

The Protocol School of Washington®

INFORMATION FOR THE CITIZEN DIPLOMAT

The Quintessential Host

Understanding the finer points of restaurant dining will help ensure that your dinner event honoring or introducing colleagues and friends is a resounding success.

Host Duties

Begin by considering the taste and personality of your honored guest or guests. A conservative gentleperson might be overwhelmed by a trendy hotspot filled with noise and activity, while a seasoned business leader might bask in the hustle and bustle. Once you have selected just the right dining spot, visit it before your event so you can become familiar with the menu and meet the maitre d' or captain.

When you invite your guests, be precise about the purpose of the invitation, time, and place. You will also need to state where you will meet them in the restaurant; for example, the captain's stand or at your table. Make your reservation and confirm it the day before your group arrives.

It is a good idea to handle payment with the captain away from the dining table. Before the meal begins, the captain can stamp your credit card and add the customary tip. When a woman serves as host in a country other than the United States of America, the check should not be presented at the table. Why? In some cultures it is considered an affront for the woman to pay for the meal.

Allow your guests to precede you when the captain takes you to the table. You should take a seat with your back to the room so your guest or guests can look out into the room. If you are seated at the table when additional guests arrive, rise to greet the guest and remain standing until the guest is seated. Feel free to suggest menu items and don't forget to offer bread and butter to guests before you help yourself. Allow your guests to order before you do.

Time to Toast

In many countries, the host gives a welcoming toast to guests at the beginning of a meal. When offering a toast, you may stand for a large group or remain seated if there are just a few guests. At dessert time, the host toasts the guest of honor with a few words that will make the guest feel special. The host and everyone present, except the guest of honor, should drink to the toast. Your guest of honor remains seated and doesn't pick up his or her glass.

(continued)



Pamela Eyring, Owner & Director of The Protocol School of Washington®, is the author of this publication.

The Quintessential Guest will wait for the host to begin eating...

Guest Duties

You've long mastered the art of eating with your mouth closed and – heaven forbid – you don't pick your teeth at the table. But, dining like a diplomat calls for the mastery of many proper behaviors and the realization that customs and table manners may vary from culture to culture. A little research before attending a dinner is always a good idea and can save you embarrassment, the loss of business and weakening of new friendships. Following are things you should not do at the table in any culture.

- ◆ touch your hair or face
- ◆ overload your plate or fork
- ◆ push your plate away when finished
- ◆ gesture with your knife or fork
- ◆ peer over your glass when drinking
- ◆ talk about food likes and dislikes
- ◆ butter your bread in midair
- ◆ reach across the table
- ◆ mop your face with your napkin

With practice, proper dining will become automatic, allowing you to focus on making interesting conversation. Always speak with everyone within your conversational reach, being sure to encourage your quieter table companions to enter into the conversation. Before you know it, you will enjoy a new sense of confidence in your role as a guest!



Time to Toast (continued)

People have a tendency to drink from a glass when holding it, so leave your glass on the table when being toasted.

Protocol Tip: One does not drink to one's self!

It is customary for the guest of honor to return the toast after all guests have finished drinking a toast to him or her. A sincere thank you and a few kind words about the host are all that is needed. Finish by adding, "Please join me in a toast to our host."

If your guests are from another country, a little research into toasting practices in their culture is in order. In many countries, you do not toast a guest of higher rank, one who is older than you are, or the host. If the host initiates a toast, you may toast him in return. Cheers!

This article is part of a continuing series by Pamela Eyring



The Protocol School of Washington®

The Protocol School of Washington shares the belief of the National Council for International Visitors that individual citizens have the right, even the responsibility, to help shape United States foreign relations "one handshake at a time." As the acknowledged international leader in protocol and etiquette training and certification, The Protocol School of Washington works toward this worthy goal in everything we do. We invite you to learn more about our programs by visiting our website or by calling 202-575-5600.

The Protocol School of Washington® offers a 10% discount on the tuition for its Protocol Officer Training™ courses to members of the National Council for International Visitors.

We are more than experts

WE ARE THE EXPERTS WHO TRAIN THE EXPERTS

202-575-5600 ♦ 877-766-3757 (Toll-free)

www.psow.com