

Business Dining Etiquette

10 Tips To Make A Great Impression At The Table

Written by Ash Ariffin

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One of the most vital parts of conducting business today is business dining etiquette. Office or even on your cell phone may not be the best or common place to conduct business today. Almost about fifty percent of business is conducted over food. That is why it is said that business lunch or dinner is always more than a meal. It is an important way to built relationship with potential clients or business partners.

Just imagine for awhile the potential for making a good impression or a poor one during a meal. We meet, order, eat and drink any kinds of food and beverages then exchange business cards and that is it. Nothing of these details is conducting business while trying not to talk with your mouth full.

If you accidentally grab the bread basket without offering it first to your client or ungracefully gobble down your food because you are famished or hungry, your potential client or business partner might conclude that you are insensitive or aggressive. They might wonder or assume on how you will be if they do business with you.

After my numerous attempts during business appointments over a meal and attending some of business etiquette course, I have come out with 10 tips on how to make a good impression over business appointments over meals.

Tip #1 - Similar to any other business meetings, always plan ahead to ensure that this meal will be a success. The person who issues the invitation is the host and he/she is responsible or expected to pay the bill.

Tip #2 - As the host, you are responsible in choosing the restaurant and making sure the meals goes smoothly. Taking into consideration of the time of the meal and location of the restaurant. You might want to choose a restaurant that is convenient for your client, for example, the ease of parking facilities. Scheduling the time for a meal is also important, try to schedule it early in the week so as to avoid Friday lunch time crowd where restaurants can be noisy and it is almost impossible to conduct business.

Tip #3 - Also to take into consideration if there is any special dietary requirements from your guests. If you are not sure, ask what does your guest prefers. This is very important if your guest is a Muslim, Buddhists, Vegetarian and etc so as to avoid any misunderstandings and strike out the opportunity.

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Tip #4 – As the host, it is only polite to arrive at the restaurant ten minutes early and wait for your guests at the entrance. Remember! Your guests always get the preferred seats. For example, the one facing towards the room or the one facing a window with a scenic view. Always sit in your chair from the left and get up from the right. If there are other guests arriving, you can start ordering drinks as a starter but do not touch anything else on the table. It is important to keep the table in pristine or immaculate condition until everyone has arrived.

Tip #5 – Always coordinate your meal courses. Did you ever have a business meal where everyone is having something different? Some is having soup or salad and others did not order anything. When this happens, some of them are eating while the others just watch and feel awkward. Everyone at the table have to order as a group to be sure that everyone eat the same number of meal courses and all finishes at the same time.

Tip #6 – Always offer suggestions. As the host, you can offer suggestions starting from the more expensive items on the menu so that your guests will feel free to order anything they want. Allow your guests to order first followed by you. The reason being, order anything that your guests order, even if you do not like it and have a few bites. If your guests order salad, you order salad as well.

Tip #7 – This can be a little tricky if you follow Tip #6. Order the meals carefully unless your guests order food that can sabotage you, try your best to avoid them. You do not want to be wrestling with a lobster claw instead of talking to your guest and a grown person wearing a lobster bib will not look very impressive. Try your best to avoid anything that is difficult to eat with a knife and fork or meals like pasta where splattered sauces can end up disastrously on your tie or shirt.

Tip #8 – Do not forget your objectives or motive for the meal. It can be about a specific issue or introduction of your services to a potential clients or business partners, so the time for you to start talking about business depends on situations. For example, if you are meeting them for lunch or breakfast, time will be limited and you might want to start talking business after ordering. If it is during dinner, the pace setting will be more flexible and make sure that everyone have settle down and feel more relaxed. You might want to start your business related conversation only after the main course is cleared away.

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Tip #9 – Building relationship is the most important of all. From case to case basis, you might not even want to talk business at all and spend the time to get to know you potential client or business partners and vice-versa. If their spouses are around, remember not to ever forget or ignore them. Their spouses might not be important for business but they will or might be having a great influence on your potential clients or business partners. Treat the spouses as well as you treat your guests. Remember, do not jeopardise their first impression on you in any way.

Tip #10 – Always keep it in perspective. Remember that the purpose of a business meal is to build a relationship with your potential clients or business partners, not with the food.

Verbally Retarded