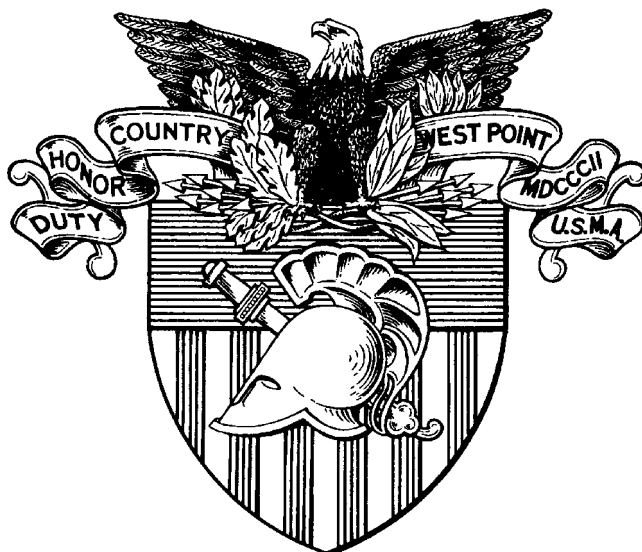


UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

GUIDE TO  
MILITARY DINING-IN



## **PREFACE**

This pamphlet is offered primarily as a guide for those persons planning and participating in a military dining-in. It outlines the rationale, planning considerations, rules, protocol, and organization leading to a successful execution of a dining-in. It is not intended to be all-inclusive and should be supplemented as local resources and command desired dictate.

For any questions or concerns, please contact the Protocol Office at (845) 938-4315/4316.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Concept**

The dining-in is a formal dinner for members of a military organization or unit. It provides an occasion for officers to meet socially at a formal military function. The purpose of a dining-in is to recognize individual and/or unit achievements or any events that are effective in building and maintaining esprit de corps to include saying farewell to departing officers and welcoming new ones. A dining-in may also be held to honor one or more distinguished visitors. It is important to emphasize that a dining-in should be viewed as a manifestation of association rather than a mandatory formation for all parties.

### **Historical Development**

It is believed that the practice of a dining-in began many years ago in England. The origin of a dining-in was probably not a military function but instead a custom practiced in the monasteries and early universities. With the advent of the Officers' Mess the British military establishment initially adopted the custom. The close association and camaraderie of British and American military forces during World Wars I and II led the United States Army to also adopt the dining-in as an integral part of the Regimental Mess. From a high point during World War II the dining-in has declined in popularity and now shows signs of revival.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **CONSIDERATIONS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **Overall Planning Considerations**

The dining-in should have some distinct purpose. This might be a spring or fall social event or for any of the reasons cited in Chapter I. The purpose will have a definite impact on determining the conduct of the dining-in. If, for example, the purpose is to honor a foreign dignitary, the sequence of the dining-in would be substantially different from a dining-in that involves the presentation of unit or individual awards. Whatever the purpose, the presiding officer of the Mess, usually the commander or his deputy, has a great deal of latitude as to how the proceedings are conducted. Contained herein are general guidelines for various types of dining-ins with specific points of protocol given as applicable. After reviewing the following planning considerations it is anticipated that one will obtain a more complete insight as to committee functions and corresponding organization.

#### **Organization**

The first and foremost key to successful execution is organization. While one man could conceivably accomplish all preparations for a dining-in, normal military duties may hinder him from doing his best. For this reason, it is recommended that a committee be formed and tasked with organizing and executing the dining-in. If duties permit, the committee will vary depending on the purpose of the affair, the extent of formality sought, and the number of individuals available to serve on the committee.

#### **Date and Place**

Before listing specifics, it must be determined, in conjunction with/by the presiding officer, exactly when and where the dining-in will take place. Though some general guidance may have been given earlier (i.e., spring or fall), a specific date and place must be found before planning can continue. The best time is often a Friday and Saturday night and the best place is usually the Officers' Open Mess as it generally is more familiar with dining-in procedures and is mutually accessible to all parties. Special care should be taken to ensure that the dining-in is not scheduled too close to some other social event that might detract from its effectiveness.

## **Specific Considerations**

### **Invitations**

The dining-in is always a formal affair for all officers, male and female, in the unit and invitations are extended accordingly. All unit personnel invited are expected to attend unless cogent reasons prohibit.

Spouses have on occasion been invited to attend a dining-in. Though there is no definitive rule for or against spouses attending, it must be recognized that some of the military formality may be lost. Inviting spouses, however, to a dining-in is an effective way to provide the spouses greater understanding and appreciation for military and unit customs and traditions.

It is proper to extend invitations to key noncommissioned officers and civilians of the unit should the presiding officer desire.

Depending on the purpose of the dining-in, invitations might be extended to other persons outside the unit. If an invocation is desired, it might be proper to invite the Post Chaplain. If an important guest lecturer or foreign dignitary is going to be present, it may be advisable to invite his counterpart, post associate, or person(s) who speaks his language. A guest invited as a lecturer should receive an invitation from the presiding officer which includes a fairly precise idea of what he can expect and what is required of him, i.e., a 20-minute speech on history of the unit.

Invitations should be formally extended in sufficient time to elicit a response but not too far in advance as to preclude the guest/member from knowing if he can attend. This time will vary depending on location, but normally two weeks preceding the event is sufficient. The RSVP date of the invitation should be at least one week prior to the dining-in. Guests should respond to the invitation within 72 hours of its receipt.

### **Menu**

The food served at dining-in should be of the best quality, be expertly prepared and be served in an efficient and timely manner. The dinner may consist of from three to seven courses depending on the number of people involved, facilities, and expense deemed appropriate. Customarily, four- or five-course menus with appropriate wines are attached at Appendix A.

### **Table Arrangements and Seating**

The number of people attending, coupled with the facility in which the dining-in is being conducted will largely determine the table arrangement. The number of tables, as well as seating at the tables, may require adjustments as the dining-in nears. While the officer strength plus the number of invited guests will suffice for an early planning figure, persons who regret must be considered.

Tables may be round, square, or rectangular and be in any formation, for example, a “T” or “Horseshoe.” Regardless of the configuration, a head table is appropriate. The proper seating at the head table is a concern and a prime consideration to avoid embarrassment. Samples of two of the more common table arrangements, along with precedence of seating at the head table, are indicated at Appendix B1.

Neat, easily understood, properly oriented, seating diagrams are required and should be prominently displayed in the cocktail area or foyer of the dining room. Seating diagrams should be constructed to indicate assignment to a specific table or to a designated place at a specific table. One or more copies of the seating diagram may be required based on the number of attendees, entrances to the dining area, etc.

Place cards are used as manner of convenience in seating guests and should always be placed at the head table. Use of place cards at other tables is desirable but not required if there is no particular protocol precedence. Place cards have a distinct position on the table, as do menus, wine glasses, and other pieces of dinnerware. An appropriate place setting is indicated at Appendix B2.

Generally, there should not be vacant seats at a formal dinner. In the event of last minute cancellations the entire place setting should be removed from the table.

### **Toasts**

Toasts are considered a mandatory part of any dining-in. The format of toasts will vary depending primarily on the purpose of the dining-in. It is important to make the proper toast in terms of both proposing the toast and responding to it, particularly if foreign dignitaries, and hence diplomatic protocol, are involved. Additional information on toasts is provided in Appendix C.

### **Program Planning**

The dining-in is generally divided into formal and informal sessions. Pre- and post-dinner activities are usually informal and optional. While actually not a mandatory portion of the dining-in, pre- and post-dinner activities are certainly a consideration, as a need exists for a smooth, yet distinct, transition between the informal and formal sessions.

The pre-dinner activity is a means of providing flexibility to the dining-in as it gives the presiding officer the opportunity to circulate among the guests, enables the dining-in committee to pass on any last-minute changes, and generally lends to a more congenial atmosphere among all participants. The pre-dinner activity is often a cocktail period and is conducted in an area separate from the dining room. The length of the period varies, but is seldom longer than 30 minutes.

The formal portion of the dining-in, in addition to the dinner, usually consists of remarks by the presiding officer and one event such as an awards convocation for members or guests, a hail and farewell, remarks highlighting the importance of a special occasion, or a lecture by a distinguished visitor. This event should be meaningful, well organized, and be the “highlight” of the evening’s formal activity. Particular care should be taken to insure that only one event is stressed. If it is an awards ceremony, it should be rehearsed so that all participants know what is expected of them. If it is a lecture, it should be relevant and the proper equipment (rostrum and amplification systems) should be provided as appropriate.

It is essential that the key participants in the program (i.e., the color guard, chaplain, presiding officer and guest speaker) are knowledgeable of the role they will play and are aware of the exact sequence of events (see sample at Appendix D).

Once the dinner is adjourned the dining-in may revert to some informal session. Customarily, the presiding officer invites the attendees to join him for an informal drink at the bar. Attendees might also be invited to participate in other on-going entertainment as appropriate.

### **Protocol Rules for Attendees**

1. Promptly reply to the invitation. Replies should be sent or phoned within three days (72 hours) after being received.
2. The Army Mess Uniform is the standard dress for a dining-in; but the Army Blue/White Uniform is viewed as acceptable. Normally, the invitation is extended with the option of wearing either. The Army Blue/White Uniform is usually worn with bow tie and miniature medals. Nametags are not customarily worn. United States Military Academy cadets should wear the Full Dress or White Uniform. Civilians should wear formal attire or a dark business suit. Ladies’ attire is formal.
3. Arrive on time. If cocktails are prescribed, arrival should be no later than ten minutes after cocktails begin. If there are no cocktails, arrival should be ten minutes before dinner.
4. Attendees should be time-conscious and prepared to move from cocktails to dinner without delay.
5. If arriving late for the dinner, an inconspicuous apology should be made to the presiding officer.
6. If a cocktail period is planned, cocktails should not be carried into the dining area.
7. Smoking is permitted during the informal portions and during the formal portion of the dinner only after it has been indicated that the smoking lamp is lit.



8. Attendees should introduce themselves to the guest(s) of honor either before or after the formal session. Guest(s) of the organization are introduced to all in attendance as part of the formal portion. All members of the sponsoring organization are responsible for showing warm, gracious hospitality to each guest.
9. Attendees should “take seats” only when directed to do so by the presiding officer. They should remain seated until the presiding officer and guests have left the head table.

### **Procedures**

The formal portion of the dining-in commences with chimes being sounded and the presiding officer, guests, and attendees moving to their respective table assignments. If chimes are unavailable, the presiding officer, upon notification that all preparations are ready for dinner, should move directly to his or her position in the dining area. The wine should be poured just prior to all attendees taking their positions behind chairs.

The presiding officer bangs the gavel once and announces “POST THE COLORS.” The bugle sounds attention, the drum rolls, and the colors are posted. This may be omitted or modified depending on the availability of resources.

The presiding officer then asks the chaplain or appropriate person to give the Invocation. This, too, is optional and may be omitted or tailored so as not to prove offensive to persons of other sects or religions.

Toasts are proposed.

The presiding officer announces “PLEASE BE SEATED,” and all are seated.

The presiding officer makes appropriate introductory remarks.

If guests are present, the presiding officer then introduces guests at his table. The guests should rise when announced and then be seated. If there are guests at more than the head table, the ranking officer at each table, in protocol order, rises and introduces his guests. Guests should stand when announced and resume seats.

Once all guests have been introduced, the junior officer, often referred to as “Mr. Vice,” then rises and proposes a toast, “TO OUR GUESTS.” All unit personnel rise and respond, “HEAR, HEAR.”

The presiding officer then announces, “PLEASE BE SEATED FOR DINNER.” All are seated.

Dinner is served.

There should be some distinctive break between dinner and the remainder of the formal proceedings. This break serves to highlight the remaining proceedings as well as to indicate that smoking is permissible. There are many ways of doing this. Customarily, cigars are offered with coffee and the presiding officer or some designated person rises to introduce the evening's events.

The presentation, address, or rendition, is made.

The presiding officer makes concluding remarks.

The presiding officer then announces, "RETIRE THE COLORS" (if the colors were previously posted), and the colors are retired.

At this point the presiding officer bangs the gavel twice, chimes are sounded to indicate movement, and the Mess is adjourned. The presiding officer might also adjourn the Mess with a suggestion to have an after-dinner drink or to partake in some specially arranged or on-going entertainment.

### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that having read this guide, the individual (s) tasked with accomplishing a dining-in will have a better perception of exactly what is involved and the procedures necessary for successful execution.

## REFERENCES

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- Post, Emily. 1984. Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics, and at Home. Harper and Row, New York.
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## APPENDIX A

### MENUS

#### Seven Course Menu

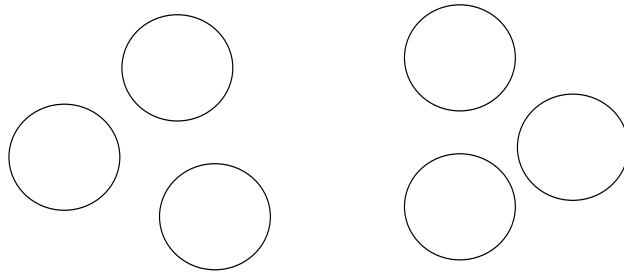
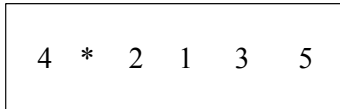
<u>Course Number</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>Wine</u>
1	Shrimp cocktail, oysters, clams on the halfshell	Chablis
2	Soup (usually clear)	Sherry
3	Fish (hot or cold)	Rhine
4	Main course of meat (usually beef) and vegetable or Main course of game and vegetables	Claret Burgundy
5	Salad	Claret/ Burgundy
6	Dessert (ice cream, sherbet, etc)	Champagne
7	Fruit (pears, grapes, etc)	Champagne

The above may be modified as required. Sample modifications are as follows:

- A. Five courses: shrimp cocktail, soup, main course, salad, dessert
- B. Four courses: soup, main course, salad, dessert
- C. Three courses: soup, main course, dessert

Rolls, condiments, and after-dinner coffee are always served. Cigars are frequently served with the coffee as is a port wine.

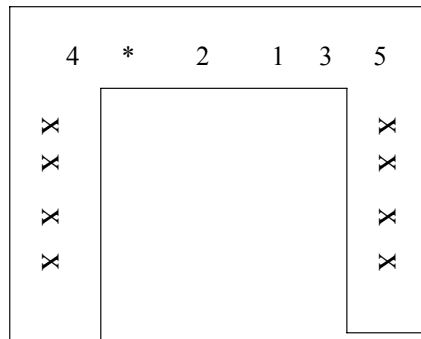
**APPENDIX B1  
SAMPLE TABLE  
ARRANGEMENTS/SEATING**



Example 1: Long Head Table, any style membership tables

See Appendix B2 for Legend

**APPENDIX B1  
SAMPLE TABLE  
ARRANGEMENTS/SEATING**

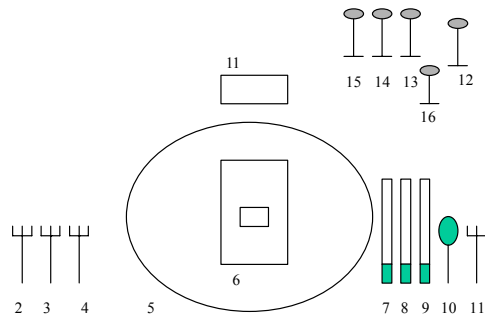


**Legend**

- 1. Presiding Officer
- 2. Honored Guest
- 3. Chaplain
- 4. Junior Officer (Mr. Vice)
- \* Interpreter (if necessary)
- X Attendees

Example 2: "U" or "Horseshoe" Table

## APPENDIX B2 TABLE PLACE SETTING



- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Menu Card                           | 9. Fish Knife                       |
| 2. Fish Fork                           | 10. Soup Spoon                      |
| 3. Meat Fork                           | 11. Oyster Fork                     |
| 4. Salad Fork                          | 12. Champagne Glass                 |
| 5. Plate                               | 13. White Wine Glass                |
| 6. Napkin and Place Card<br>(optional) | 14. Red Wine Glass                  |
| 7. Salad Knife                         | 15. Water Glass                     |
| 8. Meat Knife                          | 16. Sherry Wine Glass<br>(optional) |

NOTE: Each glass is removed with the course it accompanies, with the exception of the dessert wine glass which stays throughout the serving of the demitasse. The salad and fish knives may not be needed, and only two wines, sherry and champagne, may be served.

## APPENDIX C

### TOASTS

Toasts must be done in a correct manner. That serious thought and effort must be given to toasts cannot be overemphasized. An incorrect toast will prove acutely embarrassing to the host as well as to the guest. All personnel should be informed of the order of toasts and the correct responses beforehand.

At a dining-in that has no foreign dignitaries in attendance, the presiding officer may stand and propose a toast, "TO THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF." Standing, all respond "THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF." Subsequent toasts may be "TO THE UNITED STATES ARMY" and "TO THE (UNIT)," with like responses. Following the introduction of any guest (s) the final toast should be "TO OUR GUESTS," with the appropriate response of, "HEAR, HEAR." In such instances, guests should remain seated and not raise their glasses.

Toasts at dining-in with foreign dignitaries in attendance are slightly more complex. Foreign guests should be informed of toasts and aware of the toast expected from them in response. Additionally, care should be taken to insure that toasts to a foreign guest would not be offensive. For example, consumption of alcoholic beverages is often offensive to Moslems. In this instance, all in attendance might toast with a fruit juice instead of with a wine.

Toasts to foreign head of state will be proposed in order of the seniority of the foreign guest(s) present. After toasts are proposed to each foreign head of state (examples of which are on the following page), the senior foreign guest will propose a toast "TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES." All respond, "TO THE PRESIDENT." Following this toast, toasts to respective services or individuals may be made; however, it is advisable to have the junior officer propose a toast, "TO OUR GUESTS," thereby holding the toasting proceedings within reasonable limits.

Examples of some foreign toasts with the appropriate response are as follows:

Germany: Toast: TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC  
WEST GERMANY

Response: TO THE PRESIDENT

Iran: Toast: TO HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS THE SHAH OF IRAN

Response: TO HIS IMPERIAL HIGHNESS



Japan: Toast: TO HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF JAPAN  
Response: TO THE EMPEROR

Korea: Toast: TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF KOREA  
Response: TO THE PRESIDENT

Thailand: Toast: TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THAILAND  
Response: TO HIS MAJESTY

United Kingdom Toast: TO HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH THE SECOND  
Response: TO HER MAJESTY

Special care should be taken to ensure the title of the foreign head of state is correct. Procedures for toasting British, French, and Scandinavian guests differ somewhat, and a service etiquette book should be consulted.

## APPENDIX D

### SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

DINING-IN HONORING CADET GUESTS FROM FOREIGN ACADEMIES  
FRIDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 1988, WEST POINT ARMY MESS

Uniform: Blue Mess or Blue Uniform w/Bow Tie for Military  
Appropriate Dress Uniform for Foreign Cadets  
Appropriate Attire for Civilian Attendees

1830 Cocktails; Ballroom Foyer

1900 Call to Dinner (Chimes)  
Guests and escorts proceed to tables, stand behind chairs

General Berry bangs gavel and announces "POST THE COLORS"  
Bugle attention, drum roll – colors are posted

Invocation  
The Invocation

General Berry proposes a toast, "TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF THE  
BELGIANS"  
All in attendance respond, "TO HIS MAJESTY"

Colonel Willard proposes a toast, "TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF WEST GERMANY"  
All in attendance respond, "TO THE PRESIDENT"

Colonel Scott proposed a toast, "TO HER MAJESTY QUEEN JULIANA"  
All in attendance respond, "TO HER MAJESTY"

Major Schmidt proposes a toast, "TO HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH  
THE SECOND"  
All in attendance respond, "TO HER MAJESTY"

Colonel Leiberich proposes a toast, "TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED  
STATES"  
All in attendance respond, "TO THE PRESIDENT"

General Berry announces "PLEASE BE SEATED"  
All are seated

General Berry makes brief introductory remarks

General Berry announces he would like to introduce the guests at his table

Colonel Willard, Colonel Scott, and so forth, do so likewise

Foreign guests rise when announced, and then take seats

Cadet McFadden proposes a toast, "TO OUR GUESTS" All USMA personnel  
rise and respond, "HEAR, HEAR"

General Berry announces "PLEASE BE SEATED FOR DINNER"  
All take seats and the dinner is served

(Coffee and cigars are served and General Berry, "lights up" while the smoking  
lamp, at a separate table, is simultaneously illuminated to indicate that the  
"Smoking lamp is lit")

Colonel Tanzer makes remarks as to welcome of the guests, remarks as to the  
history of the cadet exchange, and the purpose of the exchange program

Colonel Tanzer then introduces the Hellcats for a brief presentation of field music

2050 Hellcats make their presentation

2100 General Berry makes concluding remarks, then announces "RETIRE THE  
COLORS"

General Berry bangs the gavel twice and announces "PLEASE JOIN ME FOR  
AN AFTER DINNER DRINK"  
(Chimes indicate closing)

Guests adjourn to the bar area

2200 Guests depart  
(approx)