



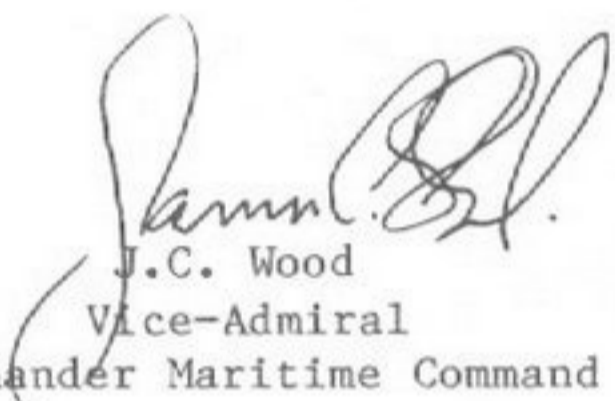
**MARITIME COMMAND**

**CHIEF PETTY OFFICERS  
&  
PETTY OFFICERS MESS**

**MESS DINNERS  
NAVAL CUSTOMS**

FOREWORD

This pamphlet on Naval Customs for Mess Dinners in Chief Petty Officers' and Petty Officers' Messes in Maritime Command is published for the guidance of all Mess members.

  
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## CHIEF PETTY OFFICERS AND PETTY OFFICERS

### MESS DINNER NAVAL CUSTOMS

1. In this pamphlet, the term "President/Gentlemen" is used when gentlemen only are present. When ladies only are present, the term "Madam President/Ladies" shall be used. When both ladies and gentlemen are present, the term "Madam President/Mr. President" or "Ladies and Gentlemen" shall be used.
2. While the general procedure for a mess dinner in messes of the Canadian Forces is given in Chapter 5 of CFP 262, Naval Tradition remain one of the prime ingredients in the esprit-de-corps of the Navy. The Royal Navy, in the course of centuries, acquired numerous customs and usages, many of which were adopted by the Royal Canadian Navy. Hence, it is appropriate that mess dinners held in Naval Messes be conducted in accordance with Naval Customs.
3. The purpose of this pamphlet is to define the sequence of events, the customs and the traditions observed when dining in a Naval Mess, whether ashore or aboard one of HMC Ships.



ANNOUNCEMENT

1. A mess dinner can be announced in a memorandum, in routine orders, posted on the mess notice board or by a formal letter of invitation. All mess members should normally attend.

WEARING APPAREL

2. a. Naval personnel normally wear M-1, FM1 or S-5, FS-3.
- b. The dress for mess dinners will be posted on the mess notice board, indicated in the invitation letter, or promulgated in routine orders.
- c. With the President's permission, diners may wear the proper civilian attire, if they have an engagement immediately after dinner.
- d. When dining in a Naval Mess, members of other services wear their equivalent to mess dress ordered.
- e. Male civilians should wear a dinner jacket. Female civilians should wear an evening gown.

PRESIDENT

3. a. The mess President is normally the President of a mess dinner, although the Vice-President or any other senior member of the mess may be called upon to act as President of a dinner.
- b. Throughout the dinner the President is in absolute charge of the table, regardless of rank, branch or seniority.

- c. The President may levy fines (in drink) or take any other action he deems necessary to maintain discipline.

#### GUESTS

4. Frequently, guests are invited to mess dinners. Guests attending the dinner are the guests of the mess and it is the responsibility of all mess members to ensure that all guests are entertained and not left to fend for themselves.

#### SEATING PLAN

5.
  - a. The seating plan is prepared by the mess manager who in turn is in consultation with the mess President or a designated member of the mess committee.
  - b. The President sits at the head of the table. At a large table this is in the centre. At a small table it is the end nearest the entrance to the dining room.
  - c. When dining at a large table, the Vice-President sits farthest away from the President on the right side. At a small table he/she sits opposite the President.
  - d. Guests sit on the right of their hosts. If the host has two guests, they sit on either side of him/her.
  - e. A host with three or more guests should have his/her guests seated on either side of him/her. Avoid placing guests immediately next to each other.

- f. There should never be a vacant seat between two diners. If too many places have been laid, the senior steward will remove excess silverware, diners should close in towards the President and Vice-President, keeping the numbers on each side of them and of the table as even as possible.

#### ENTRY

6.
  - a. Dinner is normally served at 2000. Invitations will usually read '1930 for 2000'. This indicates a 30 minute period allowing for sociable gathering and late arrivals.
  - b. Five minutes prior to dinner the senior steward will enter the ante-room and report to the President: "Dinner is served Mr/Madam President". The President and his/her guest will then lead the way into the dining room, other diners following him/her. As they march in, the band will normally strike up "The Roast Beef of Olde England", the tune to which Admiral Nelson and his officers are said to have gone to dinner in the Flagship. Upon entering the dining room, diners remain standing until mess guests and the President are seated. No one may precede the President.

#### COMMENCEMENT

7.
  - a. When everyone is seated, the senior steward reports to the President, "Diners seated Mr/Madam President" and states whether or not a chaplain is present.

- b. The President raps the gavel for silence.
- c. If a chaplain is in attendance, he/she says grace.
- d. If there is no chaplain present, the President normally designates the Vice-President or another member to say grace.

ORDER OF SERVING

- 8.
  - a. The President normally samples all wines served so that he/she may judge whether the wine is fit for consumption.
  - b. Mess guests are served before the President, and other guests before their respective hosts.
  - c. No dish is ever removed until the last diner has finished eating the course then served.
  - d. Finger bowls may be provided when fresh fruit or other sweets are served.
  - e. When the last course has been eaten, the stewards clear the table of everything except the table decorations, and remove the napkins.

THE MENU

9. The menu should be balanced and interesting. Appropriate wines are served with various courses. A typical sequence of courses might be:

Appetizer	- Crab Cocktail	Water
Soup	- Consommé Royale	Sherry
Fish	- Fillet of Sole	White Wine

Joint	- Veal Cordon Blue	Red Wine
	Potatoes, Vegetables	
Sweet	- Lemon Parfait	
Savoury	- Welsh Rarebit	
Salvadores	- Cheese, mints, nuts, fruit	

TABLE COVER

10. a. The table service encountered at a formal Naval Mess Dinner is both impressive and attractive and may initially appear rather formidable. The latter need not be so. The basic rule for silverware is . . . "Start from the outside and work in".
- b. The stewards will ensure that the appropriate wine is dispensed into the correct wine glasses.
- c. By Naval tradition the table is arranged on its natural wood finish, but a silence cloth and a table cloth may be used.
- d. the accompanying illustration shows the correct arrangement for a Naval Mess Dinner.





PASSING THE WINE

11. a. When the table is cleared, the senior steward reports to the President, "Table cleared, Mr/Madam President".
- b. The President raps the gavel for silence and thanks is given, the customary prayer being, "For what we have received, thank God".
- c. The port is then placed on the table. At a large table the President and Vice-Presidents have decanters placed in front of them. At a small table all the decanters are placed before the President.
- d. When all the decanters are placed on the table, the senior stewards report to the President, "The port is ready to pass, Mr/Madam President".
- e. The President then unstoppers all decanters in front of him/her and Vice-Presidents then follow suit.
- f. (1) The President slips the decanters, one at a time, to his/her left, the other Vice-Presidents doing likewise.  
(2) The President and Vice-Presidents do not pour their own before passing the decanters.
- g. The decanters should never be allowed to "pile up" beside a diner. If there is a gap at the end of the table, the steward will move the decanters across it.
- h. When the port has been passed and all decanters have reached their destination, the senior

steward reports to the President, "The port has been passed, Mr/Madam President".

- j. The President then stoppers the decanters in front of him/her and the Vice-Presidents follow suit.
- k. No one may touch his/her port until the health of the Sovereign has been honoured.
- m. It is not necessary to take wine if you do not want it.
- n. In civilian circles if you do not take wine your glass will be filled with water, but in the Navy we never drink a toast in water, as supersitition says that the subject of our solicitude will die by drowning.

#### THE LOYAL TOAST

- 12.
  - a. The President raps the gavel for silence and says, "Mr/Madam Vice, The Queen Mr/Madam Vice, La Reine".
  - b. When a band is in attendance, it plays "God Save The Queen", after which the Vice-President responds, "(Ladies and) Gentlemen, The Queen (Mesdames et) Messieurs, La Reine du Canada". Either the direction or the Toast is given in French, the sequence to be determined by the President in advance.
  - c. All diners raise their glasses and repeat "The Queen", and those with wine drink the toast. Those without wine do not drink.

- d. The health of Her Majesty the Queen shall be honoured while seated in Naval messes whether on shore or afloat, even when: the National Anthem is played, on all occasions except that:
- (1) when Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, or any other member of the Royal Family is present, these toasts will be honoured standing unless Her Majesty, His Royal Highness, or other members of the Royal Family has expressed a wish that Naval members should remain seated; (The pleasure of the Royal Personage concerned on the procedure to be adopted should be sought before the meal);
  - (2) when foreign official guests are present and toasts to heads of state other than Commonwealth countries are included, these toasts and that to Her Majesty shall be drunk standing whether National Anthems are played or not;
  - (3) the first toast shall always be proposed in English but if applicable, shall be repeated in French or the language of the visitors; and,
  - (4) National Anthems should be played as an accompaniment to a toast whenever a band is present. When a National Anthem of another nation is played in accompaniment to a toast, an abbreviated version shall not be used unless it has been ascertained that this is in accordance with the custom of the country concerned.



TOAST OF THE DAY

13. a. There is no official record of the original toast of the day, however, these have been given (by an old Naval Officer) as being in vogue in Nelson's day:

Monday - Our ships at sea

Tuesday - Our men

Wednesday - Ourselves

Thursday - A bloody war on a sickly season

Friday - A willing foe and sea room

Saturday - Wives and sweethearts

Sunday - Absent friends

SMOKING

14. a. After the toasts have been drunk the rules are relaxed. Cigars, cigarettes, coffee, and liqueurs are normally passed.
- b. One must not, however, light up before the President has done so, or has given permission to smoke.
- c. Pipes may not be smoked without the President's permission.
- d. At this time the President may announce a 10 minute interlude. This practice will ensure guests and diners continue to enjoy the dinner and the designated guest speakers' speeches.

### BANDMASTER

15. If the band is in attendance at dinner, it is a custom of the Service for the President to invite the Bandmaster to join him in a glass of port after the toasts have been drunk. A chair is placed beside the President for the Bandmaster when the invitation is issued.

### REMOVAL OF WINE

- 16.
- a. The President may order the wine removed after the toasts are drunk, but it is the custom to sit over it and to pass the decanters at least once more.
  - b. After the decanters are passed the second time, the stoppers are left off until the wine is finally removed upon the President's order.
  - c. Incidentally, the President or other members guarding wine, who desire to refill their glass, are not at liberty to pick up the decanter in front of them and do so; they must wait until the wine is again passed.

### RULES OF ORDER

17. As soon as the President raps the gavel for grace, the following rules are rigidly in force:

- a. Without the President's permission no one may:
  - (1) enter and seat themselves at the table;
  - (2) leave the table;

- (3) return to the table;
  - (4) read (except the menu and musical programme);
  - (5) write; and,
  - (6) have a second helping of any course.
- b. If a diner wishes to address the President:
- (1) he/she shall stand and face the Vice-President;
  - (2) the Vice-President raps his/her gavel for silence and recognizes the member;
  - (3) the member addresses the Vice-President;
  - (4) in turn the Vice-President stands and faces the President;
  - (5) the President raps his/her gavel for silence and acknowledges the Vice-President and/or member; and,
  - (6) the President administers his/her final ruling.
- c. No diner may do the following:
- (1) commence a course before the President;
  - (2) smoke;
  - (3) utter an oath or use foul language;

- (4) place a bet or wager;
  - (5) discuss political or other controversial subjects;
  - (6) talk "shop";
  - (7) tell "smutty" stories; or,
  - (8) propose a toast.
- d. If a diner has been granted permission to sit down late, or to return to the table, he/she continues with the course then being eaten or served, unless the President gives him/her permission to eat the course which he/she missed.
- e. Whenever the President or Vice-President summons attention, there must be silence until he/she has finished speaking.

#### AUTHORIZED MARCHES

18. In accordance with CFAO 32-3 Annex A, authorized marches may be played in the proper order of precedence.

#### DISCIPLINE

19. a. During dinner the President may discipline any diner for misbehaviour. He/she has three alternatives:
- (1) warn him/her;
  - (2) fine him/her an appropriate number of drinks; or,
  - (3) order the culprit to leave the mess.



FINES

- 20.
- a. Fines may vary from a single drink to drinks for all present.
  - b. The President may award the drinks to any diner or diners he/she chooses to name, including the President.
  - c. Vice-Presidents may warn or fine the President.
  - d. Fines imposed upon a guest must be paid for by his/her host.
  - e. Fines are nearly always paid in port or other wine in which toasts are drunk.
  - f. They are never paid until after the toasts have been drunk.
  - g. No diner who has not drunk the toasts in wine may accept payment of a fine.
  - h. Toasts may never be drunk in wine that is served in payment of a fine.
  - j. Fines are sometimes paid in liqueurs, in which case these rules do not apply; but this is seldom done, and such a fine is generally imposed only for a flagrant breach of good manners committed after the toasts have been drunk.

AFTER DINNER ENTERTAINMENT

21. Following the dinner, the members should retire to the ante-room. Most dinners are followed by a program of entertainment or games. This is the most relaxed part of the evening, affording an opportunity for all members to become better acquainted. Members shall not leave the mess, without permission, until the President and mess guests have departed.



