

Propose a toast A New Year's Tradition

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12/30/2004

Toasting is in, but if you are planning to use one this New Year's Eve, you may want to avoid what actor Hugh Grant's character did in "Four Weddings and a Funeral."

He lifted his glass and toasted the bride and groom by saying that the last couple he had toasted were no longer married.

Local etiquette expert Joy Weaver says despite Grant's character's movie faux pas, toasting is still a very vital part of parties and weddings and that those planning a toast should follow the three Bs.

"Begin, be brief, and be seated," says Weaver, a Plano resident who appears on national television shows.

For a toast to be effective, Weaver says, "You must always stand up, raise your glass and look the person you're toasting in the eye. Then give your toast sincerely to them from your heart."

In other words, don't ramble like Grant's character did in the movie; otherwise, the toast will fall flat. Instead of an honorable occasion, it can turn into a humiliating one. Also, Weaver says, another reason to be brief is that there are others who are holding up their glasses.

At the end of the toast, the host should let the others know the toast is over.

"They should say 'cheers' or 'to your health' or anything else that's customary," says Weaver.

After the toast, everyone except the recipient should take a drink.

"Having the recipient take a sip is like applauding yourself," says Weaver.

So many times, Weaver says, people tend to forget their manners and clank their glasses together during a toast. It's a no-no for practical reasons, including the part about breaking stemware.

The other rule to remember when planning a toast is to let all the others know about the toast ahead of time.

"Let people know so that everyone has something to drink," she said.

Weaver says one of the most-asked questions is whether partygoers must have alcoholic beverages in their glass to toast.

"They do not," says Weaver. "You can toast with water or fruit juice or punch, ginger ale, or iced tea. Whatever your preference is, you can toast with it."

At dinner parties, a reciprocal toast by the guest of honor is always in good taste, providing the honoree gives a toast back to the host or hostess at least before the dessert course.

"It serves as a kind of thank you to the one who has given you a toast," says Weaver.

Faux pas include honorees who applaud after being toasted, probably from the embarrassment of being in the spotlight, Weaver surmises.

She urges people to look at it as accepting a gift or a compliment.

Other embarrassing moments in toasting history come from Barton Brands Ltd. They include such fine points as never toasting with an empty glass and looking at the glass or the other guests while offering a toast. Then, when the toast is completed, look at the person whose glass you're touching.

More toasting is done around the holidays than any other time of the year, mainly because it's a time to reflect on the past and to celebrate the coming of a new year, according to the people at Barton Brands Ltd.

Weaver says toasting is as popular as ever and that it has its place because "it's such a great way to say thank you and to give honor where honor is due."

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