

10 Etiquette Tips You Should Know About When Attending a Business Luncheon

Okay, I'm no Emily Post, but I know a thing or two about planning and conducting myself properly at a business luncheon. I have seen some truly bad manners during my career as a Meeting Service Concierge in the conference industry. It didn't matter whether it was a million dollar business event or a small sit down business luncheon, bad manners can show up anywhere - let's keep them out of your business luncheon with these tips:

- 1. As soon as everyone at the table is seated, that napkin goes on your lap.** If you need to get up at any point, the napkin should be folded and placed in your chair - Not on the table. Nobody wants to look at your dirty napkin, and it helps the server at that table know that someone is seated in that spot.
- 2. Your water glass is to your RIGHT. Your bread dish is to your LEFT.** It can be confusing, but if you put your hands on your lap and touch the index finger of your left hand to your thumb - your hand forms a "b" for bread, and your index finger of your right hand to your thumb - your hand forms a "d" for drink. You can also think of "BMW": BREAD MIDDLE WATER. I would get a kick out of seeing executives sitting at the table with their index fingers touching their thumbs - once you learn it you don't forget it!
- 3. Make sure items are passed.** If you are hosting or assisting the host, it's good manners to make sure things are passed such as; butter, cream, salt & pepper, bread. Make sure you pass the salt & pepper as a unit, even if someone just asked for salt - when you arrive early to check the luncheon room, you can ask your Banquet Captain to put the salt & pepper in a little carrier or small plate to make it easier.
- 4. Use the piece of silverware farthest away from the plate.** If you are confused as I used to be about which silverware to use, start with the silverware farthest away from the plate. When you're done eating place the silverware diagonally in the upper right-hand corner to signal to the server that you're done.



(Here is a quick guide to a place setting)

5. Pay attention to what others are ordering. Don't be the chick on a diet who orders a plate of lettuce, or won't order an appetizer even when everyone else is. Also, don't be the person to order an appetizer when no one else has, and you're sitting there eating all by yourself. It's 100% acceptable to order an appetizer to start and an appetizer for your main entree. Trust me, no one cares what you're eating as long as everyone is eating at the same time. When having your luncheon catered-you can find out the dietary restrictions and allergies and choose a menu, a restaurant will also accommodate the needs of you guests if they know ahead of time - this where the planning is very important.

6. When in doubt, cut your food with a fork and knife. You have a huge piece of lettuce from your wedge salad? Cut it. Here's the rule with fries - if you're eating the rest of your meal with a fork and knife, cut your fries. If you're eating the rest of your meal with your hands, eat the fries with your hands. Keep it simple . . .

7. Proper way to use a fork & knife. The most common method in the United States - when you eat, your fork is held in your right hand, for all you lefties out there the fork is still held in your right hand. When you cut your food, switch hands, fork goes in the left hand - knife goes in the right. To eat, switch the fork back in the right hand and knife in left.

To simplify: TO CUT FOOD - FORK IN LEFT HAND, KNIFE IN RIGHT HAND

TO EAT FOOD - FORK IN RIGHT HAND, KNIFE IN LEFT HAND

8. Treat the staff well.

You can tell a lot about a person by the way he or she treats a service person. Be sure to treat the wait staff respectfully and thoughtfully. Say "thank you" when service is rendered. How you treat everyone in a restaurant goes farther than just table talk. Be the gracious host or that first-rate guest by remembering these social graces and you'll get you through a business lunch without winding up looking like a jerk.

9. Wait to sit until your host is seated. It's good manners to wait for the host to sit first, then everyone can follow. This would be a great time to mingle, say hello to people you haven't seen in a while, make some new connections. *Make sure you shake hands with everyone!*

10. Cell phones should be kept under the table or out of sight at all times. You should excuse yourself from the table to use your cell phone. But, let's not keep getting up to answer a text or a phone call. You should get up and leave the table if it's an emergency. During my career in the conference industry - when sitting down at a post-con for a business event, this is one area that drives hosts, keynote speakers, and meeting planners crazy when people are constantly interrupting the event by walking out to attend to the cell phone - make the most of your time with these business luncheons.

A lot of great deals have been made over great meals!

