

How to change your boat's name without tempting fate

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Tempting fate. It's not a thing any of us likes to do very often, unless you have a death wish, or just like to live on the edge. But most of us like our comfort, and actively try to fend off any of those little twists and surprises that could throw a kink into our securities.

Boats are like people. They have a history, a legacy of hours behind them. Memories of every little cruise out to the point, or the longer jaunts to the secluded, secret spots down the Bay.

When a boat changes owners, its name usually changes as well. But, unfortunately, most people in this "enlightened" day and age ignore one of the most basic tenets of seafaring folk and take much to lightly the fine art of dealing with the gods. A vessel's moniker, seemingly only as lasting as the next coat of paint, is nothing short of the most important item to consider after buying a new boat.

Most people, preferring to shy away from tempting the unknown, will just keep the same name. Sure, they'll use some excuse like they don't have time, or that good boat graphics are too expensive, but they're really just trying not to anger Poseidon, the lord of the deep.

Those people are right to fear. The bottoms of all of the seven seas are littered with the shells of boats whose captains got on the wrong side of Poseidon. Think back to that guy you knew a few years back who bought himself an expensive, shiny new 37-ft. plaything with all of the bells and whistles only to be stuck at the dock all summer with engine trouble. Ask yourself, did he really buy a lemon or was he just too careless with those important few letters across the transom?

So if it's such a risk, you ask, why change it at all? Why not just keep whatever name the boat comes with? Well, there are the obvious reasons. Who would want to be the 30th boat in the marina named "Fanta-Sea"? And something like "French Tickler" with pictures of topless mermaids doesn't exactly make for a good weekend getaway boat with the wife and kids.

But perhaps the best reason of all is that it's your boat. All of the good times and adventures to come on board will be yours. With every voyage, every new excursion, that boat will take on your characteristics, your personality -- and its name should reflect that.

Spending all those great moments on a boat christened by someone you don't even know can be like sleeping with another man's wife. Sure, it's fun, but ultimately, it'll be unsatisfying.

What can you do to safely change your new boat's title and appease those testy

gods? The same tried and true method that gets so many of us through those tortuous family get-togethers -- lots of booze.

According to legend, each and every vessel is recorded by name in a great log book on the bottom of the sea by Poseidon himself. The first step is to ask the great lord of the seas to have the boat's old name stricken from that log.

To do this, you first have to rid the boat of each and every trace of the old name. And be thorough. Something as small as a key ring fallen behind a seat cushion with the offending name on it could be seen as an affront to the gods and lead to doom.

Now it's time to break out the champagne. And don't skimp -- the gods will know. By the way, this entire exercise is an excellent opportunity to gather together a group of friends and celebrate.

After wiping off all traces of the old name and popping the cork on the bubbly, take a position on the bow. Make sure you have some little trinket bearing the old name. This represents the last vestiges of that name.

First, catch Poseidon's attention by calling his name. To do this, say things like: "Oh great and mighty ruler of the seas." Gods like that sort of thing, makes them feel important.

After summoning Poseidon, ask him to purge the name from the log and drop the trinket over the bow. And for his trouble, pour a goodly portion of the bottle of champagne after it. Then spread around the rest amongst yourself and your friends and drink up.

Now the old name will be no more. The next step is to ask Poseidon for another favor, to list the new name of your choice in his log book. It's a little like dealing with an accountant. To do one simple thing, like replacing one name with another, you have to go through a half-dozen complicated steps.

What you want to do now is pop open a fresh bottle of champagne and summon up Poseidon again, this time making sure to call him gracious and kind. A little sucking up never hurts.

Ask him, if he wouldn't mind too much, if he could list your boat's new name in his records. Then pour yourself a glass of champagne, maybe one for your first mate and pour the rest over the bow. Nothing like greasing the skids with a little libation.

Now, if you like, you can also ask the Four Winds—Boreas, Zephyrus, Eurus and Notus—for their blessings. I can hear some of you now, "I have twin 454s, what do I need the four winds for?" Well, you probably don't, but it never hurts to ask.

Pop yourself open another bottle and split it four ways, pouring some over the east, west, north and south sides of your boat. Ask the winds, in your best and most humble voice and manner, for their help and good fortune in the future.

After that, you should be ok. Your boat will have a new name and the gods will be

happy to see you on your merry way. Doom will have been averted. Now it's time to honor your guests by circulating a few more bottles and celebrating good times to come.

One last thing. The next morning, you should once again take a position on the bow, this time with a glass of water and two packets of Alka Seltzer. Drop one packet into your water and toss the other overboard. After all of that champagne the day before, Poseidon will thank you for it.