



Party Panache



To help you sail through the coming season's myriad celebrations, **Suneeta Sodhi Kanga** outlines some basic dos and don'ts



So the party season is currently in full swing! A party is an enjoyable celebration where people get together to socialise, converse and relax but, more often than not, a lot of bloopers are created by guests. A savvy party goer should have a few tricks up his sleeve.

Guidelines for Eating and Drinking: Never, ever, drink on an empty stomach. Stop on the way to the event to grab a snack if necessary. The risks of losing control or being indiscreet are too great. In fact, be sure to pace your alcoholic intake throughout the course of the evening.

Don't fill your plate to overflowing. People seldom notice you going back for seconds at large cocktail functions; they will notice the mountainous heap on your plate. If refreshments are being served by waiters, all the better. It eliminates the necessity for a plate, provided greed doesn't get the better of you and you try to take more than one hors d'oeuvre at a time. Refuse if the foods are messy, drippy or drippy. Olives with pits are held in the fingers and eaten in several bites. Then the pit is discarded on the side of your plate, in an ashtray or into a napkin. Do the same with toothpicks.

Never, ever dip something from which you've already taken a bite back into the sauce. Hold your cocktail napkin beneath the vegetable to catch any drops of sauce that may fall.

Always exercise caution to avoid burning yourself when biting into a hot hors d'oeuvre. Test the temperature unobtrusively with the tip of your tongue, and remember that the inside is usually quite a bit hotter.

How to hold glasses at parties: First of all, the right hand should always be kept free to shake hands with other guests who may be arriving or leaving. Food, drink, napkin, stirrers, toothpicks - everything - goes into the left hand.

A cold, wet drink should never be held for more than the time it takes to have a quick sip. In fact, a chilled drink should be held by the stem, never

the bowl, so you don't heat the drink. Hold a highball by the base of the glass rather than wrapping your hand around the drink.

Only room temperature drinks, like brandy or a neat scotch that benefit from the added body heat to release the bouquet, are held by the bowl of the glass. If an elaborately garnished drink is provided, it may be drunk through a straw. Please do not fidget with it, or use it to stir the drink between sips.

How to Hold a Wine Glass: Wine is served in stemware because the temperature at which it is served can have a profound impact on the taste and the enjoyment it yields. Wine glasses should always be held by the stem of the glass rather than the bowl since the heat of your hand will quickly warm the liquid. Just hold the glass by the stem unless the wine is served at too cool a temperature and you need to warm it for a minute or two.

What to do with Stirrers and Toothpicks? While food served on toothpicks or cocktail sticks may keep your fingers clean, there is the problem of what to do with those sticks. Don't litter, but don't put them back on the serving tray; it is unappetising to others and unhygienic. If no containers have been provided for the toothpicks, put them in an ashtray, on a dish or on the tray when the waitstaff is collecting empty glasses.

If nothing is available, wrap the toothpicks in a napkin and dispose of them later. Please do not put toothpicks in your pockets, Ming vases or flower arrangements!

Here's how to hold everything in one hand: Take that cocktail napkin and put it between the ring and baby finger of the left hand. Then, spread the ring and middle fingers to act as a base for the plate of hors d'oeuvres. Use the thumb and index finger to hold the stem or base of the glass and to stabilise the top of the plate at the same time. As you need something, reach for it with the right hand, use it, then return it to the appropriate finger slot in the left hand before continuing. ☑