

# *Table Manners That Sell*

**85 TIPS FOR DINING FOR SUCCESS**

**BY  
LYDIA RAMSEY**

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### **EIGHT WAYS TO USE THIS BOOKLET**

- 1** Follow the tips to advance your own career.
- 2** Package this booklet as a value-added bonus with a product you sell.
- 3** Distribute this booklet to your sales team.
- 4** Customize this booklet and offer it as a “give away” at corporate or association seminars.
- 5** Make it part of the curriculum in a business training session.
- 6** Give it as a gift to new hires.
- 7** Send it to university and business school students to market your company as a prospective employer.
- 8** Give it as a gift to a recent college graduate.

### **INTRODUCTION**

So much business is conducted over meals today that the successful professional dares not venture out without knowing good table manners. Whether the purpose of the meal is to win over a customer, enhance a client relationship, impress a potential employer, or acquire a promotion, you want to feel confident and at ease in any dining situation. This includes everything from knowing which meal is appropriate for the business you need to conduct to understanding your role as either host or guest and being competent with the foods and utensils that you encounter. You can't concentrate on the business at a hand if you are worried about which fork to use, how to eat the pasta or what to do with that olive pit in your mouth.

## **DINING FOR SUCCESS**

### **PLAYING THE ROLE OF THE HOST/HOSTESS**

- 1** Choose a restaurant where you know the food and service are good and the atmosphere is conducive to conducting business.
- 2** Make arrangements ahead of time to take care of the bill.
- 3** Confirm the time and place either the day before the meal or that day.
- 4** Give your guest the prime seat — the one with the view.
- 5** Make suggestions about what to order.
- 6** Wait until your order has been taken before you begin discussing business.

### **PLAYING THE ROLE OF THE GUEST**

- 7** Ask your host for suggestions about what to order.
- 8** Stay in a moderate price range.
- 9** Remember that the person paying for the meal decides when to talk business.
- 10** Send a handwritten note the next day to thank your host.

### **BEGINNING THE BUSINESS MEAL**

- 11** Remember that business meals are not about the food — they are about business first.
- 12** Wait until everyone has been served and your host has started to eat before you begin.

### **MANAGING YOUR NAPKIN**

- 13** Leave your napkin on the table until everyone is seated.
- 14** Place the large dinner napkin in your lap with the fold toward your waist.

- 15** The smaller luncheon napkin is opened fully and placed in your lap.
- 16** Put your napkin back on the table after everyone has finished eating and is ready to leave the table.
- 17** If you need to excuse yourself during the meal, do so between courses, and put your napkin on your chair.
- 18** Your napkin is to be used for blotting your mouth, nothing else.

### **NAVIGATING THE PLACE SETTING**

- 19** The place setting is your guide to the meal when the meal is pre-ordered.
- 20** Forks belong on the left, and knives and spoons on the right.
- 21** Use your utensils from the outside in, starting with the soup spoon on the far right or the salad fork on your far left.
- 22** Glasses are placed on the right above your knife. The bread and butter plate is on the left above the fork.

### **EATING SOUP**

- 23** Soup is spooned away from you toward the back of the bowl.
- 24** The only crackers you may crumble in your soup are the oyster crackers.
- 25** You may leave your soup spoon in the bowl when resting between mouthfuls.
- 26** When you have finished, place the spoon on the saucer or plate under the bowl.

### **BUTTERING YOUR BREAD**

- 27** Your bread and butter plate is on the left side of your place setting.
- 28** Break off only one or two bite-size pieces of bread at a time.
- 29** Place the butter on your plate with the main butter knife, and use your butter knife to spread the butter on your bread.

- 30** Butter one small piece of bread at a time, not half the roll at once.

### **PASSING FOODS**

- 31** Pass foods to the right because the wait staff is serving from the left.
- 32** If you are closest to an item that needs to be passed, such as the basket of rolls, pick up the basket, offer the bread to the person on your left, take a piece for yourself and pass it to the person on your right.
- 33** When you pass a serving dish with a handle, make sure the handle is facing the person to whom you are handing the dish.
- 34** Pass the salt and pepper together even if the other person only asks for one.

### **HOLDING YOUR UTENSILS**

- 35** Hold your fork as you would a pencil.
- 36** Use the knife for cutting, not sawing.
- 37** The utensils are used for eating, not gesturing.
- 38** Used knives, forks and spoons are never placed on the table.
- 39** If you drop a utensil, let the waiter pick it up and bring you a clean one.
- 40** Cut your food and eat it one piece at a time.

### **UNDERSTANDING CONTINENTAL AND AMERICAN STYLES OF EATING**

- 41** The American style of eating is the zigzag method. You hold the fork in your left hand and the knife in your right hand to cut your food. When you have finished cutting, you put the knife down on your plate, and switch the fork to your right hand to take the food to your mouth.
- 42** When you eat Continental style, you cut your food in the same manner as American; however, you keep the fork in your left hand and take the food to your mouth with the tines down.

- 43** In Continental style, it is not necessary to place the knife on the plate while taking food to your mouth.
- 44** Be careful not to wave your knife or fork around or use them as props.
- 45** Eating Continental or American style is your choice. The only requirement is that you be consistent. If you begin eating Continental style, you must finish that way. Switching mid-course is not acceptable.

### **RESTING AND FINISHED POSITIONS**

- 46** Where you place your utensils on your plate indicates whether you are resting between bites or have finished eating and are waiting for your plate to be removed.
- 47** To indicate that you are resting between bites, place your knife horizontally at the top of your plate, blade facing in. Your fork is placed in the lower right hand portion of your plate.
- 48** When you have finished, bring the knife down to rest beside the fork in the lower right-hand corner.
- 49** If you choose to eat Continental style, the knife is in the same position for resting as with the American style; but the fork rests in the lower left-hand corner of the plate with the tines down.
- 50** The finished position for Continental style is identical to American style except that the fork tines face down.

### **DRINKING WATER AND WINE; COFFEE AND TEA**

- 51** The water is for sipping, not for washing down your food.
- 52** The water glass is the largest one on the table. There must be a reason.
- 53** The red wine goblet is larger than the white wine goblet.
- 54** Hold a white wine glass by the stem and a red wine glass by the bowl.
- 55** Alcoholic beverages should be avoided during business meals or taken in moderation.

- 56** When you add packaged sweetener to your beverage, tear the packet only about two-thirds of the way across.
- 57** Use no more than two packets of sweetener, and open them separately.
- 58** Avoid clinking your spoon on the cup or glass.
- 59** Rest the used spoon in the saucer.
- 60** Coffee is meant to be drunk after the meal, not during.
- 61** Do not turn your cup upside down in your saucer to indicate that you do not want coffee unless the server asks you to as a signal to the person pouring the coffee.
- 62** Chewing ice at the table or spitting it back in the glass is not acceptable adult business behavior.

#### **FINISHING OFF THE MEAL**

- 63** If the table is preset, your dessert fork and spoon will be placed at the top of your place setting.
- 64** Move the dessert fork and spoon into place when your dessert arrives.
- 65** Pace your eating. Pay attention to how fast or slow the other diners are eating so you do not finish way ahead of them or lag behind.

#### **ORDERING WINE**

- 66** If you are not totally confident about ordering wine, call upon the wine steward or a knowledgeable server. Just be sure that your wine expert is indeed an expert and not the college kid who was hired yesterday.
- 67** To avoid confusion over pronunciation of foreign wines, use the bin number printed next to the name of the wine. There is less room for error when you order # 212 rather than the Chateau Larose Trintaudon Medoc.
- 68** When the wine is brought to the table, the server will hold the bottle up for you to verify that it is in fact the one that you ordered.



- 69** There is no need to sniff the cork. Just check to see if it is dry or moist. If a wine bottle has been stored properly, the cork will be moist.
- 70** Send the wine back only if there is something wrong with it, not because you aren't wild about your choice. Just order a different bottle next time.
- 71** The red wine glass is larger than the white wine glass and is held by the bowl rather than the stem. The white wine glass is held by the stem so as not to warm the wine.
- 72** As the host, it is your duty to see that your guests' wine glasses are refilled, either by you or the server.
- 73** The rule of drinking white wine with fish and red wine with red meat no longer applies except at very formal dinners.

### TIPPING

- 74** The word "tip" originated as an acronym for the phrase, "To Insure Promptness." Obviously, it began as a way of guaranteeing quality service. Today, however, tips are expected in most cases, regardless of level of service.
- 75** Today the expected tip is 15% to 20%. Tip 15% in a moderately priced restaurant.
- 76** In an upscale restaurant, the customary amount is 20% because there are several servers, including the captain and busboy, who will share in the tip.
- 77** The captain usually receives 5% and the waiter 15%. The busboy is not tipped by the customer, but by the captain or waiter.
- 78** Another thorny little question that arises is whether to include or exclude the sales tax when figuring the tip. The choice is yours, but it is perfectly acceptable to figure the tip minus the sales tax.
- 79** The valet who parks your car also deserves a tip. Depending upon the restaurant, give him one or two dollars. The more upscale the establishment, the higher the tip.
- 80** The coatroom clerk should receive a tip of one dollar a coat and 50 cents for each additional coat.

### **THE FINAL WORD**

- 81** If food lands on the table, pick it up as discreetly as possible, and put it back on your plate.
- 82** If you have special dietary issues, let this be known ahead of time for pre-ordered meals.
- 83** Women should excuse themselves from the table to reapply makeup.
- 84** Never ask for a doggy bag at the business meal.
- 85** Handbags, keys and other personal items do not belong on the table.

### ABOUT LYDIA RAMSEY

Lydia Ramsey is a business etiquette expert and the President of Manners That Sell. She conducts presentations for organizations that want their people to be at ease in any business situation and to represent them well in the marketplace. She is the author of *Manners That Sell - Adding the Polish That Builds Profits* and the co-author of *The Etiquette of Networking - 99 Tips for Connecting With Courtesy*. Lydia writes a weekly newspaper column for the Savannah Morning News. She has been quoted in the Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, Cosmopolitan and Woman's Day. She is a member of the National Speakers Association. Her client list includes corporations, associations, colleges and universities.

### ORDERING INFORMATION

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