

The Worshipful Company of Tax Advisers



A LIVERY COMPANY DINNER

Introduction

This guide is written to give an idea of what to expect at a City Livery Dinner. If you have never been to a Livery Dinner before you are bound to have a wonderful evening. If you are unsure about anything, please ask your host or any member of the Company.

Livery Dinners are usually held in one of 40 Livery Halls within the City of London, at Mansion House, Guildhall or another prestigious location. They are rather formal yet fun. They include many customs and traditions, some dating back many hundreds of years.

They may be held to celebrate a specific event in the Livery Company calendar or to mark a special occasion.

Pour memoire card

You will usually receive a pour memoire card in advance of the Dinner. This will clearly indicate the start time of the event. You should generally aim to arrive in time to comfortably attend the Reception before being called to take your seat for the meal.

What to wear?

There are two forms of dress usually worn at formal Dinners within the City and these will usually be described on your pour memoire card – Dinner Jacket (sometimes referred to as Black tie) or Evening Dress (white tie)

Dinner Jacket

For gentlemen this means a white dress shirt with turn down collar, black bow tie, black dinner jacket and black evening trousers, black socks and black shoes (ideally patent evening shoes). Any waistcoat or cummerbund worn should be black and not coloured.

For ladies this means cocktail or evening dress. The dress does not have to be full length but very short dresses are not appropriate. Trousers/trouser suits are also appropriate. Shoulders should be covered either by the dress itself or by a suitable jacket or wrap.

Evening Dress

For gentlemen this means white Marcella/Linen dress shirt with stiff front and wing collar, white bow tie and white Marcella waistcoat, black evening tailcoat and black evening trousers, black socks and black patent shoes.

For ladies this means a full length evening dress, ensuring shoulders are covered, without immodest slits. Wearing of gloves is now less common but strictly correct for “state occasions”.

Badges

The Master, Past Masters, Wardens and Court Assistants should wear their badges upon a neck riband if advised “with badges” for events organised by the Company. If you are invited as a personal guest to another Livery Company, Ward Club or other City Institution clear

advice should be sought from your host. It is only usual to wear your badge if specifically invited as a guest of the other Company as a formal WCOTA representative.

Decorations

These are usually only worn with Evening Dress, although occasionally you will see “Dinner Jacket with Decorations”. Any medals worn (on the left side) should be miniature and be mounted in order of precedence. (Further advice available from the Clerk). Occasionally full size medals are worn with Morning dress (mainly for state events, or those organised by Orders of Chivalry) or with a lounge suit (Remembrance events organised by the Royal British Legion).

General Dinner Rules

It is correct etiquette to avoid getting up from your seat until after the Loyal toast and apart from the most exceptional circumstances you should not leave the event until after the Master and Principal guests have retired from the table .

Mobile phones

Mobile phones should be switched to silent mode when attending Dinners. The sending of text messages or using other forms of social media is not considered appropriate at these occasions.

Photography

A Livery Dinner invitation gives access to a splendidly decorated Livery Hall or other unique venue. Please ensure that you seek advice on whether or not photographs either with a camera or your mobile phone may be taken. You are reminded however that the actual taking of photographs during Dinner is regarded as a serious breach of etiquette. Companies will often engage official photographers to record their events and copies may usually be obtained afterwards for a modest charge.

Reception

On arrival at the Hall where the Dinner is taking place Liverymen and their guests will then be encouraged to join the formal reception by giving their name to the Beadle, who will announce them as they approach the Receiving Line. Guests will need to announce their name clearly to the Beadle, or show him the name on their copy of the seating plan. The receiving line consists of the Master and the Wardens.

Moving in to Dinner

At the end of the Reception the Beadle will announce that Dinner is served. All Liverymen and their guests are asked to move into the dining room promptly, so that Dinner can be served without

delay. When all are at their places, the Beadle will announce the entrance of the Master, Wardens, the Principal Guest(s), the Clerk and the Honorary Chaplain. They will process into the dining room to the musical accompaniment and it is customary for the Company to clap in time to the music until they reach their seats.

Grace

The Beadle will announce the Chaplain who will say Grace.

During Dinner

It is customary for there to be some form of musical entertainment if time allows, whilst the port and coffee is served (tea is available on request). Port is always passed to the left.

Taking wine with new Freemen and newly advanced Liverymen

If new Freemen have been admitted or Liverymen have been clothed and welcomed into the Company before the Dinner, the Master may stand with a glass of wine in his hand and ask them by name to take wine with him. The new Liverymen then stand in their turn with a glass of wine in their hand and silently toast the Master, who returns the toast.

Sung Grace

Traditionally the Company sings the Grace after eating. The words are provided in the menu.

The Loving Cup Ceremony

The cup is traditionally filled with spiced wine, immemorially termed "Sack". The custom is said to have originated following the murder of King Edward the Martyr, who was stabbed while drinking by his step-mother Elfrida at Corfe Castle on 18th March 978 AD. Upon rising to drink from the cup, the person to the right and to the left of the drinker also stands. The drinker then bows to the neighbour to whom the cup will pass, who removes the cover with his right hand. This ensures that the "dagger arm" is employed and eliminates the risk of treachery. Meanwhile, the neighbour on the drinker's other side turns his back on him ostensibly to protect him from attack from behind whilst in the act of drinking. Having drunk, the drinker applies the napkin to the lip of the cup, the lid is replaced and the drinker and his neighbour bow to one another before passing the cup. The first drinker then turns about to protect the second drinker from attack; thus there are always three people on their feet, the drinker being in the middle. If you do not wish to drink from the cup, it is sufficient gesture of loyalty to receive and pass the cup on to the next guest with a slight bow.

Toasts and Speeches

There are usually five toasts and three speeches. The procedure is as follows:

- The Master announces the toast to The Queen, by striking the gavel, three times, waiting for silence, standing and proclaiming:

Ladies and Gentlemen, The Queen. The music for the first verse of the National Anthem will be played whilst the Company sings, and then the Company will reply in unison: The Queen.

- The second toast is to The Royal Family. The procedure is the same, but the Master reads out the following lists: The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; The Prince of Wales, The Duchess of Cornwall, and other Members of the Royal Family. The music plays, but on this occasion the Company does not sing; and the response by the Company is: the Royal Family.
- The third toast is to The Lord Mayor and City of London Corporation.

There may then be presentations, for example Presentations to Award Winners.

- The first speech is the Welcome to the Guests, followed by the Toast to the Guests. Guests should remain seated whilst the members of the Livery toast them.
- The second speech is the Response by the Principal Guest, ending with the fifth Toast: The Worshipful Company of Tax Advisers coupled with the name of the Master.
- The third speech is the Response by the Master.

Leaving the Dining Room

At the end of the Dinner – usually after the Master has finished his speech – the Beadle will announce that the Master and Wardens invite the Company and their guests to join them in a stirrup cup, and please to make way for the Master, Wardens and their Principal Guest(s). This is the cue for all to stand and clap in time as the Master, Wardens and Principal Guest(s) leave the dining room.

Miscellaneous (various)

- Senior Military officers entitled to wear ceremonial swords in military parade dress do not need to wear them for formal dinners.
- Spurs may be worn by those serving in regiments entitled to wear them, provided they do not damage furniture.
- Diners should make every attempt to find more imaginative topics of conversation to discuss than their everyday work – unless they professionally fly space-craft, drive on Top Gear, sail an aircraft carrier, mine gold or work for the Security Services.
- Religion, personal relationships and politics are not suitable subjects for the dinner table.
- Diners will not swear or use abusive language, whatever the provocation.
- The Navy drink the loyal toast sitting down; the Army and RAF drink the loyal toast standing to attention.
- Clerks, like Members of Parliament, are described as Honourable if they are or have been a Barrister; Gallant if they are serving or have served in HM Forces; and Learned if they have studied for a degree (although the result of their studies is immaterial).