'S NOTE

The size of the vessel is the one choice nobody warns you about. A charming one-litre keepsake can be near empty in a year. Buy for *the day you open it*, not the day you fill it.

Soak the barrel *first.*

DO NOT SKIP THIS

A new oak barrel is dry wood. Fill it with spirit on the day and the staves swell, gaps open, and you watch good whiskey weep out the seams during your own ceremony.

Fill a new barrel with hot water about six days before the wedding so the wood swells and seals. The staves take three to five days to fully close.

Check it the morning of. Weeping seams mean it needs another day of soaking, not a ceremony. When you fill it for real, leave airspace so the barrel can breathe as temperature moves the liquid. A barrel filled to the brim can crack.

ROBYN'S NOTE

Run a leak test with cheap water and let it hold overnight before you trust it with the good stuff. I have never regretted the dress rehearsal. I have regretted skipping it.

Hand the words *to a reader*.

Where it goes. The blend lives after the vows and ring exchange, before the pronouncement, where the emotional arc is already climbing. It runs about three to five minutes with the explanation.

Who delivers it. A best man, a maid of honor, a parent, or the officiant reads the words. The two of you should be looking at each other and pouring, not narrating your own ritual.

— *[Reader, step to the side of the table so guests can see both pours. Speak to the room, not down at the page.]*

ROBYN'S NOTE

The pour is the visible moment guests came for. Give them a clean sightline, then get out of the frame. The couple and the two bottles are the picture.

Water *of life.*

— *[Reader, address the guests. The couple steps to the table, a bottle each, not yet poured.]*

[PARTNER 1] and **[PARTNER 2]** have chosen a whiskey unity ceremony to mark their joining today.

The word *whiskey*, in its original Gaelic form, means water of life. For centuries, in Scotland and beyond, it has stood for celebration, and for two things becoming one.

— *[Slow down here. Let "water of life" sit a beat. It changes how the room hears everything after it.]*

Like a marriage, good whiskey is complex. It has depth, character, and edges. Blend two distinct spirits and they do not cancel each other out. They make something richer than either was alone.

The first *pour*.

[PARTNER 1], pour the first spirit.

— *[Partner 1 pours slowly into the barrel. Reader, wait for the pour to finish before the next line.]*

This first pour is everything [PARTNER 1] brings on their own. Their strengths, their character, the flavor that is theirs alone.

ROBYN'S NOTE

Pour gently and never shake the bottle to mix. A slow rock is fine. Shaking bruises the spirit, and a slow pour is the better shot anyway.

The *blending*.

[PARTNER 2], add yours now.

— *[Partner 2 pours into the same barrel, on top of the first. Let the two streams be seen as separate, then one.]*

This second pour is the blending. Two separate lives becoming one shared one. From this moment, these spirits cannot be unmixed, the same way two lives joined today do not come apart again.

ROBYN'S NOTE

This is the line that catches the room. The image of "cannot be unmixed" does the work. Read it plainly and let the metaphor carry itself.

The pour of *patience*.

— *[For a third pour, a parent or both partners add a final measure together. Or skip straight to the seal.]*

This last pour is patience. Whiskey does its best work in the dark, slowly, over time. So will this marriage.

[PARTNER 1] and **[PARTNER 2]** will seal this barrel today and open it on **[MILESTONE, e.g. their first anniversary]**, to taste what a year has made of it.

— *[Couple seals the barrel, or takes a sip together first. Do not rush the seal. The room wants to watch it close.]*

Raise *a glass.*

May your marriage be like this blend. Two distinct lives, joined into one, growing smoother and richer with every year.

Let us raise a glass to **[PARTNER 1]** and **[PARTNER 2]**.

— *[Lift your glass. Wait for the room to lift theirs. Let the toast happen before you move anyone on.]*

ROBYN'S NOTE

Pour a small tasting glass for the couple before the ceremony so the toast is ready to lift. Fumbling for a clean glass at the altar kills the beat you just built.

If whiskey *isn't yours*.

If one of you doesn't drink. Keep the ritual and swap the symbol. Blend two non-alcoholic spirits, two single-origin teas, or two coffees, anything with two distinct characters that become one. The meaning was never the alcohol.

If wine is more you. Pour two complementary wines into a carafe. The symbolism holds, years of work, careful blending, patience, all of it mirrors a marriage.

If you'd rather it keep growing. Use a decanter instead of a sealed barrel and add to it for years. A splash from the honeymoon, a pour from a hard year. The bottle becomes a record you can taste.

ROBYN'S NOTE

Whatever the liquid, the read is the same: two distinct things becoming one blend that is better than either alone. Pick the one that is genuinely yours and the room can tell.

If it goes *sideways*.

If the barrel weeps at the seams. Pour anyway and keep moving. Say, "She's a working barrel, she'll seal as she settles." Then have someone set a tray underneath quietly after the ritual.

If a bottle is corked tight or won't pour clean. Say, "Patience, this part rewards it," and give it a beat. A warm line covers a slow pour every time.

If the reader loses the line. Stop, find the place, and go on. The room reads a short pause as care, never as a stumble.

ROBYN'S NOTE

The difference between a first-timer and a pro is not that the pro never fumbles. It is that the pro has a warm line ready, says it, and keeps the ritual moving.

Three things *before you pour for real.*

This is one ritual, marked the way I would mark my own. Treat it as a working draft and it starts sounding like you.

i Buy for the day you open it, not the day you fill it.

Size the vessel to your milestone and match the spirit to the plan: unaged white rye if you are aging, two finished bottles you love if you are drinking it the same day.

ii Soak and leak-test the barrel six days out.

Hot-water soak so the staves swell and seal, then a cheap-water test overnight. Check it the morning of. Leave airspace when you fill it so it can breathe.

iii Read it aloud once, and fill every bracket a week out.

Whoever is reading runs it start to finish in their own voice. Fill each [BRACKET] in advance, print a clean copy on cardstock, and check faith or venue rules on alcohol before the day.

"We were writing the ceremony ourselves and kept getting stuck on how the whiskey pour fit with everything else. The kit had the whole arc already. We dropped our words in and it sounded like us."

DANA & MARCUS · MARRIED IN THE HUDSON VALLEY, 2025

IF THIS RITUAL IS DOING ITS JOB

The whole ceremony, *not just one pour.*

The whiskey blend is one ritual. A ceremony is the architecture around it: the processional, the welcome, the vows, the unity moment, the pronouncement, all timed so the pour falls at the right beat instead of feeling bolted on. The Couple's Ceremony Kit is the full word-for-word framework I use, with scripts for whiskey blending and every other unity ritual, written so you can drop your own words in.

\$79

Open the Couple's Ceremony Kit →

ONE-TIME PAYMENT · LIFETIME ACCESS · 48-HOUR MONEY-BACK

Where this *came from*.

PULLED FROM

The whiskey blends I have folded into NYC and Hudson Valley ceremonies, with the prep notes I now give every couple up front. The structure is field-tested over *more than 300 ceremonies*.

WHAT IS IN THE KIT

The full word-for-word ceremony framework, with scripts for whiskey blending and every other unity ritual, written so you can drop your own words in. All of it in *the Couple's Ceremony Kit*.

USE THIS FREELY

Print it, mark it up, hand a copy to whoever is reading at the altar, run it at the rehearsal.

IF YOU DO ONE

Email me. I read every one.
hello@robynashleyweddings.com.

Marked from a working ritual, with the prep notes and cues I use at the front of the aisle.

About this ritual, and where it has been poured.