

Dining Etiquette

Good manners help make a lasting impression on prospective employers and clients. The difference could give you the edge in getting a job. The following items are designed to help dispel the mystery of which utensil to use, how to use your napkin and other do's and don'ts of dining etiquette.

RSVP It is a courteous gesture to respond in timely manner to the host. It helps the host and the caterer plan a successful event.

Making a reservation: Be on time. Many restaurants do not take reservations, but some accept an advance call and will put your group on a waiting list.

Napkins

- Napkins may be placed in your lap soon after being seated. You may also follow your hosts lead.
- If you need to excuse yourself from the table, leave your napkin on the chair.
- Raise the napkin to your mouth to blot.
- When the meal is finished (when everyone is done), place the napkin to the right of the dinner plate.

Ordering

- Decide quickly what you want. Don't appear indecisive.
- If you are unsure about a menu item, ask your server.
- The server will typically direct who orders first. Sometimes the host will direct.
- Don't order the high end (expensive) items on the menu unless your host recommends a certain item.
- Abstain from alcohol whenever you can. If you choose to drink, have one drink.
- Order menu items that are simple to eat. You don't want to deal with drippy, gooey, greasy, finger food or anything that will splash on your clothes.

Silverware

- Work from the outside in. Left fork is salad, inside fork is dinner. Small fork at the top of the plate is the dessert fork. Right side of plate has the spoon outside, knife inside.
- When eating soup, spoon away from you. Don't blow on your soup; if it is hot, wait for it to cool down. Leave your soup spoon on the dish below it or in the soup bowl.
- Put your silverware down when speaking; place it on the side of the plate in a "V". This is called the rest position.
- If you drop your silverware, leave it and ask for another.
- Cutting food: Fork in left hand, knife in right. Cut what you need, then place the knife on the right side of the plate and switch hands with your fork.
- When you are done eating the course, place the fork, tines down, on the right side of the plate; if using a knife place the blade towards you next to the fork.
- Place the teaspoon on the saucer. Sugar packets may go on the side or under your saucer.
- Once you use a utensil, it does not go back on the table. Place it on your plate or bread plate.

Table Manners

- Seating: Left-handed people should sit at the left end of the table or sit at the head of a table.
- Begin eating when everyone is served.
- Family style service; pass to the right.
- Pass salt and pepper together. Don't use it first. If you'd like it back, ask.
- Don't ask for doggy bags.
- Leave a little food on your plate. Don't come across as hungry.
- Eat small amounts, so you can enter into conversation easily when you are done chewing. Don't talk with your mouth full.
- Don't season your food before tasting it.
- Sit up straight.
- Wrists are okay on the table, elbows okay only in between courses.
- Sit back when the server is approaching you to clear or pour beverages.
- Don't push the plate away from you.
- Don't mash your food.
- Don't haggle over the bill. The person who initiated the meal pays for it. If you are unsure, offer to pay; otherwise say thank you.

This information was provided by Memorial Union Catering and reprinted with the kind permission of Deb Mott. Group presentations on this subject are available by contacting MU Catering at 108 Memorial Union, or calling 541-737-1313