

Tips for Toasting

- ✓ Try for Cary Grant's sophistication and Tom Hanks's warmth -- but not Steve Martin's cleverness. Too much wit and you'll seem a nitwit, says Paul Dickson, author of *Toasts* (Crown Publishers, 1991). Silence would have been preferable to a toast in the movie "Four Weddings and a Funeral," in which a friend congratulated the groom on lassoing his bride, since "all his other girlfriends had been such complete dogs. Let me say how delighted we are to have so many of them here this evening."
- ✓ Be brief. As Mark Twain said, no toast except his own should last longer than 60 seconds. The more you meander, the deeper in trouble you get.
- ✓ Think before you quip. The toast "Bottoms up!" at the launching of a boat race is sure to sink. And don't introduce the governor of the Virgin Islands as the "Virgin of Governor's Island," as a Washington dignitary once did. President Reagan once toasted the people of Bolivia while in Brazil, and President Ford nodded his glass to Israel while visiting Egypt.
- ✓ Don't put too much roast in your toast -- or you may burn the host and leave the rest of the audience singed. Also, take care not to upstage the host or hostess. It's his or her right to make the first move.
- ✓ Avoid three topics: sex, money, and bathroom behavior, suggests Letitia Baldrige, author of *Letitia Baldrige's New Complete Guide to Executive Manners* (Rawson Associates; 1993). At best stick to double entendre, as did her father in his favorite toast: "May you live as long as you want to and may you want to as long as you live."
- ✓ The less liquor in you, the better the toast.
- ✓ Don't propose a toast if everyone's glasses are empty, Baldrige says. This imposes on the host or hostess who must bring out more. Instead, make your toast soon after you notice that the glasses have been filled, or refilled.
- ✓ Stand up and raise your glass if speaking before a group larger than nine.
- ✓ If you're the one being toasted, don't take a drink. Instead, smile and offer thanks.
- ✓ The best toasts are tailor-made. The New Year's toast Baldrige most fondly remembers addressed each of 20 guests individually. "It was so wonderful. We all toasted each other and felt so good."
- ✓ Never arrive without a script if you're expected to give a toast. Otherwise, you may be as flustered as the groom who said at his wedding, "Ladies and gentlemen, I, I don't know what to say. This thing was forced upon me."
- ✓ Make sure the object of your toast is present. Blinded by a spotlight, Baldrige once gave what she considered to be a clever yet romantic toast to Jacqueline and Aristotle Onassis at their fifth wedding anniversary bash. "When I then asked for everyone to join me, people called out from the dark, 'Tish, they're both out of the room!'"
- ✓ If you must give a New Year's toast, relax. Expectancy and optimism electrify the air. You can't go wrong on this amateur night for toasting. So go forth, and toast before you tipple.

Historic Toasts

Throughout history, whenever wine flowed, words were sure to follow. Though Ulysses drank to Achilles in Homer's *Odyssey* nearly 3,000 years ago, the first known toast in English was recorded in 450 A.D. Said the beautiful Rowena of the Saxons to Vortigern of the Britons: "Louerd King, Waes Hael!" (Lord King, be of good health!).

The term "toast" itself comes from the 17th-century custom of placing a crouton in the drinking vessel to absorb impurities.

Thankfully, some traditions are extinct, such as Scandinavians drinking from the skulls of their fallen enemies -- thus the toast "Skoal!" Also quaint today is "Here's mud in your eye," which originally expressed the wish that farmers would find soft earth easily turned by a plow.

But some toasts never lose their flavor, such as Humphrey Bogart's to Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca*: "Here's looking at you, kid."

Brief, heartfelt, and to the point, Colonel Sherman Potter of *M*A*S*H* made a toast that was everything a toast should be: "To long lives and short wars!" And who could forget Tiny Tim's magnanimous toast in Charles Dickens' classic, *A Christmas Carol*: "God bless us everyone".

Toasts over the Years

"Here is to the fools of the world...
without them, the rest of us could not succeed."

"Here's to prosperity...
and the wisdom to use it well."

"May the most you wish for be the least you
get!"

"While we live, Let us live."

"Here's to your health!
You make age curious,
Time furious,
And the rest of us envious!"

"May you live as long as you like,
And have all you like as long as you live."

"Here's to our wives and lovers,
May they never meet!"

"Here's to the model husband,
Usually somebody else's."

"To the ladies, God bless 'em,
May nothing distress them."

"Here's health to the men,

And may the ladies live forever."

"Here's to the ladies,
They need no praise...
They speak for themselves!"

"Here's to every man here,
May he be what he thinks himself to be."

"Old wood to burn,
Old books to read,
Old wine to drink,
Old friends to trust."

"Here's to you as good as you are
Here's to me as bad as I am
But as good as you are
And as bad as I am
I'm just as good as you are
As bad as I am!"

"My heart is as full as my glass,
When I drink to you, old friend!"

"Friendship is the wine of life,
Let's drink of it, and to it."

"Here's to a friend.
He knows you well...
And likes you just the same!"

"Here's to you and here's to me,
Friends may we always be!
But, if by chance we disagree,
Up yours! Here's to me!"

"May we have more and more friends,
And need them less and less."

"Here's to love,
The only fire against which there is no
insurance."

"May we kiss whom we please,
And please whom we kiss."

"I have known many,
Liked a few,
Loved one,
Here's to you!"

"Here's to matrimony...
The high sea for which no compass has yet been
invented."

"May we have those in our arms
That we love in our hearts."

"Here's to those that love us,
And here's to those that don't,
A smile for those who are willing to,
And a tear for those who won't."

"Here's head first, in a foaming glass!
Here's head first, to a lovely lass!
Here's head first, for a bit of kissing,
For the good don't know the fun that they're
missing!"

"Here are toasts to you. And you. And you."

"I've drunk to your health in company,
I've drunk to your health alone.
I've drunk to your health so many times,
I've damn near ruined my own!"

"Here's to us;
May we never drink worse."

"One bottle for four of us,
Thank God there's no more of us!"

"Here's to beefsteak when you're hungry,
Whiskey when you're dry,
All the girls you ever want,
And heaven when you die."

"Here's to good food,
Good fortune,
And good whiskey!" "

"May there be a generation of children
Of the children of your children."

"May you be in heaven...
A half hour before the devil knows you're
dead."

"May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
May the rains fall soft upon your fields,
And may God hold you in the palm of his hand,
Until we meet again."

"May the face of every good news
And the back of every bad news be toward us."

"May the roof above us never fall in,
And may we friends gathered below never fall
out."

"May you have warm words on a cold evening,
A full moon on a dark night,
And the road downhill all the way to your
door."