

Rules of Order

The rap of the gavel for grace signals the official start of dinner. Between then and the toast of the day, the following rules of order are in force:

No one may come in and sit down at the table, leave the table, read (except the menu and musical program), or send or receive messages.

Whenever the PMC or VPMC taps the table, there must be silence until they have finished speaking.

Requests are made via the VPMC. When a diner is coming to the table late, or is returning after leaving, the PMC's permission must be given.

There are no ranks or titles in the mess. All members present address each other as: Mister, Miss, or Missus. Only the PMC and VPMC will be addressed by title.

No member shall engage in conversation with the Head Table or the opposite table. Members shall only converse with those across, beside, and diagonal from themselves.

No diner may begin a course before the PMC, use foul language, discuss political or other controversial subjects, talk about work, speak in a foreign language (except when foreign guests are present) or tell rude or insulting jokes.

Members shall not clap. Instead diners shall rap the table lightly to express their opinion and solicitations.

Members shall not propose a toast (this includes "cheers" or similar remarks or raising a glass in greeting).

Mess Dinner Program

Before Dinner Gathering

Mess Call

Arrival of the Head Table

Dinner Course

Passing the Port

Toasts

Marches

~ Break ~

Coffee / Dessert

Speeches

Departure of the Head Table



Sea Cadet Mess Dinner

The mess dinner is a ceremonial occasion when military personnel dine together formally and is one of the most important traditions of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). In addition to educating cadets about an important CAF tradition, the mess dinner is also relevant because the basic rules of conduct observed are those of polite society.

Before Dinner Gathering

Cadets and guests are invited to arrive a half hour before the set time for dinner. During this period, members consult the seating plan and meet the guest of honour. During the gathering, all members pay their respects to the guest of honour providing this can be done without undue interruption to conversation with senior guests.

Introductions

All guests should be introduced to as many of the other members present as feasible. When introducing oneself it is customary to say, "Mr. Bloggins, I would like to introduce myself. I am ____". If you don't know to whom you are speaking, it is customary to say, "Please let me introduce myself. My name is ____".

Mess Calls

A bugler sounds a call at 15 minutes prior to dinner. This alerts guests to prepare to move to the dining room and to use the washroom before the start of the mess dinner. In the absence of a bugler, the mess call may be verbal.

Seating Plans

A Mess Dinner seating plan is formally arranged and the plan is drawn up and displayed. Individual places are marked with a name card. Members must sit in their assigned seat; shifting of places is not permitted.

Marching In

Five minutes prior to the meal time the senior steward enters the anteroom and reports to the PMC, "Dinner is served, Sir/Ma'am". Members move to their assigned seat and stand behind their chair. When all members are in place, the PMC and guest of honour make their way into the dining room. If a band is present, they may play "*The Roast Beef of Olde England*". No one may take their seats before the PMC.

Grace

When all diners are seated the PMC raps the table for silence with a gavel. The PMC requests a member of the mess to say grace. If a Chaplain is present, they would give the grace.

Passing the Port

In a naval mess, the decanters should be slid to the left and never leave the table. Passing the port along the table was implemented for practical reasons, as lifting a heavy decanter off a table in a moving ship might mean the table coming up quickly under the decanter and potentially spilling the port.

Loyal Toast

The PMC calls upon the VPMC to toast the Queen of Canada. For example, they may say, "Mr. Vice, The Queen of Canada", or "Monsieur le vice-president, La Reine du Canada". The VPMC announces, in the other official language, "Ladies and gentlemen, The Queen of Canada" or, "Mesdames et messieurs, La Reine du Canada". Diners announce individually "The Queen / La Reine" and take the Loyal Toast. In the navy, the Loyal Toast is given seated.

Naval members **never** clink glasses during any toast or greeting. This custom comes from the old belief that "a glass that rings tolls the death of a sailor". Instead, a sailor forwards the back of their hand with the glass in it.

Toast of the Day

Following the loyal toast the President will call upon a member to give the toast of the day.

Monday -	Our Ships	Friday -	Our Nation
Tuesday -	Our Sailors	Saturday -	Our Families
Wednesday -	Ourselves	Sunday -	Absent Friends
Thursday -	Our Navy		

Marches

Following the toasts, "*Heart of Oak*" is played. If any other elements are present, the appropriate march is played. A member only stands at attention for their own march.

Speeches

After the toasts and marches have been completed, the PMC may open the floor to speeches by special guests.

Departing the Dining Room

Upon completion of all mess functions, the PMC shall conclude the mess dinner with a rap of the gavel. All members will stand for the departure of the head table.

Dinner Etiquette

Keep elbows close to the sides at all times and never place them on the table.

Silverware or glasses must not be played with.

Silverware is laid out in the order in which it is to be used; the knives to the right of the plate and the forks to the left.

Bread must be broken with the fingers.

Never speak with food in the mouth or make gestures while utensils are in hands.

Never ask for anything that is not offered on the table such as butter, vinegar, or ketchup.

Tea or coffee should be sipped and the cup is replaced to the saucer between sips.

President of the Mess Committee (PMC)

The PMC is in absolute charge, regardless of rank or seniority. The PMC greets the guest of honour; escorts the guest of honour into the dining room, asks for grace to be said, levies fines against misbehaving members, begins passing the port, gives the loyal toast, dismisses for breaks, introduces the guest of honour; and escorts the guest of honour out of the dining room.

Vice-President of the Mess Committee (VPMC)

The Vice-President assists the President in maintaining order during the Mess Dinner. They direct members to the dining room, pass on messages to the President from members, call the President's attention to any misbehaviour from other tables, begin passing the port, and assist in the Loyal Toast.