

# Mess Dinner

## Procedures (excerpt/edited)

### C F A C M 1 - 9 0 0

#### **MESS DINNERS**

1. FUNCTION STATUS - The Mess Dinner is a parade. Therefore, it is an official Canadian Forces' function at which dress, time of assembly, attendance, and other details shall be specified and have the legal standing of orders. Cadets are expected to attend. Sponsoring Committee Members shall be required to pay for the dinner. Guests are generally not expected to pay.
2. OFFICIAL HOST - The Official Host of the Mess Dinner shall normally be the Senior Officer/NCM of the organization sponsoring the dinner (eg, Base or Wing or Sqn Commander, Base/Wing CWO), or his/her representative.
3. GUEST OF HONOUR - The Guest of Honour, if there is one, shall be escorted to the mess by the Official Host, or met at the entrance of the mess if circumstances make this more appropriate.
4. PMC GREETING - The PMC shall meet the Official Host and the senior guest, if applicable, in the foyer of the dining room and shall present them to the Sponsoring Committee.
5. ASSEMBLY - The assembled personnel shall face the official host and the senior guest and remain attentive until the host has acknowledged their assembly by stating "Good evening, (ladies and) gentlemen", or by other appropriate remarks such as introducing the senior guest.
6. The assembled personnel may then proceed to cocktails, ensuring that all guests have been served first. Individual members may be assigned to act as escorts to other guests as a matter of courtesy.
7. All guests should be introduced by their escorts to as many of the other members present as feasible. All attendees, to the extent that numbers and time permit, should come forward and pay their respects to the Official Host and the senior guest.
8. Smoking is not permitted within the confines of the mess.
9. MESS CALL - A trumpeter or Piper, when available, shall make the appropriate calls to announce dinner. Following the second call, the PMC shall escort the Official Host to the head table (arranged as shown at Annex B) or, if a Guest of Honour is present, the PMC shall escort him/her to the head table, followed by the Official Host, who shall escort the next senior guest. Other guests and their escorts should then follow, and the remainder shall parade into the dining room. The Vice-PMC shall ensure that all personnel move quickly into the dining room and shall take his/her position as soon as all personnel have entered the dining room. Once assembled personnel have taken their position behind their respective seats, the Chief Steward shall discretely advise the Vice-PMC that everyone is present. At that point the PMC shall rap his/her gavel and ask the padre, or a previously designated member (quite often the most junior member present), to say grace (High Flight). At the completion of grace, all shall be seated.
10. CHIEF STEWARD - The Mess Manager or designated Chief Steward shall oversee the serving of dinner and wines and ensure that service in the dining-room is as quiet and unobtrusive as possible.

11. DINNER ETIQUETTE - The dinner proper is a time to appreciate the fellowship and conversation of fellow personnel and guests, to savor good food and wine, and to enjoy relaxed formality in an elegant setting.

12. It is important that the unique atmosphere of the Mess Dinner not be disturbed or degraded in any way by immature or offensive behavior. If background music is to be played, it must be discrete so that it will not interrupt or override conversations. The PMC is to ensure that a high standard of decorum is maintained, if necessary by expelling any member whose behavior is unacceptable. No one may leave the dining room without first obtaining permission from the PMC.

13. Beverages of any types will not be brought into the dining room by attendees – at any time during the dinner, break, or speeches.

14. BREAK - On occasions where lengthy after-dinner formalities such as speeches and presentations are scheduled, the PMC may decide that a short break is needed. Depending on several factors including but not limited to, number of servers, expected length of speeches, number of dinner attendees, etc., the PMC may choose to have the break before or after the passing of the port. Service may be delayed until all diners have returned to their chairs. Diners having to leave the dining room shall do so quietly and in an orderly manner. At the expiration of the break, the PMC shall rap his/her gavel for attention. Note for the break, the PMC shall announce the head table members will leave the dining room first.

15. PASSING THE PORT - After the last course has been served and the tables have been cleared or after the break, port decanters shall be placed on the tables. The Mess Manager or person acting as Chief Steward shall indicate to the PMC that the port is ready to be passed. At that point the stoppers shall be removed, and the PMC will indicate that the port may be passed by pouring a small amount of port into his/her glass, tasting it, and passing the decanter to the left. Port decanters shall be passed to the left, and the decanter shall not be placed on the table until it requires replenishment or has reached the end of the table. Once port has been poured into the glass, it shall not be touched until it is time for the Loyal Toast.

16. LOYAL TOAST - When the Mess Manager, or person acting as Chief Steward, has indicated to the PMC that all have been served port, the PMC shall rap his/her gavel for attention, all conversation shall cease, the PMC shall rise, and shall announce to the Vice-PMC, either, "Mr. Vice, The Queen of Canada", or "Monsieur le vice président, La Reine du Canada". The Vice-PMC will then rise and announce in the other official language, "(ladies and) gentlemen, The Queen of Canada" or, "(Mesdames et) messieurs, La Reine du Canada", as appropriate. At that point all personnel and guests shall rise and shall remain standing at attention until all bars of "God Save The Queen" have been played (if a band is present) then the assembly shall pick up their glass of port and hold it at waist level announcing individually, in French or English, "The Queen"/"La Reine", and take the Loyal Toast. Glasses shall be lowered to the table, and the assembly shall be seated.

21. INTRODUCTION BY PMC - At the beginning of the dinner the PMC shall introduce the head table. After the last toast, coffee and/or liqueurs and or cheese tray may be served. It is also customary for the PMC and/or the host to recognize the serving staff and drink a toast with the Chief Cook. This is the most appropriate time for this toast, as there is no more serving to take place. This toast will precede the speeches. The PMC should also recognize the Band, if in attendance, at this time. The PMC will then make any announcements appropriate to the occasion, and introduce the Official Host if the latter wishes to speak. The Official host will

introduce the Guest of Honour. The PMC, Official Host and Guest of Honour are not to be interrupted during their remarks.

22. DEPARTING THE DINING ROOM - When all speeches have been concluded and the Official Host has indicated to the PMC that it is time to depart the dining room, all in attendance shall rise and remain standing until the Official Host, Senior Guest, PMC, and head table guests have moved from the dining room.

23. AFTER DINNER ENTERTAINMENT - After adjournment to the anteroom, the formal aspects of the Mess Dinner are considered to have been concluded. The Official Host and guests may engage in conversation or such games and skits as may be appropriate to the mess and the occasion. This informal aspect of the mess dinner should counter-balance the preceding formality. There is considerable scope for enjoyment within the broad parameters of avoiding obscenities, insults, destructive activities, or gambling. Good humour and camaraderie should be the theme in arranging post-dinner activities. Some personnel and guests will wish to continue with conversation; one of the benefits of a mess dinner is that it should provide the time and setting for frank, open discussion, particularly between senior and junior personnel. Again, while senior personnel should permit latitude and encouragement for this kind of communication, rudeness and deliberate offensiveness will not be tolerated.

24. TRADITION - Mess Dinners are special events in our way of life; to ensure that we conduct them with dignity and enjoyment is a solemn, collective responsibility.

25. MIXED DINING-IN - The organizer of a Mixed Dining-In should keep in mind that spouses are not military personnel, and should not be expected to know the various rules of a mess dinner. Therefore, the above guidelines can be used for Mixed Dining-In evenings; however, they may be adapted and relaxed to cater to the situation.

## **ANNEX B - TABLE ARRANGEMENTS**

### **HEAD TABLE**

PMC		VPMC
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- (1) Official Host
- (2) 1st Guest
- (3) 2nd Guest
- (4) & (5) etc. as assigned by the Official Host and PMC

### **NOTES :**

1. The Official Host shall sit at the centre of the head table, and the guests as per the drawing.
2. Official Host Squadron/Unit - Sqn/Unit CO
3. For the remainder of attendees a liberal mixing of personnel is to be encouraged. This will meet the intent and spirit of Mess Dinners.