

DON'T BURN YOUR TOAST!

Tips on Toasting from Toastmasters

Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif. – 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? 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 Gavin Blakey, International President of Toastmasters International. "Most of all, it should be heartfelt."

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 Blakey.
- 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 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 9,000 clubs in 70 countries.

For more information about Toastmasters International, please call (949) 858-8255 or visit our Web site, **www.toastmasters.org**.