

Proposing a Toast by Richie Dayo Johnson



The ability to offer a toast is indeed an art, and one that is becoming rarer with infrequent usage. Too often, we only think of offering a toast at weddings. Otherwise, toasts are relegated to state functions or looked upon as a strange and disconcerting custom of foreigners. Mastering the ability to offer a toast can indeed turn even the simplest of occasions into a memorable event. Understanding the importance of toasting and including toasts in a programme is essential for event planners.

Toasts are offered mostly after a meal or an interruption of an event for a purpose. Some are preceded by a short speech or preamble.

The procedure is simple – the principal host rises and gives the toast. Everybody else stands, glasses are raised and the toast is said and drunk. All sit.

However some toasts are drunk sitting down. This is peculiar to the navy for obvious reasons of low-ceiling decks or as commanded by the toastmaster.

The History of Toasting: Toasting, despite a somewhat ignoble origin, has a long history through many cultures. In ‘Olde England’, a piece of toast bread was put into the bottom of the glass, and you drank until you got to it.

A number of theories exist about clinking glasses with a toast. One theory is that a good glass of wine or champagne appeals to the senses of sight, touch, taste and smell and, by clinking, it also appeals to the sense of sound, making it an all-encompassing sensual experience. My favourite theory is that clinking could also be a way to make contact since we no longer all drink from the same bowl.

A Guide for Gracious Toasting: Be prepared, even if you were never a scout. A good toast is a speech in miniature. As anyone who writes can tell you, it takes a great deal more effort to be succinct than long-winded, so prepare your words well in advance. Practice, practice, and practice even if you want to sound spontaneous.

Exercise eloquence and wit. A good toast is hard to find, probably because people seldom give thought to what will be said. And, when they do, too often they turn it into a roast. A good toast should be a gift, not an insult, so make it appropriate, flattering and if possible, memorable.

Remember to KISS ... keep it short and simple. Brevity is the soul of wit and the heart of hospitality. As George Jessel said, "If you haven't struck oil in three minutes, stop drilling." Better still, think three sentences. The simplest words are perceived as the most sincere. Be yourself. A toast is not an audition for a performance. The best words and witticisms are your own, so forget about being reminded of something you once heard or read. Originality is the essence of wit.

End on a positive note. A toast should always be upbeat. Lead your audience to a conclusion with a generally accepted gesture like "Raise your glass" or clinking.

Nuances: Never drink when a toast is offered to you. It's like applauding yourself. Nor should you stand. As a youngster, the late Princess Margaret apparently asked her father what he sang while everyone else sang "God Save the King". He is said to have replied that one should look gratified and dignified, but under no circumstances did one ever join in. That's excellent advice to the recipient of a toast.

Always stand up and respond to the toast, even if it is only to thank the host for the generous gesture. Never, ever, should anyone toast the guest of honour before the host. In fact, no toasts should be made until after the host has had the opportunity. If half way through the dessert it becomes apparent that the host has no intention of offering any toasts, a guest may quietly request the host's indulgence to offer a toast.

Unless it is a small, informal group of eight or less, stand when offering a toast. Be sure to make eye contact with the guest. Never rap on a glass to get attention. Too often the results are shattering. By standing, you should have

been able to command enough attention to quiet everyone down. Otherwise, ask for attention while honouring the guest. Never refuse to participate in a toast. While it is ideal to have saved some wine or champagne for the toast, it is perfectly acceptable to toast with a non-alcoholic beverage.

What follows are a few of my favourite traditional toasts, suitable for your final words.

- “May your love for each other be greater than the differences between the two of you.”
- “May your luck be like the capital of Ireland, always ‘Dublin’.”
- “As you slide through the banister of life, may the splinters never face you the wrong way.”
- “When the end comes for you, let it find you climbing new mountains and not sliding downhill.”
- “May you both live as long as you want and never want as long as you live.”
- “Here’s to the bride, another man’s daughter, in whose arms you’ll spend the rest of your life.”

Cheers,

RDJ

Follow RDJ on  @AskRDJ

Richie Dayo Johnson is a thought-leader and experiential specialist and consultant on communication and human behaviour.

He works with aspiring leaders, high net worth individuals and multinational organisations in Europe and Africa.

Image Source: Google