

TIPS FOR DINING WITH PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS

Interviews will occasionally entail lunch and/or a reception; therefore, it is helpful to know proper business etiquette for dining with prospective employers.

Your Responsibilities as the Interviewee

- **Acceptance of Invitation:** Do not keep your host waiting; reply within 24 hours.
- **Arrival:** Be on time! If you are going to be more than ten minutes late, notify your host directly, or call the restaurant and ask them to relay the message.
- **Seating:** Do not just sit anywhere; wait for a cue from your host. If possible, sit next to the host to gain maximum exposure.
- **Napkins:** Place your napkin on your lap immediately after everyone is seated. At the conclusion of the meal, return your napkin loosely folded to the table.
- **Ordering:** Do not order the most expensive item on the menu, and do not order unfamiliar food. If you are unsure what to order, follow the host's lead or ask for a recommendation.
- **Food arrangement:** Solid foods (bread plate and salad plate) are always on your left, beverages are on your right.
- **Bread:** Butter bread on the plate, not in midair. Break bread into small pieces and butter one piece at a time.
- **Meal:** Do not begin your meal until all meals are served and your host takes the first bite.
- **Passing Food:** When passing food around the table, always pass it to your right. When passing salt and pepper, always keep them together.

Utensil Etiquette

- When you face a full battalion of knives, forks and spoons, work from the outside in; use the flatware furthest from the plate first.
- Used utensils must never touch the surface of the table or the tablecloth because they might make the cloth dirty.
- When you are finished, place your knife and fork so they lie horizontally across the center of the plate.

Do:

- Order foods that can be eaten with a knife and fork. Finger foods can be messy and are best left for informal dining.
- Stick to soft drinks, tea, coffee and water. Avoid alcohol.
- Cut one bite (meat, fruit or vegetable) at a time.
- Eat at the same pace as your host. Dining is not a race to see who can finish first.
- Prepare to be conversational. Read national and local news ahead of time so that you can discuss current events.
- Sit up straight.
- Excuse yourself from the table and go to the restroom if food gets caught between your teeth and you are unable to subtly remove it with your tongue.
- Say please and thank you to the server.
- Write a thank you note to your host, emphasizing your appreciation for the chance to talk about the job (or learn about the company, meet prospective colleagues, etc.) over a meal.

Do NOT:

- Drink from the soup bowl.
- Ask for a box to bring your leftovers home.
- Talk about personal relationships, recent parties, politics or religion.
- Blow your nose in your napkin.
- Smoke.
- Get too comfortable. Even if the meal is not technically an interview, your behavior and interaction with others is still being evaluated.