



Some Notes on Wedding Toasts

The traditional toasts at the reception following the wedding are an essential part of every wedding celebration. You will find many different versions of the “traditional” order for toasts in any Internet search for wedding toasts. What follows here is what occurred at a wedding I attended some years ago. It made such an impression on me that, since then, I have recommended this to many couples.

Part of what made this flow so smoothly and elegantly was that the person acting as the Master of Ceremonies really had his “act together.” Everyone else also knew what to do and had his or her parts well rehearsed. So before giving my recommendations based on this long ago ceremony, I would recommend that prospective brides and grooms give much thought to the person they will ask to perform the duties of Master of Ceremony. This person needs to be someone comfortable with public speaking and capable of informing the other principles the order of events. In some other countries, couples hire a professional emcee and claim it was well worth the expense.

So now... here goes.

In the ceremony that so impressed me, toasting was postponed until after dinner was served which, when you think about it, makes perfect sense.

The emcee took charge of the event right from the get-go. When the wedding party arrived at the reception they waited until he introduced them and then went on a round-about path to the head table greeting guests as they went.

The emcee introduced the pastor who gave the blessing before the meal.

After the meal, the emcee began the formal toasting by making some opening comments and a few special announcements. He then introduced the father of the bride.

The bride’s father gave a moving speech regarding his daughter and new son-in-law. He then proposed a toast to the couple.

The groom then stood and thanked his new father-in-law for his kind words. To this day I don’t know if what happened next was planned or spontaneous, but when the groom said “My wife and I...” everyone broke into applause. So now I encourage every

groom to use those words in his response to the toast and have the emcee plant a couple of applauders in the audience to get the ball rolling.

The groom then gave a very nice talk thanking everyone involved with organizing and running the wedding. Then, in a gesture you don't see every day, he presented floral bouquets to his mother and mother-in-law. What a gracious and beautiful thing to do! Finally, he gave a toast to his new bride's attendants and then asked her to speak.

The bride gave her heartfelt thanks to her attendants and to her mother and mother-in-law.

The best man thanked the bridesmaids and groomsmen for their efforts and then gave a wonderful speech about the bride and groom and offered the final toast to the new couple.

Finally, the emcee read a message of good wishes from a member of the family that was not in attendance and announced the first dance.

I don't claim to be an expert or a Miss Manners wannabe but I always have believed that everyone involved with this showed a lot of class! Regardless of what order you choose for the toasts, try to make sure everyone knows in advance what is expected of them and encourage them to prepare. Your choice for the Master of Ceremonies will play a large part in how smooth this part of the reception flows.

Here are some tips for proposing a toast:

Statistics show that next to dying, public speaking is most Americans' greatest fear. Overcoming that fear requires a lot of advance preparation. So get over there, in front of that mirror, and practice...practice...practice!

Toasts should NEVER be longer than four minutes. Two minutes is best.

Always stand when offering a toast. Hold your glass out at arm's length parallel to the floor. End a toast with an invitation to the guests to join you. Make sure you say something that indicates to them what to say in response.

Toasts are offered once all the guests have been served drinks after the meal. If no meal is served then drinks are served with the wedding cake. The toasting beverage (whether it is alcoholic or not isn't important) is poured in this order:

1. The bride.
2. The groom.
3. The maid or matron of honor.
4. All the other guests at the head table
5. The best man is the last to receive his beverage.

What to do when you are the recipient of a toast:

1. Do not raise your glass, stand, or sip your drink with the toast. Thank the toasters.
2. Sip your drink after the toaster sets down.
3. Although you are not required to, you may propose another toast.