

EATING

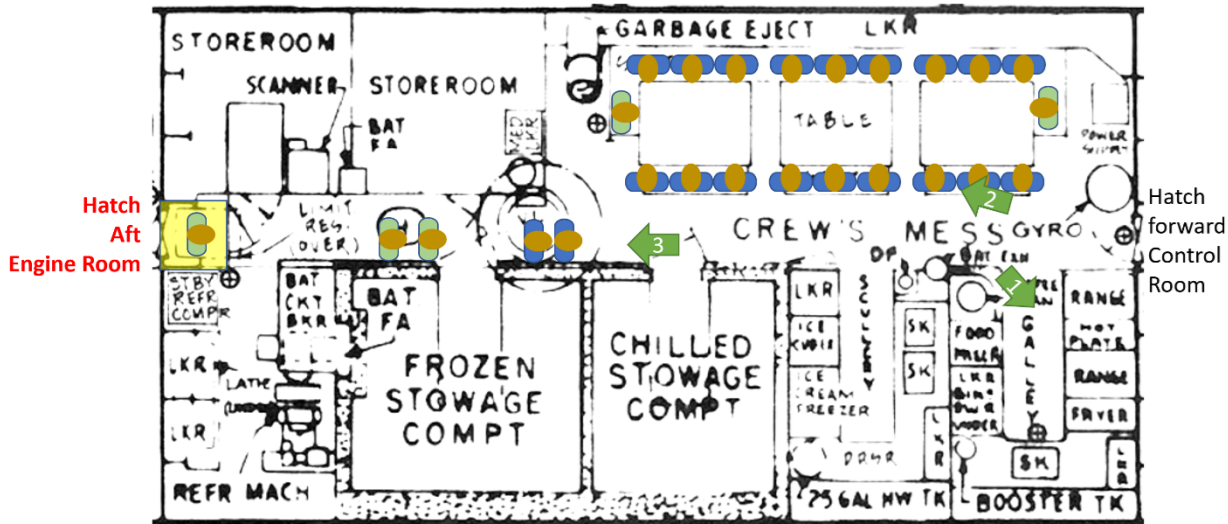
One of the fundamental things in life is eating. You start life off “eating” when you want, simply requested by crying the proper way. As you grow you become more regulated and get accustomed to Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner. This is the training and adaptation that family and society provided you. It sets you up to live a good life with all the nutritional value that those who prepare the food provide to those that consume food. Eating the food is one thing and you may be one of the ones who know how to do the preparation. But typically, those that don’t know how to make the food participate by setting up the meals to be consumed and those that clean up afterward, such that eating is a healthy and sustaining activity. This all changes on Submarines.

In a separate SeeStory in this ebook is an explanation of the 18-hour day. There are actually two stories, Part 1 and Part 2, and both deal with meals as bookends to time periods within each modified day on board a submarine. It is mentioned there in those two stories that there is a fourth meal that joins the basic three. These four meals divide the day up into four equally timed parts of the day. This story will provide a little more information about the four meals but will also explain WHERE you eat. The MESS DECKS. (Appropriately named.)

First the four meals, the first is MID-RATS, short for Midnight Rations. MID-RATS starts at 11:30PM on the 24-daylight regulated clocks, and it ends at 00:30AM on that 24-hour clock. Some boats are more forgiving, and the time span is two hours long 11:00PM to 01:00AM. This timing allows for approximately 25 to 30 individuals to come onto the Mess Decks and eat the meal. Again, as stated in the other stories, those who are going “ON Watch” eat first, and those that are coming “OFF Watch” eat second. And then those that are coming off watch, some of them hang around the Mess Deck to play games, read, or if the timing is right watch a movie or two.

The next thing you must be aware of is the “style” of the boat. Some Mess Cooks served the meals “Cafeteria style” where others served it “Family style”. I don’t remember ever eating a meal Family style on the diesel boats – the space available (3 tables) just didn’t allow for it. AND the Cafeteria style on the diesel boats was different from that on the Nucs. The food server on the diesel boats loaded up your plate for you, sort of like they do in school cafeteria’s whereas on the Nucs, you went by a counter and loaded up the plate the way you wished it to be filled. On the Nucs it was also possible to have it combinational. Where you started off cafeteria style selecting the food and portions you wanted and then during the meals the mess cranks (Junior people), would bring around more, while you were seated.

The next page will present to you the two floor plans of the two classes of submarines that I rode. And yes, every class of submarine is different, and each one progressing over time incorporate more creature comforts for the crew. Eating on a 563 class Diesel boat was very different, as I have started to explain from that of the 594 class (that I didn’t ride) and the 637 class that I did. And now in the fifty some years since my “rider” days, the boats I have toured as guests are very different in layout as each generation comes along.

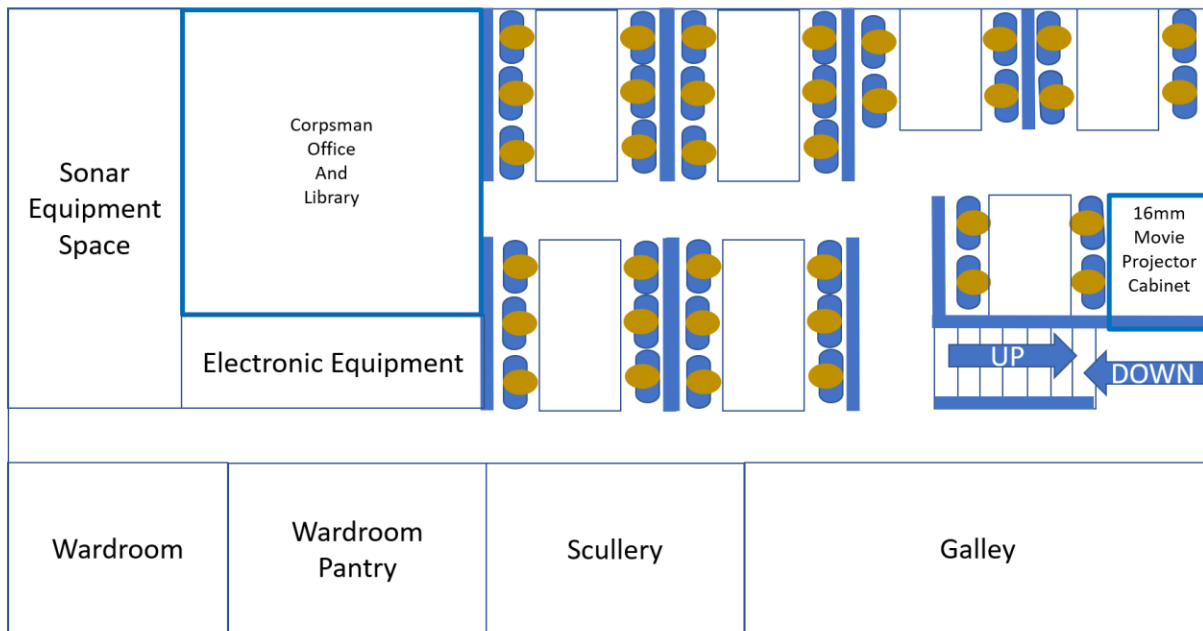


The Green arrows 1,2 and 3 show the camera perspective in the [TANG Video](#)

Shown above is the floor plan for the 563 class boats, and I want to draw particular attention to the red lettering and yellow highlighted area on the left. Most of the Crew's sleeping quarters were back aft, aft of the engine room, in the After Torpedo Room. IF you were going ON Watch, you were most likely coming from that part of the boat. So, upon waking up or being woken up for your watch, you sleepily came forward through the engine room and through the normally closed engine room hatch.

The Aft Engine Room hatch was almost always closed primarily because you spent a lot of time on the surface, and one or all three of the diesels would be running. If you were submerged, at periscope depth and it was night-time only one of the diesels, perhaps two would be running. The diesels would get their air from the snorkel mast which was all the way up in the Control Room, and the hatch that separates the crews mess from the Control Room would be open. If this was the case, then there would be a torrent of air flowing through Crews Mess trying to get to the diesel's intake as fast as it could because they needed lots of air. So you would open, and come through the hatch and then immediately turn and close the hatch because in that little air lock you would not be able to open the regular door there, because of the air pressure. The air trying to get to the running diesels would hold that door shut. Once the hatch was shut and latched, then it was possible to open the regular door; and you could take your place in line for whatever meal it was that was being served. Now then before I start the next paragraph about seniority, I will mention that IF you were submerged AND the diesels were NOT running, that meant that you were running on the batteries. The air lock hatch/door entry to crew's mess would not be an issue, and you could take your place in line for LUNCH. The other three meals of the day, Breakfast, Dinner and Mid-Rats, the airlock was an issue.

Now then, seniority. As I said most of the crew slept back aft, but some slept in the forward half all the way up in the Forward Torpedo Room. Those that slept up there were the senior enlisted guys. Not the Chiefs, or Officers, they had their own spaces and eating areas, which of course I was not familiar with. Just the 1st Class and below ate in the Crew's Mess, BUT we ate in the order of seniority. So, when lining up to get your food, you let more senior people (blue bodies above) get in front and then the junior (green bodies) were at the end of the line and NOT in the best seating positions, shown in the upper right corner.



Shown here is my own drawing of the 637 class submarines that I rode. There is not as much detail here as the drawing for the 563 class Diesel on the previous page. Skipping over boats like the Nautilus and other one of a kind Nucs, the 594 were few in number and the workload was being taken over by the vastly superior 637 Sturgeon Class submarines and compared to the previous boats this was luxury.

First note that there was sufficient seating for 36 enlisted guys at a time. Virtually every member of the oncoming or off-going watch could be seated in their allotted time, there was hardly any need to stand in line – unless the meal was being served Cafeteria Style. Again, the Chiefs and the Officers had their own eating spaces, so it was only the 1st Class and below that ate here.

Yes, the meals were prepped here in the common Galley, but the fruit of their labor was sent to the other two areas other than Crews Mess. And Family Style fit so much better since everyone could enter the mess decks as they wished, take an open seat and serve themselves from the plates and bowls placed on the table by the junior mess cooks.

When you were done eating, and this is true for the Diesel boats as well, you would gather up the plates, bowls and utensils that you had used and return them to the Scullery. And this brings up the final aspect, the “flow”. Everyone’s sleeping quarters were forward of this compartment, so you entered on the left, and when it was time to go on watch you went aft to the up or down ladders shown. The only things aft of the Crews Mess was the Freezer and Room temperature food storage areas, and the laundry. (And OBTW, on the diesel boats there was no laundry.) IF you were coming off watch and wanted to eat you came up or down the stairways shown on the right and entered the Mess Deck from those two points. And when you were done eating – you either stayed to play games, read or watched the movie – then off to bed by going down the middle level passageway to your berthing space.

FINALLY -- EATING

Now that you know how, where, and when you were going to eat on a Submarine, it came down to WHAT you were going to eat. This also touches on another SeeStory called "Loading Stores".

It was up to the Ship's senior chef to work with the Storekeeper to come up with what food would be ordered from whatever port you were going to be in. The ship's schedule came into play with an eye on a general schedule of port calls along the way. The worst-case scenario would be a long run. I will use the example of my one long run (also a SeeStory) called 89 days, where we did run a little short. I remember this number very well, because I bid on the "Last Jar of Peanut Butter". On that run, the Cook had ordered sufficient food for 34,000 meals. Which had broken down into three separate overall divisions of "Freshness". There were items that could be consumed without anything going bad for a week to 10 days. Then there were frozen items that would last almost indefinitely, except for ripped and breakage of the packaging. Then there were items that could be kept for up to 30 to 45 days at room temperature, and finally canned goods.

Things like Milk and Fresh Eggs fell into the first category along with fresh vegetables and salad fixings. Things like steaks, fish and other meat products could be frozen for a good deal of time. But things like Milk and Eggs I missed big time, because powdered versions of those items were just not as good as when they were fresh. There is just no way to have "Sunny side Powdered Eggs".

I remember visitors from other services coming on board for guest meals in port and them saying that we ate like royalty. The steaks we ate in port and for the first few days were indeed spectacular. I remember eating 5 steaks at one sitting; but again, that was to make up for the time when we would be at sea for a while and items like that were just not available anymore. That 89-day run that we made – we did run out of a lot of "stuff". When we pulled in we were down to Lime Kool-Aid as the only flavored drink available and bread. Fortunately, I still had my last jar of peanut butter, with ample justification for the \$25 per swipe fee I charged others on the last few days of that run.

Storage of the food was a science unto itself. When it came down to the canned goods, remember these were 1-gallon cans of food, four to a box. During the loading of stores not covered in that SeeStory was the fact that the boat's senior chef stayed at the bottom of the ladder of the Weapons loading hatch. He had his list with him and as the boxes were handed down the ladder, he would tell the guy at the bottom of the ladder where that particular box would be stored. And that guy would pass it either forward or aft based on that information. Every dude in line passed that info along with that box as it went from hand to hand, to its destination. This was the method of storing the food in the order in which it would be used. All the floors to and from the berthing spaces and the berthing spaces themselves had the canned food stored in layers, and those layers were determined by the order in which we would be using them. We literally ate our way down to the decks themselves day by day and week by week; uniformly such that tripping hazards were at a minimum.

Eating on a submarine was a totally different experience from every other place on earth.