

691 HAWK INDIAN HEAD ROYAL CANADIAN AIR CADETS



CADET MESS DINNER HANDBOOK

Issued on Authority of the Training and Command structures
of 826 Gryphon Squadron Hamilton

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Rules of Order

The rap of the gavel for grace signals the official start of dinner. Between then and the toast of the day, the following rules of order are in force:

No one may come in and sit down at the table, leave the table, read (except the menu and musical program), or send or receive messages.

Whenever the President or Vice-President taps the table, there must be silence until they have finished speaking.

Request are made via the Vice-President. When a diner is coming to the table late, or is returning after leaving, the President's permission must be given.

There are no ranks or titles in the mess. All members present address each other as: Mister, Miss, or Missus. Only the President and Vice-President will be addressed by title.

No member shall engage in conversation with the Head Table or the opposite table. Members shall only converse with those across, beside, and diagonal from themselves.

No diner may begin a course before the President, use foul language, discuss political or other controversial subjects, talk about work, speak in a foreign language (except when foreign guests are present) or tell rude or insulting jokes.

Members shall not clap. Instead diners shall rap the table lightly to express their opinion and solicitations.

Members shall not propose a toast (this includes "cheers" or similar remarks or raising a glass in greeting).



Air Cadet Mess Dinner

The mess dinner is a ceremonial occasion when military personnel dine together formally and is one of the most important traditions of the Canadian Forces (CAF). In addition to educating cadets about an important CAF tradition, the mess dinner is also relevant because the basic rules of conduct observed are those of polite society.

Before Dinner Gathering

Cadets and guests are invited a half hour before the set time for dinner. During this period, members consult the seating plan and meet the guest of honour. During the gathering, all members pay their respects to the guest of honour providing this can be done without undue interruption to conversation with senior guests.

Introductions

All guests should be introduced by their escorts to as many of the other members present as feasible. When introducing oneself it is customary to say, "Mr. Bloggins, I would like to introduce myself. I am _____". If you don't know to whom you are speaking, it is customary to say, "Please let me introduce myself. My name is _____".

Mess Dinner Program

Before Dinner Gathering

Mess Call

Arrival of the Head Table

Dinner Course

Passing the Port

Toasts

Marches

~ Break ~

Coffee / Dessert

Speeches

Departure of the Head Table

Mess Calls

A bugler or piper sounds a call at 15 minutes prior to dinner. This alerts guests to prepare to move to the dining room and to use the washroom before the start of the mess dinner. In the absence of a bugler or piper, the mess call may be verbal.

Seating Plans

A Mess Dinner seating plan is formally arranged and the plan is drawn up and displayed. Individual places are marked with a name card. Members must sit in their assigned seat; shifting of places is not permitted.

Marching In

Five minutes prior to the meal time the senior steward enters the anteroom and reports to the PMC, "Dinner is served, Sir/Ma'am". Members move to their assigned seat and stand behind their chair. When all members are in place, the PMC and guest of honour make their way into the dining room. If a band is present, they may play "*The Roast Beef of Olde England*". No one may take their seats before the PMC.

Grace

When all diners are seated the PMC raps the table for silence with a gavel. The PMC requests a member of the mess to say grace. If a Chaplain is present, they would give the grace.

Passing the Port

In an air mess, the decanters should be moved to the left, never being placed on the table. The only time the decanter should be placed on the table is when the decanter is emptied, needing to be refilled or replaced, or when it arrives back to the PMC / VPMC.

Loyal Toast

The PMC calls upon the VPMC to toast the Queen of Canada. For example, they may say, "Mr. Vice, The Queen of Canada", or "Monsieur le vice-president, La Reine du Canada". The Vice-President announces, in the other official language, "Ladies and gentlemen, The Queen of Canada" or, "Mesdames et messieurs, La Reine du Canada". Diners announce individually "The Queen / La Reine" and take the Loyal Toast. The loyal toast is given while standing.

Marches

Following the toasts, "*Royal Canadian Air Force*" is played. If any other elements are present, the band will play the appropriate march. A member only stands at attention for their own march.

Speeches

After the toasts and marches have been completed, the PMC may open the floor to speeches by special guests.

Departing the Dining Room

Upon completion of all mess functions, the PMC shall conclude the mess dinner with a rap of the gavel. All members will stand for the departure of the head table.

Dinner Etiquette

Keep elbows close to the sides at all times and never place them on the table.

Silverware or glasses must not be played with.

Silverware is laid out in the order in which it is to be used; the knives to the right of the plate and the forks to the left.

Bread must be broken with the fingers.

Never speak with food in the mouth or make gestures while utensils are in hands.

Never ask for anything that is not offered on the table such as butter, vinegar, or ketchup.

Tea or coffee should be sipped and the cup is replaced to the saucer between sips.

President of the Mess Committee (PMC)

The PMC is in absolute charge, regardless of rank or seniority. The PMC greets the guest of honour; escorts the guest of honour into the dining room, asks for grace to be said, levies fines against misbehaving members, begins passing the port, gives the loyal toast,, dismisses for breaks, introduces the guest of honour; and escorts the guest of honour out of the dining room.

Vice-President of the Mess Committee (VPMC)

The VPMC assists the PMC in maintaining order during the Mess Dinner. They direct members to the dining room, pass on messages to the PMC from members, call the PMC's attention to any misbehaviour from other tables, begin passing the port, and assist in the Loyal Toast.

MESS DINNER

All information for training required by a senior cadet to provide this information is included here:

COMMON TRAINING

ALL TRAINING LEVELS

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

(CAF) FAMILIARIZATION

SECTION 4

EO MX20.01D – PARTICIPATE IN A MESS DINNER

GENERAL

1. This handbook has been created to give an understanding of the long tradition of the mess dinner. Use this as a guide, but always be aware of the proper protocols of the function you are attending to avoid embarrassment. The Regional Cadet Instructor School (Central) Officer's Handbook and the Canadian Forces Officer Candidate School handbooks are the references for this publication.

PURPOSE

2. Mess dinners originated about 200 years ago, the purpose being the same then as it is now: to afford the opportunity for the seniors and juniors to meet on a friendly but formal occasion; and, to enable the officer in command to speak to his or her members as a group. The traditional formality of the dinner fosters a fellowship which would be lacking at less formal functions.

3. Some units, bases, ships, wings or the services of other nations have highly individualized customs and traditions quite different from those of your own mess. When entertaining guests, a prior brief explanation of your own idiosyncrasies is a courtesy that is normally greatly appreciated and reduces the potential for embarrassment.

ATTENDANCE

4. Although members meet in the mess on a footing of social equality, it nevertheless must be understood that a mess dinner is a formal parade. Members will be excused only by their Commanding Officer for good or substantial reason.

INVITATIONS

5. Dinner invitations are worded 1830 for 1900 hours. The period before dinner is designed meet and greet allowing hosting officers to peruse the seating plan, seek out and identify their guests, and introduce themselves. Hosts should be there 15 minutes prior to the starting time. The remainder of the time can then be comfortably spent partaking of a beverage with friends before dinner. The remainder of the time can then be comfortably spent partaking of a beverage with friends before dinner.

When the Base Commander and/or the senior guest arrives, all members shall rise as a form of courtesy. If the arrival of the Base Commander and/or senior guest should be unnoticed by some, the PMC or any other senior officer present should attract attention by discreetly calling "Gentlemen". allowing hosting officers to peruse the seating plan, seek out and identify their guests, and introduce themselves.

DRESS

6. The dress to be worn at a dinner will be specified well in advance and indicated on the invitation. Serving members wear Mess Kit or Mess Dress at dinner depending on unit tradition. Retired officers may wear either Mess Dress (with permission) or appropriate civilian formal attire with medals.

Cadets will wear C5, white dress shirt replacing the blue and a black bowtie, replacing the uniform tie.

Officers of other services wear the appropriate equivalent of Mess Dress. Civilian guests wear appropriate semi-formal attire while lady guests wear formal evening dress.

SEATING PLAN

7. The seating plan for a mess dinner is formally arranged, and a plan is drawn up and displayed. Individual places at the table are marked with a name card.

- a. Shifting of places is not permitted.
- b. Guests sit to the right of their hosts.

8. The success of a dinner is often directly proportional to the amount of time that has been spent on the seating plan. The organizer must:

- a. Carefully consider each person attending the dinner.
- b. Avoid concentrations of junior and senior members.
- c. Look at the personalities involved and distribute the more witty and outgoing individuals to liven up the entire dinner; and
- d. Avoid placing long-winded individuals or bores as Vice President.

9. If no seating plan is provided, or if the seating plan provides only for the President and mess guests, members shall take their places at the table without regard to rank or seniority.

MESS DINNER ETIQUETTE

10. Since a mess dinner is a formal function, protocol dictates that members shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting the occasion. To ensure that all members are afforded the same opportunity to enjoy the evening in the good company of their fellow members; members are reminded that it is considered in poor taste to:

- a. Engage in heated discussions of controversial subjects (no talk of religion, politics, sports or sex), discuss topics inappropriate to the occasion, use language offensive to others, or make comments which might be embarrassing to mess guests.

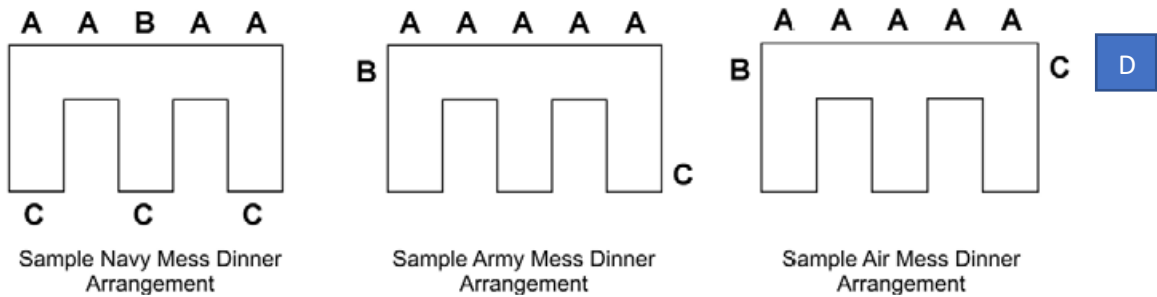
- b. Act in a boisterous manner.
- c. Propose spontaneous toasts; and
- d. Talk if the PMC calls for attention or raps for order.

DINNER

11. The dinner is announced by the VPMC at 15- and 5-minute increments prior to the seating time. Use this time wisely, since once you sit down to eat, you do not usually leave the table until the end. When dinner is announced, the PMC shall inform the Commanding Officer and all will proceed to the dining room preceded by the PMC who shall escort the senior guest of honour, and the Commanding Officer who shall escort the next senior guest.

The Dining Room:

Behind the head table and centred is the crossed flags of the unit, if possible or standing upright at each end - the Canadian flag and the Corps banner. The table is shaped as a hollow square with a leg or legs down the center if extra seating is required. The Table of The Fallen Comrade, ideally, is in front of the head table and centred.



A	Invited Guests
B	President of the Mess Committee
C	Vice President of the Mess Committee
D	Missing Aviator Table

12. On entering the dining room, members and guests are to take up their respective positions and remain standing behind their chairs. The PMC will rap for silence and request a member to say grace of say grace himself. As soon as grace has been concluded, all members and guests shall be seated. No member shall leave the dining room without prior permission from the PMC.

THE MISSING AVIATOR TABLE CEREMONY

PMC will announce the Missing Aviator Table Ceremony and will call forth

1 _____ and 2 _____.

1 _____ - Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. Please rise for the playing of O' Canada and remain standing for the Missing Aviator Table Ceremony.

O' Canada plays

This evening as we join together to enjoy one another's company, we pause and pay tribute to those men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in war and peace so that we may enjoy the freedom that they sought to ensure for us. Their earthly remains still lay today near to where they fell, throughout the world, in cemeteries, on battlefields, and in countless resting places known only to God. Before we begin, I would like to draw your attention to the small table located in a place of honour to the right of the head table. This is our way of remembering that many fellow aviators are missing this evening from our midst. They are our brothers and sisters who are unable to return to those whom they love, so we remember them. The table is small symbolizing the frailty of our chosen profession; The tablecloth is white symbolizing the purity of our comrades' intentions when they answered our country's call to arms; The single rose displayed in the vase reminds us of their families and loved ones; The red ribbon tied so prominently on the vase is symbolic of the blood they have shed so that we may enjoy freedom; The slice of lemon is set on the bread plate to remind us of their bitter fate; The salt upon the bread plate is symbolic of the family's tears as they wait for someone who will not return; The glass is inverted for they cannot toast with us this evening; Other chairs are drawn away from the table, for they are not here in body but they are with us in spirit;

At this point the appropriate head-dress (air force cap, or wedge, or air force association wedge cap) is slow-marched into the room by 2 _____ The individual places the headdress on the table and takes one step back and bows their head. 1 _____ will announce that all shall bow their heads as we observe a moment of silence - Last post, a moment of silence then Rouse.

GRACE

Airman's Grace

PMC will call forth _____ to give the Airman's Grace

Lord of thunderhead and sky
Who placed in man the will to fly,
Who taught his hand speed, skill and grace
To soar beyond man's dwelling place.
You shared with him the eagle's view.
The right to soar as eagles do,
The right to call the clouds his home,
And grateful through your heavens roam.
May all assembled here tonight,
And all who love the thrill of flight,
Recall with twofold gratitude,
Your gift of Wings, Your gift of food.

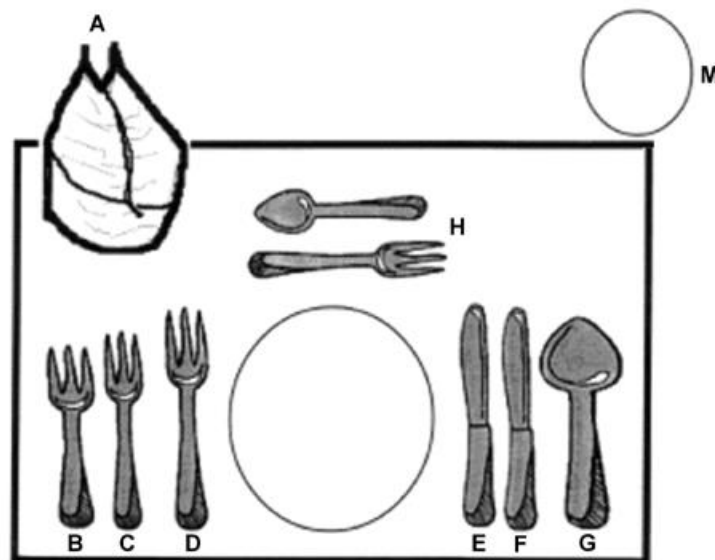
At the conclusion of the evening, the PMC will say: All rise for the conclusion of our Fallen Aviator Table Ceremony, and the playing of God Save the Queen. 2_____ will retrieve proceed to the table and come to a halt, bow his or her head, salute, retrieve the headdress, and slow-march out of the dining room. At this point **God Save the Queen** will then be played and the head table will depart.

EATING A MEAL

13. A mess dinner is a formal, multi-course meal. You will be confronted by a formal place setting with your cutlery and several glasses. Before proceeding with the actual dinner, a couple of general points must be emphasized. Keep your elbows off the table! A mess dinner is not a race; relax and enjoy it; do not shovel your food into your mouth; do not gulp your beverages. As far as which knife of fork to use – start from the outside and work in. Spread your napkin on your lap; do not tuck it in anywhere.

PLACE SETTINGS. Traditionally, mess dinners are a formal occasion with formal place settings. A variety of utensils may be used. Diners should use utensils starting with the utensils on the outside. Utensils are changed with each course of the meal.

A variety of glasses may also be used. Each glass has a specific purpose. As there will be no alcohol served during the dinner, it is acceptable to only use one glass.



Napkin and Dinner Roll (Item A)

The napkin and dinner roll will be placed on the table at the place setting prior to diners taking their seats.

Salad Fork (Item B)

The first course is either a mixed green or fruit salad. Eat the salad with the salad fork found on the extreme left of the dinner plate. No knife is to be used with the salad. If the salad cannot be picked up with the fork it must be left on the plate. Do not push food onto the fork with fingers.

While eating the appetizer, the fork should be laid at a 45-degree angle from the centre of the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed, the fork is placed at a six o'clock on the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Soup Spoon (Item G)

Eat the soup with the soup spoon found on the extreme right of the dinner plate. Soup is always taken from the side of the spoon. The motion of the spoon should be from the front to the back of the bowl. Never tip the bowl to get the last drop or blow on the soup to cool it.

While eating the soup, the spoon should be laid at a 45-degree angle from the centre of the bowl to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed the spoon is placed at a six o'clock in the bowl to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Fish Fork and Knife (Items C and F)

Use the fish knife found on the extreme right and the middle fork to eat the fish course. Place the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left. A left-handed person may reverse the cutlery. While eating the fish, the fork and knife should be laid at a 45-degree angle from one another from the centre of the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed the fork and knife are placed together at a 45-degree angle from the centre of the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Dinner Fork and Knife (Items D and E)

Use the last set of cutlery on either side of the plate to eat the main course. The cutlery is held in the same way as the fish course. Never pick up the meat with the hands. Only eat what can be cut with the knife and fork.

While eating the main course, the fork and knife should be laid at a 45-degree angle to one another from the centre of the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed the fork and knife are placed together at a 45-degree to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Dessert Service (Item H)

The last course is dessert. There are two pieces of cutlery laid out for dessert found at the top of the place setting. It is only necessary to use one. The dessert is the end of the meal, but not the end of the dinner. While eating the desert, the spoon or fork should be laid at a 45-degree angle to indicate to the steward the meal is not completed. When the course is completed the spoon or fork is placed at six o'clock on the plate to indicate to the steward the meal is complete.

Water Glass (Item M)

Water will be served to all members prior to the start of the dinner.

PASS THE PORT

14. The PMC shall test the beverage, and then pass the decanter to his or her left for the next member to fill his or her glass. This is the signal for all who have decanters in front of them to fill their glass and pass the decanter to their left. NEVER LET THE DECANTER TOUCH THE TABLE AT AIR EVENTS, THIS IS A HUGE FAUX PAS.

15. When the decanter returns to the PMC, he or she fills their glass, raps for silence and raising alone, will say (in either official language), “Mr. (or Madam) Vice, the King of Canada” – “Monsieur (ou Madam) le vice-president, la roi du Canada”. The VPMC then stands and says in the other official language “Ladies and Gentlemen the King of Canada”. Normally, up to this point no one excluding the PMC and VPMC shall of touched their glass. When the VPMC says “Ladies and Gentlemen, the King of Canada” all will rise, raise the glasses, and repeat the toast “The King” or “La Roi”.

THE LOYAL TOAST

16. At the conclusion of the meal, all china, glasses, etc. except for the toasting glass and table decorations shall be removed and the decanters will be brought by the servers. One decanter will be passed to the PMC and the other to the VPMC.

Loyal Toast

The PMC will call on 4 _____ to present the Loyal Toast in English

followed by 5 _____ to present the Loyal Toast in French

English – Ladies and gentlemen, the King

French – Mesdames et Messieurs, la Roi

OTHER TOASTS

17. The PMC may on appropriate occasions call upon other members to propose toasts, e.g., to the Unit or Branch.

FOLLOWING THE TOASTS

18. If there are any speeches or presentations they shall begin on the completion of the toast (or toasts). Indication that a dinner is officially over is given by the PMC standing up until noticed by all members. If the Commanding Officer and the guest of honour leave immediately, it is customary for the members to stand until they have left the room. The PMC and VPMC accompany the official guests to the lounge. Decorum must be maintained throughout the dinner.

DEPARTURE

19. Members should not leave the mess until the Commanding Officer and the senior guests have left. If a member is required to leave before the Commanding Officer, they should pay their respects to the Commanding Officer or senior officer present, and finally to the PMC.

TABLE MANNERS FOR FORMAL AND INFORMAL OCCASIONS

20. Tradition may produce minor variations in procedure, but the overall purpose and the formality of a mess dinner will always remain. There is no substitute for good manners; when in doubt, take your cue from the head table.

21. Posture. One should always sit in an erect position, never loll, lounge, or prop the elbows on the table. When not occupied with knife and fork, the hands should rest on the lap. The body should be approximately six inches from the table.

22. Drawing designs on the tablecloth with knife and fork, crumbling of bread, beating a tattoo on the table with the silverware, playing with the glasses, etc., are all in bad taste. Gentle manners and quietness in eating mark the well-bred person.

23. One should not speak with food in their mouth, or gesture with utensils in their hands. The conversation should be tactful, kind, responsive, brief, and cheerful. Additionally, one never asks for anything which is not offered, such as butter, vinegar, ketchup, as this is a reflection on the dinner. Food should not, at any time, be piled up on the fork.

24. Serviette. The table serviette is partly unfolded, not in view of those present, but on the lap, laid flat across the knees. Never tuck it in front of your tunic. After the meal, the serviette is not folded but laid carefully on the table.

25. Silverware. The silverware is laid out in the order in which it is to be used; the knives to the right, and the forks to the left.

26. How to use utensils. Soup is always taken from the side of the spoon. The motion of the spoon is from front to back of the plate; never tip the plate to get the last drop or blow on the soup to cool it.

27. A roll is never cut in half and then buttered. The roll shall be torn in pieces one at a time and then butter individually.

28. A knife is held in the right hand, cutting edge down, with the index finger extended along the backside of the blade. (Never cut bread with a knife; break the bread with the fingers).

29. The fork is held in the left hand, prongs down; to eat the food that the knife cuts. Vegetables may be eaten by holding the fork in the right hand, prongs up, or in the left hand, prongs down. In the latter case, the knife is used to help place food on the fork.

30. If you wish to indicate that you are finished with your current course, place your utensils together and at a one-hundred-eighty-degree angle or at the 6:00 pm to your plate or bowl. If you need to put your utensils down, but are not finished with your current course, place your utensils apart from each other at a forty-five-degree angle.