

DON'T BURN YOUR TOAST!

Tips on Toasting From Toastmasters

Timing may be everything, but wording isn't far behind. Consider one of the most famous toasts of all: Humphrey Bogart's words to Ingrid Bergman -- "Here's looking at you, kid" -- in the legendary 1941 film Casablanca. Now trade "kid" for another endearment. No big deal? Maybe. But Bogie probably would have achieved another kind of immortality if he'd raised his glass to Bergman and said, "Here's looking at you ... babycakes!"

A toast should be "brief, personal and customized to the occasion," says Ted Corcoran, International President of Toastmasters International. "Most of all, it should be heartfelt."

When all else fails, you can't go wrong with this traditional Irish blessing, says Corcoran, May there always be work for your hands to do; may your purse always hold a coin or two; may the sun always shine on your windowpane; may a rainbow be certain to follow each rain; may the hand of a friend always be near you; may God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.

Speaking from the heart is the key to an appropriate toast. To make sure you put your best foot forward -- and not in your mouth -- here are some tips:

- Pick a topic that is personal but appropriate.
- Keep it short -- no more than a couple of minutes. "Essentially, the best advice in public speaking is to always be brief," says Corcoran.
- Practice. Think about what you want to say, and practice the toast in advance. Use friends as sounding boards beforehand.
- Stay sober. Being coherent helps, so save the alcohol for after the toast.
- Dress your best. If you look good, you'll feel more confident.
- Use humor if appropriate to the occasion.
- In summary -- be sincere, be brief, be seated.

Since its founding in 1924, Toastmasters International has helped more than four million men and women develop their public speaking skills and become confident communicators at work, at home, and yes, even at parties. Headquartered in Southern California, the organization now has approximately 200,000 members and 9,300 clubs in 80 countries.

For more information about Toastmasters International, please visit our Web site, www.toastmasters.org.

SOURCE: Toastmasters International

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