PURPOSE:
Dining interviews and business meals are commonplace. Using good manners and proper etiquette will not only leave a positive impression, but will also show respect for your host, the dining venue, and the event. When in doubt, be gracious, use common sense, and follow the lead of your host.

PREPARATION

- Before attending a business meal, ask yourself who is hosting the meal, what is the purpose, and where is the location. These questions will assist you in determining the appropriate dress for the event. A barbeque fundraiser for a nonprofit would necessitate conservative casual wear, where professional attire would be appropriate at a business meeting in a nice restaurant.
- To prepare, consider some conversation topics beforehand, stay clear of controversial topics.

FOR STARTERS

Show respect for your host:
- Arrive 5-10 minutes early and wait in the restaurant lobby. Once your party is shown to your table, let the host arrange the seating.
- Place your napkin in your lap after your host has done so. Leave the napkin folded in half so that it forms a triangle, and the longest side is nearest you. Do not use your napkin to wipe or blow your nose. If you get up from the table, loosely fold your napkin placing it to the left of your plate.
- Ask your host for recommendations if ordering from a menu. If none are forthcoming, order a medium-priced item. Do not order extras (appetizer, dessert) unless suggested by your host and others are ordering extra items as well. Be cautious about ordering messy or difficult to eat foods.
- Wait to begin eating until everyone has been served and let the Host take the lead. Try to pace your meal so you finish at about the same time as everyone at your table.

Show respect for the wait staff:
- Be courteous and respectful to your server. If you are at a pre-arranged meal and have ordered a special meal, do let your server know once you are seated.
- Place your purse or briefcase under your chair so it is out of the way.
- If you drop a utensil on the floor, do not pick it up. Ask the server for a clean utensil.
- Passing food or condiments, you are responsible for passing what ever is in front of you on the table:
  - Salt and pepper, salad dressing, bread and butter should be offered first to the person on your left before taking some for yourself and then passing to the right.
  - However, if items are being passed in the ‘wrong’ direction, do not interrupt the flow and continue to pass items in that same direction.
  - Do not pass food or reach across the table to grab a dish or condiment. Always pass salt and pepper together as a set, even if only one has been requested.
**TABLE SETTING GUIDE**

Do not be overwhelmed by a formal place setting. The guide above is an elaborate place setting, you may encounter a simplified version. Remembering two easy rules will help you feel at ease. First, always work from the outside in with silverware, and second, solids (bread) are always found to your left and liquids (drinks) are always on your right. This rule will assist you when you are at a crowded round table.

### Navigating the Courses

**General** – During a banquet, wait for your entire table to be served. If at a buffet, wait until everyone has returned to the table to begin eating. If you are the only one waiting for food, encourage others to begin eating.

**Bread** – Place some butter from the butter bowl on your bread plate. Instead of buttering your roll all at once, break off piece and butter one piece at a time, and repeat. In between bites, place the butter knife across the top edge of your bread plate with the blade facing you.

**Drinks** – Keep your primary drink to the right of your water glass. If you add anything to your drink, stir it with your teaspoon, and place the spoon on your bread plate. The empty packets of sweetner, can be folded and placed under the edge of your bread plate. Avoid alcoholic drinks unless your host is drinking alcohol and then use moderation. Feel free to abstain if you like. If a coffee cup and saucer are part of the place setting, turning the coffee cup right side up indicates to the server that you want coffee and when, turning the coffee cup upside down indicates that you are passing on coffee. Giving the waiter these unspoken cues will allow conversation to remain uninterrupted. However, with wine glasses, you hold your hand over the glass when it is being poured to indicate you are passing.

**Soup** – Always spoon your soup away from you. Sip your soup from the side of the spoon. Do not crumble or dunk crackers into your soup. Do not lift the bowl/cup closer to your mouth – leave it on the table. When you are finished, place the spoon on the right side of the plate the cup/bowl is resting on with the handle in the 5 o’clock position (as if you bowl was a clock).

**Salad** – Use your salad fork to eat your salad, unless you have ordered a salad as your main meal, then a dinner fork is appropriate. You may cut your salad if necessary. When you are finished, put your knife on the bread plate and leave your fork, tines up, with the handle in the 5 o’clock position (as if your plate was a clock), this will signal the server that you are finished.

**Dessert** – If you have ordered dessert, slide your dessert fork/spoon down to the left side of your place setting once your dinner plate is removed. Feel free to pass on dessert. Finish position is also in the 5 o’clock positions.
Main Course – Avoid messy and difficult dishes like pasta, fried chicken, or ribs in professional dining situations. Taste your food before seasoning it.

There are two different styles of eating: American and Continental Style dining. American style is generally used in the United States (although in today’s world either style is correct in the US), and Continental style is generally used in Europe and South America. The different styles pertain to how you cut your meat/food. Which ever style you choose to use, use it through out the meal.

**American Style** - Hold the meat in place with your fork in your left hand, tines pointing down to stabilize the food. Cut only one or two bites. Place the knife across the front of your plate with the serrated edge facing you. Switch the fork to your right hand and eat the bite. Put your left hand in your lap (reverse this process if you are left-handed). In between bites, put your fork on your plate with the tines facing up. When you are finished with the course, the silverware you used should be placed across the plate with the handle in the 5 o’clock position. Place multiple items next to each other. Knife blades should face you and fork tines should be facing upwards.

[Images showing American Style—cutting, finished position, Continental Style—eating (tines down), Finished position]

**Continental Style** - Hold the meat in place with your fork in your left hand, tines pointing down to stabilize the food. Cut only one or two bites. Keep both hands above the table, do not put your hands in your lap during the meal. Keep your knife and fork in the same hands, inserting the bite in your mouth with the tines down. This is a more efficient way to eat. When you want to rest, put your utensils down on the plat at 5:00 and 7:00 with the fork and knife meeting in the center of the plate. Place the knife across the front of your plate with the serrated edge facing you. When you are finished with the course, the silverware you used should be placed across the plate with the handle in the 5 o’clock position. Place multiple items next to each other. Knife blades should face you and the fork tines should be facing down.

**General Information**

- Turn your cell phone off or switch it to silent, and leave it out of sight. Do not text, check email, or answer your phone during the meal. If you must make a phone call, excuse yourself from the table and step outside of the dining area.
- Be courteous. Thank the server/busser when they bring or remove something from the table.
- Never point with your silverware or wave it in the air.
- Make conversation with everyone at the table. Give others the opportunity to talk.
- Do not use a toothpick, blow your nose, comb your hair, or apply makeup, including lipstick, at the table. If you must do any of these things, excuse yourself and visit the restroom.
- Do not complain about the food or service if you are a guest.
- If something is wrong with your meal, tell the server discretely.

**FINAL ADVICE**

*Remember, professional dining events are never about the FOOD, but always about networking and making a good impression. If the food is not to your liking, don’t worry, you can grab a PB&J when you get home!*