

Anecdotes can often be more entertaining but if you cannot resist the temptation to tell a joke make sure it is not risqué or even worse. Also, when commenting upon the work, remember that if you can praise do so; if you cannot praise, it is better to say nothing. Criticism is for Lodge members to make between themselves, not for visitors to make.



Absent Brethren. A toast to Absent Brethren is given during the evening. Some Lodges will give the toast at 9.00 pm because at that time the hands of a clock form a square. Also, wherever absent brethren are they can join in the toast at that time. Some Lodges, however, will toast Absent Brethren immediately before the Tyler's Toast. The toast is not usually followed by Masonic 'fire'.

Masonic 'fire'. In earlier times, the Military had a custom of firing guns or muskets after toasts. Guilds are reported, for example, to have had annual processions where the Mayor would be accompanied by trades people and soldiers to each of the City gates at which toast were drunk, each health being followed by a volley of shot from musketeers. Masonic 'fire' would seem to have been adapted from this practice. 'Firing glasses' were made with heavy bases to withstand being banged upon tables to imitate the shots. Many Lodges use a standard pattern, pointing with the right, index finger and then clapping (C), thus:

Point, left, right; Point, left, right; Point, left, right;
One, Two C CCC CCC CCC

In earlier times, the hand movements during 'fire' included Masonic signs and there was a need for the dining room to be 'tyled' during the 'firing' routine. Although this no longer applies, the tradition of 'tyling' has remained. 'Silent fire' follows certain toasts in some Lodge. This is a contradiction in terms; however, Lodge traditions must prevail!

The Tyler's Toast. The Festive Board is usually concluded by the Tyler's Toast. The Tyler is summoned by the Master who gavels twice.



"To all poor and distressed Masons, wherever dispersed over the face of earth and water, wishing them a speedy relief from all their sufferings, and a safe return to their native country, should they so desire it."



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The Festive Board



Freemasons will usually dine together after their Lodge meetings. The Festive Board, as it is usually known, takes the form of a three or four course meal during which there can be several 'wine takings', followed by a number of toasts. The Festive Board is not part of the Lodge

meeting and is not therefore covered by any Rules in the Book of Constitutions. That is not to say that anything goes at the Festive Board! The proceedings must be carried out with propriety and decorum. Almost invariably you will find that each Lodge has traditions relating to those proceedings. In this fact sheet we will be looking at the various aspects of the Masonic Festive Board.

Seating. Some Lodges use seating plans, some do not; most have a top table with sprigs. The Master and his Wardens will usually sit so as to form a triangular pattern - the Master at the centre of the top table, the Senior Warden at the end of the sprig on the Master's right and the Junior Warden at the end of the sprig on the Master's left. The senior ranking Brother present often takes the seat on the immediate right of the Master. Indeed, at an Installation Meeting the District Grand Master or his Representative takes that seat. Many Lodges will place the Initiate in that seat on his Initiation night. When visiting a Lodge be guided by your host as to where to sit.

Wine taking. During the meal you will probably find announcements that the Master wishes to take wine with a group of Brethren. This is usually a signal for those named to rise, raise their glasses to the Master, take a sip and resume their seats. However, it is traditional in some Lodges for the Master to take wine with everyone present and to request that they all remain seated whilst he stands. Also, the Master may invite everyone to take wine with a particular Brother, on the occasion of his birthday for example



Toasts. A set toast list is provided to each Lodge. Grace is usually said before the meal and the formal toasts usually follow Grace after the meal. The toast list will take the following form.

The Queen and the Craft

His Excellency The President of the Republic of Cyprus

The Most Worshipful the Grand Master

The Most Worshipful Pro Grand Master
The Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master
The Right Worshipful Assistant Grand Master
and the rest of the Grand Officers present and past

The Right Worshipful District Grand Master

The Deputy District Grand Master
The Assistant District Grand Master
District Grand Officers of Cyprus;
Provincial Grand Officers;
District Grand Officers of other Districts present and past;
Holders of Metropolitan, and Overseas Rank,

The Worshipful Master

The Initiate

The Guests and Visitors

Absent Brethren

The Tyler's Toast

On actual toast lists you will find the Officers are named. It is traditional in many Lodges for the toast to the visitors to be proposed by the Junior Warden (because of his responsibilities regarding visitors to the Lodge). There is usually a response from a Brother on behalf of the visitors. He will often take the opportunity to praise the work and many cannot resist the temptation to tell a joke. If you are invited to respond on behalf of the visitors when you visit a Lodge, bear in mind that jokes are not obligatory.