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Cheers to festive toasts

Language Matters

It's that time again when people get together for festive celebrations, often accompanied by at least one toast to the new year. So what do people say in other languages to toast to the past, present, and future?

As might be expected, many people across languages focus on wishes for good health. The well-known "Sláinte" means "health" in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic, though it is pronounced differently ("slan-shuh" in Irish and "slanj-a-vah" in Scottish Gaelic).

In Spanish, people say "Salud" (pronounced "sah-lood"), and in French the saying is "Santé" (pronounced "sohn-tey"), both of which come from the original Latin "salus", meaning "health". Speakers of Hebrew extend these wishes a bit further, toasting "L'chaim" (pronounced "l-xhaim") and meaning "to life".

Italian speakers sometimes say "Salute" (pronounced "sa-lu-tey"), which shares the origin of the Spanish and French language wishes for health. However, sometimes Italian speakers also say "Cin cin" (pronounced "chin chin").

While this expression is often thought nowadays to resemble the sound made when glasses clink together, the origin is actually from Chinese-speaking sailors who traded with Italian sailors. In Chinese, "qing qing" nowadays means "please please", but historical linguists have also pointed to it originally being used in greeting to welcome others.

Ukrainian and Polish speakers also both traditionally toast to a person's health – "Na zdorov'ya" in Ukrainian and "Na zdrowie" ("na zdrovee") in Polish.

But Ukrainian speakers may also include a toast to celebrate meeting together ("Za zustrich"), a toast to friendship ("Za druzba"), a toast to happiness ("Za shchastya"), and even a toast to love ("Za lyubov"). Of course, some jump straight to the point with a simple "Bud'mo" (meaning "cheers" and literally translated as "let's be").

There are also languages whose speakers have toasts that encompass more than one meaning. For example, if you are toasting in Samoan, Tokelauan, or Tuvaluan, you can expect to hear "Manuia" (pronounced "ma-nu-ee-a"). While often translated simply as "cheers", "manuia" encompasses many different sentiments at once, including wishes for health, happiness, prosperity and success in life.

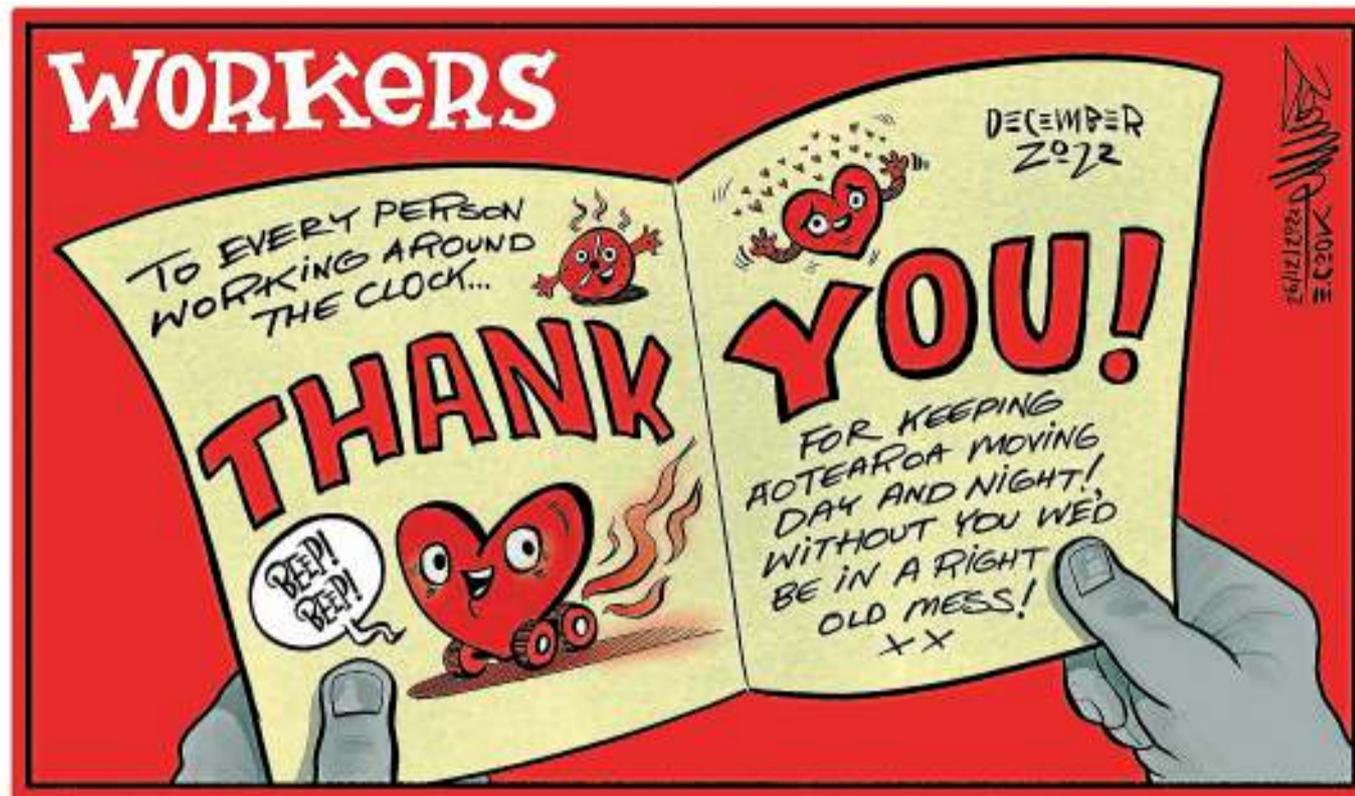
Another well-known toast is "Prost" (pronounced as written) for German speakers. While often translated as "cheers", "prost" comes originally from Latin "prōsit", which means "may it be beneficial" and was used by Latin speakers in a way roughly equivalent to the modern-day usage of "bless you" in English.

Finally, if you find yourself toasting with speakers of Chinese, you may hear "gānbēi" (pronounced "gan-bey"), or "kampai" ("kam-pie") with Japanese speakers. "Gānbēi" and "kampai" are frequently translated as "cheers", but both literally mean "dry cup" in their respective languages, indicating what should remain following the toast.

While many other languages also have cheers to offer, the overarching sentiment remains – best wishes for a happy and healthy new year!

Contact Us

Send your language questions to opinion@stuff.co.nz. Not all will be answered.



A wave and a smile for road workers, not abuse

Faced with increasing violence and abuse, road workers are donning body-cams, writes Alan Pollard.

As you travel over the holidays, spare a thought for the roading contractors working to keep roads safe and open.

Much has been written recently about the state of our roads, with many stories about damage to vehicles from potholes and deteriorating road surfaces, as well as catastrophic damage to the network from severe weather.

I have also heard of cases where our traffic controllers and people working to fix these very issues are facing anger, abuse and even violence from the public.

It is understandable people want to spend their holiday season with family, rather than sitting at a roadwork site.

I hope people can also understand that summer provides optimal conditions for road maintenance, which can't be done unless weather conditions are right, so it's inevitable the road-surfacing season will coincide with holiday travel.

Weather and road conditions aside, the key thing for people to remember is that the person behind the stop-go sign, or operating a roller to compact the road surface behind the road cones, is working to make sure there actually is a road, and that it's safe to use.



Their focus is on completing the roadworks as quickly and efficiently as possible. Just as they work to make sure travellers can get to their destinations safely, likewise the workers need to be able to complete their tasks and return safely to their families each day.

So it is disappointing to see a significant increase in violence toward and abuse of traffic management and road maintenance workers, and situations where body cameras are needed to protect road crews from abuse, threats and assault.

These teams are doing their jobs and what the contracts require. People should be held responsible for their behaviour and police will take strong action.

Abuse and enforcement aside, it's also disappointing to witness vehicles speeding through work sites.

I have heard of traffic controllers injured by flying rocks; at its worst this can be fatal, as we have seen when lives have been lost on sites due to drivers ignoring temporary speed restrictions.

As well as the danger, it can damage the work done to the roads. In turn, this means remedial work is needed, resulting in another traffic control site and fresh delays.

Roadwork sites are set up to achieve three key purposes: to provide an environment within which the roadworks can be done safely and efficiently; to ensure the safety of our road workers; and to minimise disruption to travellers.

Contractors know people don't want to be delayed. They are trying to do their job as well as possible.

The people behind the road cones are often skilled civil tradespeople, responsible for working with heavy machinery and hazardous materials like bituminous binders.

They know their work, and how to keep their team safe. And they deserve a wave and a smile, not abuse.

So next time you encounter roadworks, picture your workplace is the roadwork site and you are the person working behind the road cones.

Follow all instructions, keep to the required speed limits and be sure to acknowledge the traffic management team. They are good, hardworking people with real feelings, and they are working for you.

Alan Pollard is chief executive of the industry organisation Civil Contractors New Zealand.

The Telegraph

No time for a US wobble

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to the United States is emblematic of the total failure of the Russian invasion of Ukraine to subjugate its people. The offensive began in February with an assumption that Kyiv would swiftly fall and the government would be replaced by a pro-Moscow puppet regime.

Putin underestimated the Western response, and understandably so, given the almost total absence of any comeback for his 2014 annexing of Crimea. President

Viewpoint

Zelenskyy has been the greatest champion not just of his country's national identity but also of its extraordinary resilience. But he also knows that Ukraine faces pressure to reach some sort of accommodation.

These wobbles have been evident in America recently, hence his visit and Congressional speech. Winston Churchill addressed both Houses, in December 1941. The US, he said, was the guarantor of eventual victory over the aggressors, just as it is now against Russia. This is no time for Washington to soften its resolve.