

Dining Etiquette

It is said that the Shah of Iran, on a visit to India, was so impressed with the custom of eating with one's fingers that he remarked that to eat with cutlery was like making love through an interpreter. In today's global village, however, we all need to have the right table manners. **Suneeta Sodhi Kanga** navigates the potential minefield of silverware and eating utensils

ATABLE or place setting refers to the way a table is set with tableware—eating utensils and dishes for serving and eating. A table setting may have many elements, especially on formal occasions.

The arrangement for a single diner is called a place setting.

In the West, the forks, bread plate, butter knife, and napkin are generally placed to the left of the dinner plate; and knives, spoons, stemware and tumblers to the right.

Cutlery refers to any hand implement used in preparing, serving, and especially eating food in the Western world.

It is more usually known as silverware or flatware in the United States.

This is because traditionally, good quality cutlery was always made from silver, though steel was always used for more utilitarian knives.

The major items of cutlery in the Western world are the knife, fork and spoon.

Utensils are arranged in the order and according to the manner in which the diner will use them.

Those utensils in the outermost position are used first. For example, a soup spoon and a salad fork, are used before the dinner fork and the dinner knife.

Forks are placed on the left of the dinner plate and knives and spoons are placed on the right.

Remember that the cutting-edge of the knife should face the plate.

Silverware that you use first should be placed farthest from the plate.

The fork that you use first should be placed to the far left of the plate.

And the spoon that you use first should be to the far right of the plate.

A butter knife can be placed horizontally on top of the bread plate if needed.

The pudding or dessert spoon and fork are placed on the top of the table setting

Each course has its own utensils, but they will be set in the order in which you will use them. Therefore, always use the outer utensil when you're served the next course.

Your knife and fork are the significant utensils because they signal when you're resting between courses and when you're finished.

To indicate that you're not finished eating but only taking a rest, make an inverted 'V' over your plate by placing the fork on the left and the knife on the right.

To indicate that you're finished, place the knife and fork together in a 6 o'clock position.

As a courtesy to the waiter, so that he doesn't hurt himself while clearing, the sharp end of the knife should face inwards.

Remember, that if you have a knife in one hand, it is wrong to have a fork in the other with the prongs (tines) pointed up.

Hold your knife with the handle in your palm and your fork in the other hand with the prongs pointing downwards.

When eating in formal situations, rest the fork and knife on the plate between mouthfuls, or for a break for conversation.

If you put your knife down, you can turn your fork over.

It's correct to change hands when you do this, so if you are right handed you would switch and eat with the fork in your right hand.

If it is your sole eating instrument, the fork should be held with the handle between the index finger and the thumb and resting on the side of your middle finger.

Reminder: Never place a used item on the table. Once you use your utensils, always rest the utensil on your plate.

Types of spoons

- The soup spoon has a large or rounded bowl for eating (not drinking!) soup.
- The tablespoon or dinner spoon has a large bowl and is the main spoon.
- The dessert spoon, intermediate in size (between a teaspoon and a tablespoon) is used for eating dessert.
- The teaspoon is small and suitable for stirring and sipping tea or coffee.

Types of forks

- The oyster fork has 2 to 3 prongs.
- The dessert fork, small in size, is usually used along with a dessert spoon.
- The salad fork is smaller than a dinner fork.
- The dinner fork is the largest on the table.

Types of knives

- The butter knife is kept on the bread plate.
- The cheese knife is only meant for the cutting and service of chesses, not eating.
- The dinner knife is used for entrees. ☞

