

Dinning Etiquette by Richie Dayo Johnson



Table manners are like accents; easy to learn but difficult to get right. To my acute embarrassment a guest at an event at which I gave the after-dinner speech was given a hot towel after a three-course meal. He proceeded to use it vigorously to wash his face, rub his expanse of bald head, back of his neck as well as his hands.

Hot towels in restaurants are like fingerbowls and are intended for light ablutions at the table. They are primarily meant for cleaning the hands and the odd decorous dab of the lips is acceptable.

Also at an event on the Sunborn Yacht in London a few years ago, a dashing young man who felt lost in the table setting of a fund-raising dinner did not hesitate to ask how to manoeuvre the silverware maze.

Table settings are like road maps that guide you through the courses of a meal.

Tips to dine at ease:

1. Forks (except the seafood fork), are placed to the left of the plate.
2. Glasses or crystal stem-ware are to the right of the dinner plate.

III. Knives and spoons are placed at the right side of the plate.

1. Remember the "etiquette rule", solids to the left, liquids to the right.
2. Napkins should be spread on the knees immediately on sitting down. They are used for dabbing and not scraping the lips. They are to remain

on your lap until the completion of the meal. However if you need to excuse yourself for a moment or two, make sure you leave them on the chair and not the table. At the end of a meal, they are left scrunched up by the side of the place setting.

3. During the course of a meal you pick up the silverware pieces from the outside in, toward your plate. Remember that you should work from the outside in; not hold your knife like a dagger or your spoon like a shovel.

VII. Finger bowls are provided whenever foods are to be eaten by hand. They are generally made from silver, filled with tepid water and sometimes livened up by a floating lemon or lime. The form is to dip your fingers gently into the water and then pat, not rub, them with a napkin.

First Course

Generally, the first course is eaten with the fork alone unless it comprises awkwardly sized things like large prawns. Bread rolls are eaten with the left hand, and are always broken into bite sized pieces and eaten individually. It is vulgar to bite into bread. If butter is used, a small pat is taken from a butter dish and placed on the edge of a side plate and each piece is buttered individually and not eaten like a hamburger.

Main Course

Eaten with a knife and fork – fork on the left and knife on the right.

The use of hands to pick up small bones to eat inaccessible bits is theoretically acceptable but should be avoided if not confident. However stray bones are spat discretely into the left fist and placed on the side of your plate, and not, except in a life threatening emergency, extricated with the fingers.

Pudding – sweet, afters or dessert are eaten with a spoon and fork.

Wines and drinks

It is bad manners to refill your glass without offering to do the same for your neighbours beforehand. Never fill a glass more than two-thirds full. Hold it by the stem when drinking and do not gulp it down as if you have been in the

desert for several hours. Also avoid letting your glass look over-fingered and smeared with unappetising food particles. Port is generally brought in with cheese. The usual procedure is for the host to serve the guest on his right, then himself and pass the decanter or bottle to the left.

VIII. Good manners dictate that you order your meal through your host rather than direct to the waiter. When in doubt reduce the name of your dish to its barest minimum if it has a long and complicated name.

1. Men should not sit down until the all women are seated. It is considered polite to encourage ladies and guests to seat facing into the restaurant or room so that they get the most interesting view.
2. When hosting a dinner, don't forget your guest's special dietary needs. (Religious observances, vegetarian, food allergies, etc.)
3. The person paying the bill always tastes the wine. If a man is being wined and dined by a woman, then it is she who performs the tasting no matter how much the waiter may insist otherwise.

XII. Do try a little of everything on your plate if you're a guest. Never be too shy about asking exactly what a certain dish constitutes.

XIII. Treat your waiter with care and consideration. Your food bill is probably many times his wage for the day.

XIV. It is considered rude to sit with your legs crossed at table. Do not swing your chairs.

1. Avoid using your mobile phone when in restaurants. It considered good manners to leave them with the head-waiter or concierge who takes calls and interrupts if considered important.

XVI. Do compliment the host/ess on the preparation, tastiness or presentation of the meal. If at a restaurant, send a word of appreciation to the chef. They hardly get direct compliments from patrons.

The rules of dining etiquette exist not only to keep other people happy. They are also – and some would argue, most importantly – about ensuring that you have an enjoyable time yourself. Remember to thank your host and pay compliments. The recipient should thank his/her host even he/she does not want to see them again.

Looking forward to shaking hands with you.

Cheers,

RDJ

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