

Rueda simply means "wheel". Casino refers to the kinds of turns and breaks you might normally see in ordinary partner Salsa Dancing. What makes Rueda unique is that the dancing is done in the "wheel", as a group, with the "followers" being passed in the wheel, rapid exchanging of partners, and many complicated moves -- sometimes done as wheels within wheels -- and all done in time with "hot" Salsa music. Each move, or "call", has a name, and is called by a leader of the Rueda, sometimes in very quick succession. Many of the moves also have hand signals as well as names, in order to be able to dance in a loud club setting. The Rueda can be as small as two couples, or as large as a space can hold -- as many as a hundred couples.

When dancing Rueda, there is a new group dynamic that happens. What is not obvious when watching Rueda, is the new level of awareness required to have a group dance flow smoothly, and look sharp AND keep it fun! Dancers learn to open their sphere of awareness, their peripheral vision, beyond the normal restricted "bubble" of solo or partner dancing. In this way, dancers coordinate and adjust their individual feel and timing and style so as to make the Rueda "click". When this happens, it is very exciting indeed! A unique group feeling develops, and you can feel the whole wheel ebb and flow, and "breathe" to this wonderful AfroCuban/LatinAmerican music. The result is an exciting Dance, exciting to do, exciting to watch!

The form of the Rueda -- passing partners in a wheel -- may reflect some influence of French Court Dances (brought to Cuba by Haitians), blended with the Afro-Cuban movements. With Cuban emigration to the US -- mainly into Miami -- the Cuban culture, music and dance blossomed, and, along with Mambo, ChaCha, and "Salsa", Rueda re-emerge and became popular in the Miami clubs in the 1970s and 1980s.

from Russ Hammer and Sidney Weaverling: www.SalsaRueda.com