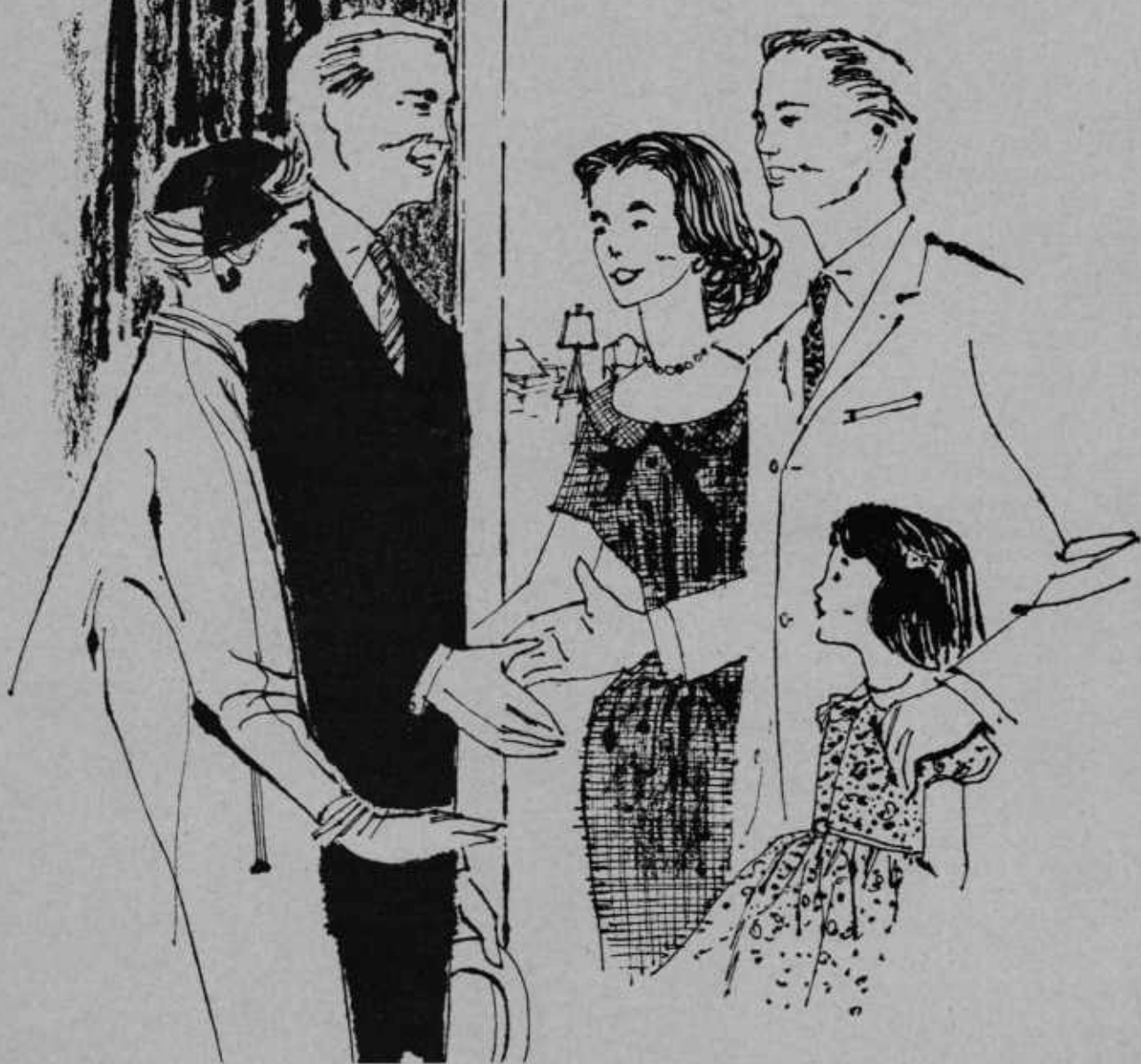


# The family entertains



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# The family entertains

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Mealtimes can be pleasant. In our busy society they are often the only times family members relax together. They should, therefore, be happy, enjoyable experiences. Anything which mars their pleasantness should be avoided. To serve nutritious food attractively, and in an orderly, relaxed manner is a worthy goal for any homemaker. Children adjust quickly to new eating experiences outside the home when consideration and good manners at mealtimes are part of daily living.

Certain customs have become accepted as aids in achieving a desirable atmosphere at mealtime. They apply equally to a simple family meal, an unexpected guest meal, or an elaborate formal banquet. These so-called rules are simply guides to help achieve the main objective—an orderly, pleasant eating experience. *No set of rules should be followed so closely that individual living patterns are dictated.* Common sense and experience will show which apply in any particular home. Choose—and then use—those which fit your situation.

Decide on the method of service and customs which fit your situation. Use them daily until they are a part of your family living pattern.

Avoid controversial or unpleasant table conversations.

Teach children by daily example. Briefing on what to expect before special occasions gives a child confidence. Make sure he knows what his duties are, and where he is to sit. Try not to embarrass a child by correcting him in front of others.

Feed very small children early. Provide comfortable chairs for preschool children. They cannot be expected to eat properly if their chairs are too far from the table or too low.

Learn to handle silverware with ease. Teach young people how to use knives, forks, and spoons gracefully.

Serve a variety of foods so that children will accept most of them when they are guests.

Expose all family members to a variety of eating experiences. Young people will get valuable social experience when company meals, buffet meals, or evening refreshments are served to guests.

Relax and enjoy your family and friends.

## Types of Table Service

Recent trends toward larger families and smaller dining areas, along with a more informal living pattern, have resulted in many changes in table service. Homemakers need to know how to adapt the time-honored methods to their particular situations.

There are many acceptable methods for serving food at the table. The two most common types of table service are the English and Russian, or variations of them. Many company meals are served buffet style.

Remember that *no form of service is in bad taste if it is orderly, pleasant, and places food before the family or guest while the food is in the best condition for eating*. However, the style should be simple enough to be grasped quickly by guests unfamiliar with the pattern.

### English Style

In the English type of service the host, seated at one end of the table, serves the dinner plates from bowls or platters placed in front of his own table service. Usually he serves both the meat and vegetables. He carves the meat at the table. The first plate served is passed to the right to the hostess who sits at the opposite end of the table from the host. Successive plates are then passed to the right to the guests on that side of the table until all on the host's right are served. The left side of the table is then served, the plates being passed to the left to avoid extra handling. Salads, breads, etc., are placed on the table before guests are seated. This style of service is preferred by many homemakers because it avoids awkward passing of many hot dishes. The host must be experienced enough to serve food quickly if guests are to eat a hot meal.

### Russian style

This is a formal type of service used for large banquets and dinners. Usually several

courses are served. Here the table is set with silver, a glass, and a cup at each plate. Salt and condiments, if used, are on the table. Each course is served and removed by waitresses. Soup, salad, entree, and dessert courses are the minimum served. Because of its formality, it is seldom used except for banquets. Plates are filled in the kitchen and served.

### Buffet style

Buffet style service is especially useful when serving more guests than can be seated around a table. Plates and silverware are placed at one end of a table. All other food is placed on the table for self-service by the guests. A guest is given his plate and silverware and requested to proceed down the table, serving himself with whatever he wishes. Trays usually are provided to hold the plate, beverage, and silverware. Elderly persons or children are more comfortable when they can place their food on some sort of table. Others may prefer to sit wherever convenient, placing trays on their laps.

### Western family style

Western homemakers in recent years have evolved their own style, suited to their mode of living. Strictly speaking it is an adaptation of the Russian style. Larger families and smaller tables have made it difficult to have platters and bowls of food on the table without overcrowding. Many families find it easier to serve the plates from the kitchen, having salads, bread and butter, pickles, etc., already on the table. Seconds are either served by the hostess or passed in bowls or platters.

Food is always passed to the right. Much confusion can result if this sensible rule is not observed. Food for seconds can be placed on a serving table close to the hostess. Beverages are served from the right.

## Setting the Table

### Table linens

Luncheon cloths or place mats are used for covering the table at breakfast, lunch, and informal dinners. They may be many shapes, either plain or printed, cloth or straw. Many attractive plastic coated cloths, difficult to tell from untreated material, are available. They are especially useful for families with young children. Whatever is chosen, the table covering should be fresh, clean, and should harmonize with the room and dishes.

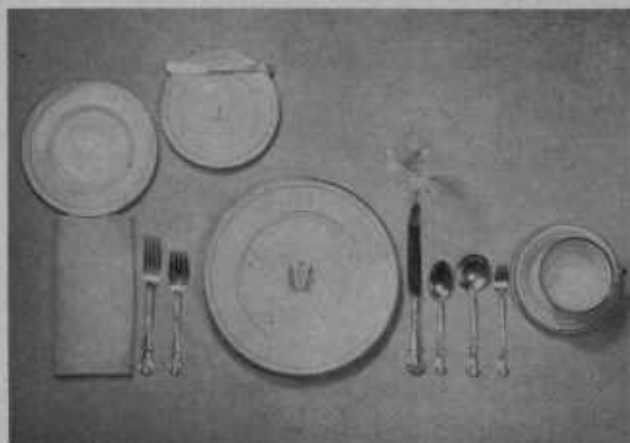
For special dinners use linen, fine cotton or rayon cloths. White or pale colors usually are chosen. These should be placed over a silence cloth or pad to deaden sound and protect the table finish from hot dishes. An old blanket makes a good silence cloth. If the tablecloth is folded the fold should be lengthwise of the table. The cloth should extend over the edges about 10 inches.

### Dishes

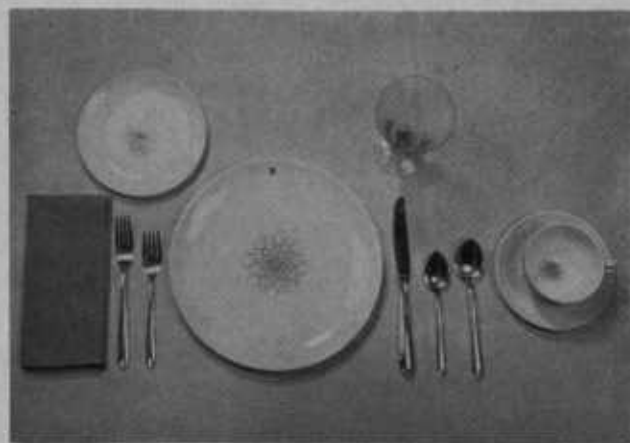
Dishes need not be expensive. They can range in price from inexpensive pottery to expensive porcelain. Informal pottery should be accompanied by silver and glass which also have a casual appearance. Formal china should be used with harmonizing sterling or silver plate and crystal. Dishes used should be simple enough that the food, not the china, is the real interest. They should be sparkling clean, free of stains and chips. Glasses should be easy to grasp, goblets or stemware well balanced.

### Flatware

The homemaker has many choices of flatware. Inexpensive plate, stainless steel, and sterling are readily available. Silverware and serving pieces should be free of tarnish and in good condition. Accidents can happen because fork tines have been bent out of shape.



Formal china, silver, and crystal are used for formal table settings.



Less formal types of china, silver, and glassware may be used for either family or company dinners.



Casual pottery or dishes made of plastic look well with tumblers and stainless steel flatware.



## Centerpiece

A low, pleasing centerpiece is a desirable addition to any table. Keep the centerpiece simple. Use a piece of ivy, a few flowers, or fruit. It should never stand high enough to block the view across the table. Many modern tables are too narrow for any centerpiece. It is better to omit one than to make the table look overloaded.

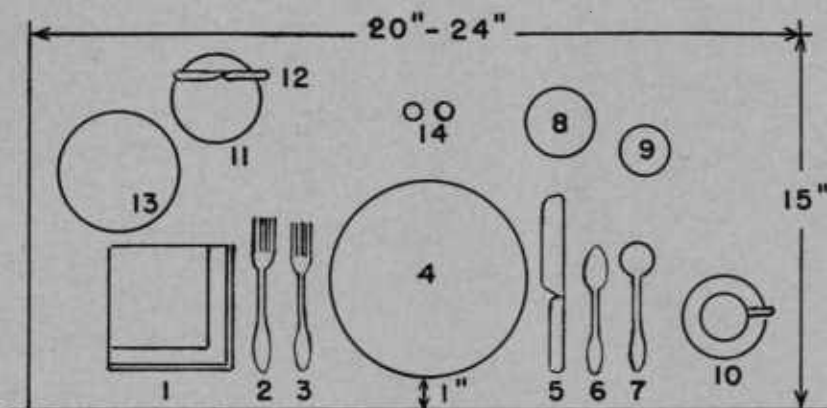
Often candles are used. If candles are

placed on the table they should be lighted and furnish the only illumination. Be sure there are enough candles to give sufficient light for comfortable dining. The flame should be above, or below, eye level when guests are seated. Many men thoroughly dislike eating by candlelight. A hostess should be sure the guests will be comfortable if she chooses this type of light, but any guest should cooperate without comment if a meal is served by candlelight.

## The Place Setting

The place setting for one person is called a cover. It requires a minimum of 18 inches in width and 14 inches in depth. If possible, allow up to 24 x 15 inches for a less crowded area. The usual cover consists of:

A large plate, 9 to 10 inches or larger; a salad plate; a bread and butter plate; a cup and saucer; a glass or goblet for water; a small glass for fruit juice; silverware necessary for menu to be served.



A cover set up ready to use.

1. Napkin
2. Dinner fork
3. Salad fork
4. Plate
5. Knife
6. Spoon
7. Soup spoon
8. Glass of water
9. Glass of fruit juice
10. Cup and saucer or mug
11. Bread and butter plate
12. Butter spreader
13. Salad plate
14. Salt and pepper shakers

The plate is placed in the middle of the cover. All china and silver are placed one inch from the table edge and in the order it will be used, starting from the outside. The knife is placed to the right of the plate, cutting edge toward the plate. To its right are the teaspoon

and soup spoon, bowls up. A seafood fork, if used, goes to the right of the soup spoon. The coffee cup is just beyond the spoons. Beverage glasses go at the top of the knife.

To the left of the plate are the forks, tines up. The salad fork will be closest to the plate,

the dinner fork to its left. Some local customs will switch the salad and dinner forks, but since they are usually used at the same time, it makes little difference. The bread and butter plate is placed above the forks. The butter knife rests on the far edge of the bread and butter plate parallel to table edge. The salad plate is to the left and a little below the bread and butter plate. With very small tables it is sometimes necessary to use the bread and butter plate in place of the salad plate. Breads when passed are then placed on the same plate with the salad. A better method is to serve the salad as a separate course. Napkins are folded so the open corner is in the lower right-hand area. They are placed to the left of the silverware.

Individual salt and pepper shakers, if used, are placed directly above the individual's plate, or they may be shared between two persons.

Butter, jelly, pickles, and condiments are placed in an orderly fashion around the table, in easy reach of some guest. Usually the hostess requests that these be passed. If asked to pass an item, pass it to the right. It is best to wait until it returns to serve oneself.

### **Families with children**

"Come, and bring the family," is a common invitation in the West. Large families are not uncommon and often a hostess finds it impossible to serve everyone at the same table. The thoughtful hostess will anticipate this problem and attempt to solve it with ingenuity. Small children are happier at a low table with their friends. A coffee table may be used with low chairs, hassocks, or children kneeling. If the children are young, spills are almost sure to occur. Placing the table on a surface such as linoleum, that will not be harmed by liquids, will endear a hostess to the mother of young guests. A large tablecloth of plastic may be spread on the living room floor under the children's table if no other satisfactory place for them to eat is available. Plates may be smaller



Tables for children may be improvised with a coffee table or bench, using low chairs and stools.

than average size, glasses should be of good balance, heavy enough to withstand easy tipping. Serving the children before the adults usually will allow for a more enjoyable and less interrupted adult mealtime. It may be practical to ask the mother to serve the plates for her own small children. She can judge best what the child will eat. With a cloth or sponge handy, even quite young children can take care of accidents. When special attention is given to making guest mealtimes pleasant occasions for youngsters, such experiences as eating with their friends become learning opportunities.

### **Greeting guests**

A skilled hostess will plan a menu that requires little last minute preparation unless she has dependable help in the kitchen. She will be dressed in plenty of time to greet the first guest. The host, also, should be ready for the guests. The table will be set and the house in order. Often most of the people will know each other and can chat comfortably. Newcomers should be introduced. Following are a few accepted rules for introducing people. Their observance will help prevent the hesitation and

embarrassment often associated with introductions.

1. Be sure *who* is being presented to *whom* and mention the *latter's* name first.
  - a. A man is introduced to a woman, that is "Mrs. Jones, may I present Mr. Smith?"
  - b. A younger woman is introduced to an older lady: "Mrs Elderly, this is Miss Youth."
  - c. When introducing men the older man's name is usually mentioned first: "Mr. Sixty, this is Mr. Forty."
2. Speak clearly and repeat the names if necessary.
3. Refer to a spouse as "my husband" or "my wife." It is graceful to say, "Mrs. Greene, may I present my wife?"
4. Introducing relatives may result in confusion unless careful attention is given to names. Be sure to indicate the surname if it is different from your own. "This is my sister-in-law Jean" is sufficient for a sister if she is single, but my sister "Mrs. John Different" is necessary if she is married. Remember, most people may not know the maiden name of the hostess and therefore could not be expected to know the surname of her relatives.
5. Introducing parents: Teen-agers will say "Mother and dad, I would like for you to meet....." Married women will say, "These are my parents, Mr. and Mrs. (Maiden name)."
6. When introducing a single person to the group, the name of person being introduced is mentioned once. The group, if not too large, is then named. In a very large party, only those in the immediate area are introduced at one time. Thus: May I present Mrs. Smith? These are Miss ....., Mr. ...., Mrs. ...."

7. If forced to introduce someone whose name has been forgotten, admit the lapse of memory. The world won't end if one simply says, "I'm so sorry, but I have forgotten your name."
8. Local custom and the age of the group will dictate whether or not first names will be used. When in doubt better remain a little formal.

Introductions are acknowledged by a smile and a little pleasantry as, "I'm glad to meet you." Men rise, women remain seated unless introduced to an elderly lady.
9. If an oversight has occurred and you have not met another guest, it is proper to introduce yourself. Say, "I'm Mrs. Brown. I don't believe we have met." Mrs. Greene will then reply, "How do you do, Mrs. Brown. I'm Mrs. Greene."
10. Use the rules to help you make introductions smoothly, but do not become overly concerned about mistakes. The job of host and hostess is to help the guests become acquainted and at ease. How this is done is less important than the fact that it is accomplished.

### **Dinner is served**

The hostess has the responsibility for announcing the meal and seating the guests. When the dinner is ready, she can simply say, "Dinner is ready now." Guests should cooperate immediately so the meal may be served at its best. The hostess will lead the way to the dining table, and will indicate where each is to sit.

Placecards are used only at formal dinners. The hostess will say, Mrs. Jones, won't you sit next to John ( host) ?, Mr. Brown there (pointing), Mrs. Smith next, etc.," until all are sure of their places. The woman guest of honor

(or most elderly woman present) is seated at the right of the host. He usually will assist her to her place. The man guest of honor is seated at the right of the hostess.

Guests should allow the host and hostess to initiate table conversation. Many families begin a meal with a grace. There should be no awkward pause waiting for silence. Decide beforehand which family member will ask the blessing. If a child volunteers or is accustomed to doing it, help him practice. Some adult, preferably the host, should be prepared to fill the gap in case the child becomes hesitant at the last minute.

After food is served, the hostess will signal that it is time to eat by picking up her fork. Thoughtful guests will assist in keeping the conversation pleasant and not controversial. They will endeavor to eat at the approximate speed of others so as not to unduly delay the meal. However, a hostess will continue to eat until all the guests have finished.

Dishes are served and removed from the left with the left hand to prevent reaching in front of a guest. Care is taken to keep the thumb away from the plate rim. After the main course is finished, the hostess, maid, or some family member will remove the serving dishes first. Then each place setting is removed by taking the plate, salad plate, and bread and butter plate. If necessary the table is crumbed with a clean napkin. Dessert is served and coffee or beverage replenished. Coffee or other beverages are always served from the right.

The hostess signals the end of the meal by placing her napkin unfolded at the left of the plate and rising. Usually she will suggest gath-

ering in the living room for a friendly time together. Chairs are quietly moved back into place by each person.

Often close family friends offer to help the hostess clear the table and wash the dishes. A hostess may then accept or refuse as she wishes. If she refuses, the guests should not insist.

Local custom will vary the time a person is expected to stay after a meal. It may be as short as half an hour or as long as the complete evening. A thoughtful hostess will indicate this when inviting guests by saying, "Do come for dinner on the fifth of January. We will be finished in time for anyone who wishes to attend the concert." Leaving abruptly after eating, while sometimes unavoidable, is not considered good taste. It is sometimes better to refuse an invitation than to leave in too great haste.

A thoughtful guest will take his leave before the evening has become too prolonged. A thank you note, sincerely saying how pleasant the dinner was, is a final gesture of appreciation.

Often a guest will want to ask the hostess and family to dine at her home. But one should never feel *obligated* to entertain in return. It is better to let acquaintanceships lapse than to entertain from a feeling of duty.

Entertaining at home may be a most enjoyable experience if one feels confident enough to handle any situation that arises. Friendly consideration of your guests' welfare will always be the yardstick by which to measure any act. Nothing that adds to his comfort and enjoyment can be too wrong.