

Best 'toasts' come from the heart

By GREGG HOWARD
Copley News Service

Here's to the groom with a bride so fair, and here's to the bride with a groom so rare.

People have been marking memorable occasions with toasts to health and happiness for about as long as they've been celebrating the occasions themselves. Toasting is a tradition - a tradition in which champagne is the usual beverage and the most difficult part is deciding what to say.

"We receive many inquiries at the winery about what are the most appropriate toasts," said Gary Heck, president of California's Korbel Champagne Cellars. "I suppose people just assume that since we make champagne, we must know something about proposing toasts, as well."

Basically, the best toasts are simple and come from the heart. The proper way to extend a toast is to stand and

announce loud enough for all to hear that you'd like to propose a toast to the bride and groom. Make sure everyone has a full glass with which to toast, Heck said.

Then, turn toward the bride and groom, raise your glass and proceed with your message of warm wishes. You also can elaborate with a short anecdote or appropriate quotation. Whatever your words, remember that toasting is an opportunity to say something special about people you love.

For being such a touching tradition, toasting has unusual beginnings. Heck told the following history of how the word "toast" came into being.

The toast began as just that - a piece of

dry toast or a crouton added to a drink as an extra fillip of flavor. By the mid-17th century, any type of food placed in a drink was referred to as a toast.

Toast came to its present meaning in 1709, when an admirer of a celebrated beauty, who was soaking in a British resort bath, said that although he didn't care for the liquor of the bath, he'd be pleased to have its toast. The lady then became the "toast of the town."

After that time, toasting became increasingly popular. The toastmaster became a necessary personality at official functions and banquets, books on toasting were written, and many newspa-

pers ran columns with an astonishing array of toasts to almost any occasion.

Indeed, it's difficult to imagine some occasions - such as weddings - without a toast. Glasses raised to the bride and groom has become an integral part of the wedding festivities.

Aside from the reception, where the best man traditionally offers the first toast to the bride and groom, there are many other events associated with weddings that call for toasting. The father of the bride traditionally toasts his daughter and future son-in-law at the engagement party, and the best man toasts the bride and groom at the rehearsal dinner.

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