

Basic Dining Etiquette for Interview Meals

What is dining etiquette?

Dining etiquette is a set of unspoken, social rules for the behavior that is expected during a social dining event.

What is the purpose of an interview meal?

IT IS NOT ABOUT THE FOOD! Employers need to know that you can be professional in social settings with clients, colleagues and competitors.

Pre-planning for the Interview Meal

Do your research!

- Research the company
- Study the job description
- Research the host(s)

On the day of the interview meal...

- Eat a light snack beforehand
 - You may not have the chance to eat much at the interview meal
 - Focus on the interview, not the food!
- Dress professionally
- Bring money in case of an emergency
- Arrive at the interview location about 10-15 minutes early
- Silence or turn off your cell phone and keep it out of sight!

Common Courtesies

- Greet the host(s) with a smile and a handshake
 - Stand for the greeting and make sure your handshake is firm, but not jolting
- Address the host(s) by their last name (ex: Mr. Jackson, Ms. Alcorn, Dr. Smith...) until they tell you to call them something else
- When you are the first to encounter a door, hold it open for others before entering yourself
 - If someone holds the door open for you, say, "Thank you"
- Keep your elbows off of the dining table
- Wait for your host to sit down at the table before you sit down
- Do not burp loudly (it is considered rude)
- Wait for everyone at the table to be served before starting to eat
- If you need to sneeze or cough, turn away from the food and other people and cover your mouth with your napkin or arm
 - If you need to blow your nose, excuse yourself and go to the bathroom, NEVER blow your nose at the table
- Excuse yourself before temporarily leaving the table
- Push in your chair before leaving the table
- Don't touch your face, ears or hair at the table
- Use "Please" and "Thank you"

Conversation

- Topics to avoid: politics, religion, money, personal health issues
- Appropriate topics: Common interests, the weather, current events
- Wait for your host(s) to bring up interview or business topics
- Make eye contact when talking or listening to the host(s)
- NEVER talk with food in your mouth

Table Setting

- A general rule for silverware is to start from the outside and work your way in
- To figure out which silverware, plates and glasses are for you, touch your index finger and thumb together on each hand to create a “b” with your left and a “d” with your right (“b” is for bread and “d” is for drink)
- Your napkin is always to the left of your plate or on your plate

Using a Napkin

- Wait for the host(s) to be seated, then place your napkin on your lap
- Use your napkin to dab your mouth as needed
- NEVER use your hand, arm, or sleeve to wipe your mouth
- NEVER place your napkin on your plate
- At the end of the meal, even if you have finished eating early, wait for the host to place his/her napkin on the table before you place yours on the table
- If you temporarily leave the table, place your napkin on your chair

Ordering from the Menu

- Ask the host(s) for recommendations
- NEVER order the most expensive item on the menu
- Pick something that is easy to eat
- Avoid messy foods (long noodles, ribs, crab legs), foods that will give you bad breath (garlic, raw onions)

Food that is for Sharing

- For bread in a basket or an appetizer, offer it first to others before taking some for yourself
- Offer to your left, then pass to your right if you are the first to pick something up

Eating Manners

- Taste the food before adding seasoning
- Chew with your mouth closed
- Do not “saw” your food!
- When cutting large pieces of food such as meat, only cut a few bite-sized pieces at a time
- Use your knife, NOT your fork to cut big pieces of food
- Take small bites of food
- Sip your soup and your beverage
- Do not lift a plate or bowl to your mouth

Alcohol

- Use your best judgment and make sure you are 21 years old or older before ordering alcohol
- Check to see what the host and other guests are having
- If you do have an alcoholic beverage, only have ONE
- If you are uncomfortable with having alcohol, then don't order any

Accidents

- If you have an accident such as spilling something, apologize, then move on

After the Meal

- ALWAYS thank the host(s)
- Wait for your host to stand up from the table to leave before you do
- Collect business cards from your host(s) so that you can send thank you letters/cards

Additional Etiquette Resources

<http://www.etiquettescholar.com/index.html>
<http://whatscookingamerica.net/Menu/DiningEtiquetteGuide.htm>