

Dining Etiquette

Often, the second interview involves lunch, dinner or a reception. You should know how to conduct yourself, here are some basic rules:

Utensils Etiquette

As a rule of thumb, when you face a full throng of knives, forks, and spoons, work from the outside in. In other words, use the flatware the furthest from the plate first. The one exception is the salad fork - it is usually closest to the plate. Used utensils must never touch the surface of the table or the tablecloth because they might make the cloth dirty. Even the clean handles of your fork and knife should not touch the table.

At the end of a course, place your used utensil on a flat dish. Do not leave a fork or spoon in a bowl or cup. Between bites, your utensils should rest on the edge of your plate. Your knife rests on the back of your plate; your fork sits on the side of your plate. When you are finished, place your knife and fork so they lie horizontally across the center of the plate. The blade of your knife should face toward you.

Napkin Rules

As soon as you are seated, put your napkin in your lap. Sometimes, at very formal restaurants, the waiter may do this for you. Treat your napkin very gently during the meal. Do not crumple it or wad it into a knot. When you are finished, place your napkin next to your plate. Do not refold it. Do not leave it on the chair when you get up

The basics:

- If you are not sure what to order, follow your host's lead.
- If the recruiter is not first in line to order, ask him/her, "What do you recommend?"
- Stick to soft drinks, tea, coffee, and water. Avoid beer, wine, and mixed drinks.
- Cut one bite (meat, fruit, or vegetables) at a time. Keep your fork prongs pointed down, not up.
- With dinner rolls, break off and butter one small piece of bread at a time.
- Never make slurping or appetizing sounds.
- When sharing a sauce with others, spoon some of it on to your plate; don't dip your food into it.
- If you need to leave the table temporarily, place your napkin on your seat.
- Keep your elbows off the table.
- Drink from YOUR water glass; it is to your right.
- Eat at the same pace as your host or hostess.

University of St. Thomas Career Development Center Questions? Contact Us!

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Do:

- Go prepared to be conversational.
- Read national and local newspapers ahead of time so that you can discuss news and events.
- Skim the menu quickly.
- Order a medium-priced entree.
- Sit up straight.
- Relax and keep the conversation focused on business-related or casual topics.
- Say please and thank you to the waiter.

Don't:

- Don't talk about personal relationships, recent parties, politics, sports, or religion.
- Don't eat the garnish.
- Don't drink from the soup bowl.
- Don't use toothpicks in the presence of the recruiter.
- Don't discuss dietary restrictions; downplay your food preferences.
- Don't order foods that require twirling or licking, are apt to splatter or spray, or require you to wear a bib.
- Don't drink alcohol if you are under age 21; don't have more than one drink if you are 21 or over.
- Don't argue over the check or offer to pay the tip; the host who invited you must take care of both.
- Don't blow your nose in your napkin.
- Don't eat as if this is your last meal. On the other hand, don't dine on half a lettuce leaf.
- Don't get too comfortable. Even if the meal isn't technically an interview situation, you need to be on your toes.

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