

Toasts do three things. They bring glory to the person being toasted, they make the company at the toast feel comfortable with themselves and at the gathering, and lastly they put the toast maker himself in a good light. That's probably the most important. Incidentally, toasts always lead to the drinking part.

There is not a country in the world where they don't like to drink, but some are more shy about it than others. In the Latin countries, Italy, Spain, France and Latin America, they fake a certain indifference to the drink, and they have a fairly simple greeting. Santé, salut, chin chin. You raise your glass, you wink at each other, and you take a sip. The Germans are more direct. They take drinking seriously. They sing a [song so simple](#) everybody can join, like:

*Im Himmel gibt's kein Bier,
Drum trinken wir es hier.
Denn sind wir nicht mehr hier,
Dann trinken die andern unser Bier.*

The song takes 15 seconds. Another five to click glasses, and you are into it.

No credit for originality. Sometimes they give a somewhat risqué but formulaic toast such as "Bier und Mädchen stoßt mann von unten an." But that's the point of it. The drinking.

Now the ostensible purpose of the toast is to honor the toastee: The guest of honor, leader of the group, or the person whose birthday it is. And here in Ukraine I noticed that the toasts can get quite fancy and florid. The good words that one can say about one's boss seem to be rather endless. For a birthday gathering in the United States, we say good things to the guy on his birthday, insincere things that nobody really believes but it makes everybody feel good.

Different countries differ in the ease with which people socialize. Americans are very social. We don't need much need much to get us going. For the Germans, the ritual of the toast is a good thing and the alcohol helps them relax. In the Orient they need to know exactly what to do. There is no spontaneity - The whole thing has to be programmed. So the toasting serves a function of making sure that everybody feels to be part of the group. You stand and raise toast after toast after toast. If you're not careful, not a little circumspect about it, you find yourself sliding down

under the table after drinking all those toasts. But at least you will be relaxed and feel yourself among company.

Now the last purpose of the toast that I mentioned and probably the most important is to show off a little bit. Here in Ukraine people show off by reciting incredibly long poems from memory or making very flowery compliments to the toastee. In United States we do a little bit differently. Let's pretend that Vitaliy here is getting married. There will be several occasions for toasts. He will have an engagement party, a bachelor party, and a wedding. And the toasts will certainly be different.

At the engagement party the toasts might be:

Here's to Roxana. She finally caught the man who has escaped every maiden in Kyiv. Good work Roxana, best of luck Roxana. We will miss you Roxana. Here's to Vitaliy and Roxana on your engagement.

Then there will be a bachelor party for the tally. It'll be a little bit off color.

*There was a brash swordsman named Rulov
Who attempted to make a rule of
Cajoling, deceiving,
Misleading then leaving
His lovers when ardor would cool off*

*The coy and demure young Roxana
Set such an incredibly high standard
That all who would ask her
Were doomed to disaster
Our Vitaliy soon found himself abandoned*

*His ego couldn't bear such reversal
So he offered a marriage proposal
To recoup his loss
And show her who's boss
But guess – who's now at whose disposal?*

And at the wedding we have a formula:

*Congratulations, Vitaliy
Best wishes, Roxana.*

That's the formula and we're sticking to it. But for sincerity, think back to the bachelor's party toasts.