

Dining Etiquette

Prior to the Meal

- ❖ Reply to RSVPs as soon as possible
- ❖ Have a snack before the meal so you can concentrate on the interview
- ❖ Bring a portfolio and a pen
- ❖ Do not bring a cell phone or pager
- ❖ Do not complain about sitting in the smoking section
- ❖ Wait for the host to gesture seating
- ❖ Place your napkin in your lap before drinking or eating
- ❖ Sit up straight, do not tip the chair, and keep elbows off the table
- ❖ Review the menu and ask the host for recommendations
- ❖ Allow the host to lead when ordering
- ❖ Be polite to all, including service staff
- ❖ Do not ask the server too many questions
- ❖ Order something familiar and light; not the most expensive menu item
- ❖ Do not order alcohol unless the host does; then order only one drink
- ❖ Table setting: your glass is to the right; salad and bread plates are to the left; use forks from the outside first (salad, dinner, dessert)

How to Eat Difficult Foods

- ❖ If possible, do not order messy foods that drip, splash, or are difficult to eat
- ❖ If the host orders food that is difficult to eat, politely eat the food; watch how the host and others at the table eat the item
- ❖ When in doubt, use utensils and take small bites

During the Meal

- ❖ Eat after everyone has been served; ask others to begin if your meal is delayed
- ❖ Pass items to the right (salt and pepper travel together)
- ❖ Taste your meal before adding salt and pepper
- ❖ Bread: break off and butter one small piece at a time
- ❖ Do not slurp soup or tip the bowl
- ❖ Do not eat the garnish
- ❖ Cut food one piece at a time by holding food with fork prongs and cutting a small portion with a knife
- ❖ Rest utensils on your plate when speaking
- ❖ Do not lick utensils
- ❖ Do not place used utensils back on the table
- ❖ Leave unused utensils in their setting
- ❖ Rest your knife across the top of your plate when not in use
- ❖ Place tea bags and used tea/coffee spoons on your saucer
- ❖ Do not pick up a dropped utensil; discreetly ask the server for another
- ❖ Do not dip food into sauces; spoon sauces onto your plate
- ❖ Discreetly remove an unsavory bite from your mouth with a napkin
- ❖ Take time eating; keep pace with others
- ❖ Do not over indulge, eat the whole meal, or ask for a take-home container
- ❖ Place your napkin on the table to the left if you must leave the table

After the meal

- ❖ Place your knife and fork (prongs down) on your plate at the 4 o'clock position when you are done eating
- ❖ Do not push your plate away when you are done
- ❖ Order dessert if the host insists on a dessert menu
- ❖ Do not use a toothpick
- ❖ Allow the host to pay the bill and the tip
- ❖ Thank your host for providing the meal
- ❖ Shake hands and make good eye contact
- ❖ Send a hand-written thank you within 24 hours

Conversation Starters/Tips

- ❖ Do not speak with your mouth full
- ❖ Listen to everyone at the table
- ❖ Maintain good eye contact
- ❖ Be sure to answer questions, avoid interrupting others or dominating the conversation
- ❖ Take the opportunity to learn more about the company, their culture, and the job itself
- ❖ Avoid conversation on controversial issues such as religion, gossip, age, health, and income
- ❖ Avoid tasteless humor and negative comments
- ❖ Possible conversation topics:
Interesting news items; Professional journal articles; Local sports teams or attractions; Neutral books or movies

Resources and References

www.interview.monster.com/stage/lunch
www.mannersinternational.com
www.bsu.edu/students/careers/students/interviewing/dinetips
www.bsu.edu/students/careers/students/interviewing/dining