



NAUTICAL TERMS & NAVAL EXPRESSIONS

Holiday Edition

We'll explore the origin of some common and peculiar nautical terms and expressions used in your U.S. Navy in this special holiday edition of our Nautical Terms and Naval Expressions series.

CUPPA JOE

['kəp\ə\jō] noun

A cup of coffee. When Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels signed General Order 99 in 1914 prohibiting “the use or introduction for drinking purposes of alcoholic liquors on board any vessel, or within any Navy yard or station,” coffee took the place for the daily ration of grog, or rum. Sailors referred to coffee as “Joe” in honor of the Secretary himself.



MESS

['mes] noun

Originating from the Middle English term *mes*, meaning “a dish,” mess is used to refer to food or food related terms. For example, the mess deck on a ship is where the galley is located and messmates are Sailors who eat together in good friendship.

NAVY CHEST

['nā-vē \ 'chest\] noun

A protruding stomach. A seasoned Sailor will proudly sport one of these. It is the reward for enjoying an abundant Thanksgiving feast or any fine holiday meal.



SUGAR REPORT

['shu-gər\ 'ri-port\] noun

A letter from home. When the warships take you leagues away from home and into foreign shores, there is little better than a letter from that special gal or guy to raise your spirits.

TARPAULIN MUSTER

['tär-pol-ən \ 'məs-tər\] noun

The hat passing of many years ago. A “tarpaulin” was the black tarred hat that was passed around amongst a group of Sailors for a collection of money. In times of need, crews would hold a tarpaulin muster for the family of a deceased shipmate. Today, Sailors hold collections in many ways for those in need, especially during the holiday season.



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