

SUMMER ETIQUETTE

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Summer is a great time to socialize at a backyard barbeque, pool party, park picnic, or cottage weekend. Here are some tips to ease the way to being the ideal guest or host.

If you are the Host:

1. Issue the invitation with enough notice – 3 to 6 weeks will let your guests feel that they were not thought of at the last minute.
2. Supply your guests with directions or a map so that you are easy to find.
3. If your event is to celebrate a personal event – such as an anniversary or birthday – then you supply the food and drink. A potluck may be acceptable if the celebration is general – such as Canada Day.
4. If you are serving a meal, ask your guests if they have food restrictions. Someone may be extremely allergic to nuts, for example. However, do not discuss the menu with your guests.
5. Be prepared for when your guests arrive; music is playing, snacks are prepared, and a drink is offered.
6. Be warm and welcoming. Each guest is special.
7. Introduce your guests, and facilitate conversation. I like using icebreaker games.
8. If a guest brings a gift for you – such as a bottle of wine or a box of chocolates – these are for you and do not need to be shared with guests. Thank the guest graciously and let them know how much you will enjoy it.
9. If a guest offers to help, it is fine to assign them a simple task. This allows you more time for mingling.

10. At a meal, instead of asking “*would you like more ...*”, instead ask “*would you like some ...*”
11. Think of extra touches to ensure your guests’ comfort and enjoyment. Supply a comfortable smoking area (outside) for non-smokers.
12. Create a beautiful environment. Paper and plastic may be appropriate for outdoors – but they can incorporate colours and designs appropriate for the event.
13. If you have a weekend guest, put aside extra towels and facecloths for them. A small basket with shampoo, conditioner, and bath product will help them feel welcome.
14. For an outdoor evening event, provide torches or lighting (especially the kind that deters mosquitoes!).
15. Never allow your guest to drive home if there is a concern about alcohol consumption.

If you are the Guest:

1. When you receive an invitation, inform the hosts as soon as possible if you are able to attend or not.
2. If you have a food restriction and the invitation will include a meal, inform the hosts of your situation. “*I am vegetarian, but I’ll be fine with everything else on the menu.*” Do not ask what is being served.
3. Arrive at a time appropriate for the event. If it is for dinner, it is important to arrive at the designated time.
4. Bring a host gift – a bottle of wine, a box of chocolates, or flowers are the most typical gifts. If your gift is food or drink, it is generally not meant to be consumed at the party. At a dinner party the host has carefully chosen the food and drinks to be served. If the party is potluck, then a host gift is not necessary – your

offerings are intended for consumption at the party. If the party is to honour someone or something in particular, then the gift is for the person being honoured.

5. Offer to be of service to the host. If the event is not being catered, the host may appreciate your assistance.
6. Show a sincere and genuine interest in others. Engage others in conversation about their interests. Keep conversation neutral or positive. Do not ask personal questions or make too-personal remarks. This is a great opportunity to develop relationships.
7. At a dinner, the host initiates each course; do not begin before the host unless bidden to do so.
8. At a dinner, do not ask for more food. Instead say *“that was delicious”*.
9. The host always makes the first toast; if you wish to make a toast you may do so after the host.
10. Monitor your alcohol intake. You do not want to create an embarrassing situation.
11. As an overnight guest, you do not want to create any additional work for your host. Clean up after yourself, and assist in food preparation and clean-up.
12. If you are an overnight guest, be sensitive to your hosts’ personal time.
13. At a meal, remain about two hours after dinner is finished, unless something else was suggested in the invitation.
14. If there is a guest of honour, they are the first to depart.
15. On leaving, thank the host/s. A thank you note can be sent the next day.

Whether the host or a guest, have a Social Summer!

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