

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

What to do whether you're the host or the guest

Here are some tips to navigate holiday happenings with ease and finesse.

As a Host at home

- Let guests know what time to arrive, and at what time the meal will be served.
- Ask if there are food allergies or restrictions, but do not discuss the menu with guests.
- If your event is formal, invitations are in writing, and your guests will arrive 5 to 10 minutes before the appointed hour.
- Ensure that all guests are introduced.
- It is okay to give your guests tasks, as this allows you to spend more time with them.
- Consider seating plans. Usually partners are separated to allow for more conversation. You and your co-host are typically seated at each end of the table, and the guest of honour is seated to the right of the host.
- If your event is formal, as the host you would offer your arm to the guest of honour and lead the guests into the dining room.
- Ensure that the conversation runs smoothly, and steer it to neutral topics should it become heated by a controversial discussion.
- If a guest presents you with wine, this is a gift to you. It is understood that you have already provided wine for the meal.
- To ask if your guests would like more of a dish, ask "Would you like some....", rather than "Would you like some more...".
- Never allow a guest to drive home if you have a concern about alcohol consumption.

As a Host at a restaurant or club:

- Arrive 10 minutes early and wait at a table.

- If you arrive at the restaurant with your guest, precede your guest to the table.
- If possible, pay the bill privately, and always settle the tip privately.

As a Host at Business

- Select a restaurant close to your guest's home or office.
- Ask what type of food he/she prefers.
- Reconfirm with your guest the morning of the date.
- Arrive 10 minutes prior to the arranged time. Wait for your guest at a clean table; do not touch the water, napkin, or order a drink.
- Stand as your guest is shown to the table, and shake hands.
- Offer your guest the best seat.
- Offer your guest the opportunity to order a drink.
- Whether your guest drinks an alcoholic drink or not, you order what you want. Limit your consumption to one cocktail or two glasses of wine.
- Give your guest the freedom to choose what they wish from the menu, subtly letting them know they can choose the number of courses that they wish. For example you may say, "The _____ appetizer is very good.", and ask, "What would you like for dessert?"
- As the host, it is your responsibility to take care of your guest's needs; it should be clear to the servers that you are the host.
- If your guest's order arrives first, ask her/him to begin. If your order arrives first, wait for your guest's.
- If you have an issue with the restaurant, take it up privately with the manager, rather than in front of your guest.
- At breakfast or lunch, let at least 10 minutes lapse before business is discussed. At dinner, you may wait until the coffee stage.
- If possible, pay the bill privately. You may give your credit card to the maitre d' prior to the arrival of your guest, and then sign the receipt prior to leaving. Always settle the gratuity privately.

As a Guest in Someone's Home

- Let your host know if you have food allergies, but do not indicate likes and dislikes unless you are asked.
- Bring a gift with you to present to your host: a bottle of wine, flowers in a vase, etc. If you bring wine, this is a gift to them and is not meant to be served with the meal.
- Arrive on time, and dressed according to the occasion.
- If you must be late, call to advise, and insist that the dinner be served on time; when you arrive accept the current course being served.
- Offer to assist your host whenever possible.
- Do not ask for more of a dish; rather, say "that was delicious".
- Remain about two hours after dinner is finished, unless something else was suggested in the invitation.
- If there is a guest of honour, they are the first to depart.
- On leaving, thank the host/s.

As a Guest at Business

- If you arrive first, go to the table, but touch nothing.
- If you are invited to have an alcoholic drink, and you wish it, go ahead. Limit your intake to one cocktail or two glasses of wine.
- Order from the mid-priced items on the menu.
- Thank your host for the lunch.

Whether you're the host or guest, happy holiday happenings!

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