

The pride of every Butler, the dinner table.

The first thing that you need to discuss with your employer is the menu. Have your Party Book handy so you won't serve the same meal to the same guests twice and to see who hasn't been invited to dinner for a while. After the menu is set and the guests chosen, you can decide on the service style and the wine. If the meal is for more than 12 it should be catered, or use buffet service.

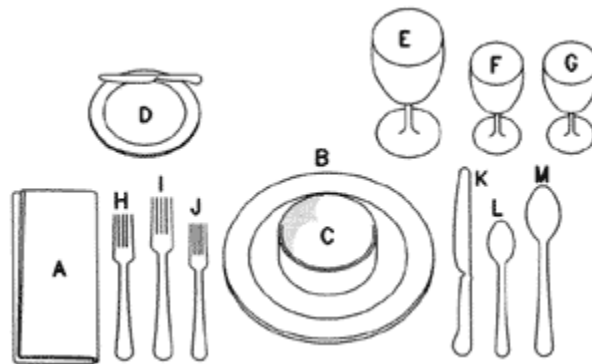
Who is going to serve coffee and after dinner drinks is something to plan now also. Some people have coffee at the table and other serve it in the living room. If it's a casual or small dinner, the lady of the house may do the serving.

Somewhere in the kitchen have a spare cover set up so you can replace any thing that might get knocked to the floor in the dining room. Have a bottle of club soda and some towels ready for spills. Another facet of the meal is the number of courses that you are going to have. The classic French meal is 13 courses but today three or four is the norm. The more courses that you have the smaller the portion of food goes on the plate and less wine in the glass.

The white card above the placemat is a place card, which tells who sits where. Many times the cutlery follows the shape of the table. It might take a professional Butler about 15 minutes per place setting to create a dinner table that lives up to his standards. So setting a table for 12 persons keeps him busy for hours.

Every place setting should be exactly the same, to the millimeter. An inexperienced Butler might use some measuring device.

You might be surprised that there are placemats used and no tablecloth, but this is absolutely correct. Covering up a beautiful antique table for instance would be a shame.



- A. Napkin
 - B. Service plate
 - C. Soup bowl
 - D. Bread and Butter Plate with butter knife.
 - E. Water glass
 - F. Wine glass
 - G. Wine glass
 - H. Salad Fork
 - I. Dinner Fork
 - J. Dessert Fork
 - K. Knife
 - L. Teaspoon
 - M. Soup Spoon
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NEVER FORGET ...

You are not "just" setting the table ...
You are also setting the mood!

TABLECLOTH

- Pull the chairs away so you can walk around the table freely.
- Lay the silence pad down and cover with the tablecloth. Make sure that all the sides are hanging true.
- Align the needed chairs so they are spaced evenly down the side of the table. Now sight the chairs that are across the table from each other.

PLACE MATS

- Use last step from above.
- Center the place mat on its chair.
- The edge of the mat should be 1/2 inch from the table's edge. If you have the large mats the flatware goes on the mat. If you have the small English type the flatware goes on the table.

THEN

- Pull the chairs away so you can walk around the table freely.
- Roll the runner down the table and make sure that the ends hang even. The edge of the runner should be 1/2 inch from the table's edge.
- Align the chairs so they are spaced evenly down the side of table. Now sight the chairs that are across the table from each other.
- Place a cover plate in front of a chair. The edge of the plate should be 1 inch from the edge of the table.
- The basic rules for laying the cutlery are:
 - - The handles will be one inch from the edge of the table.
 - The two outer most pieces are used first. (See our illustrations for the correct piece of flatware for a course).
 - A soup spoon may go between knives if there is an appetizer before the soup.
 - The butter knife on the bread plate has the blade face into the center of the plate.
 - Only the soup course has one piece of flatware all others have two. A salad should be torn into bite size pieces but a knife may be used to push the food onto the fork.
- If you have individual salt and pepper shakers they go above the main course fork or above the dessert flatware. If people have to share the shakers they go between the covers.
- The bread plate can either go to the left of the forks or above the forks to the of the salt and pepper shakers.
- The wine glass for the main course is above the knife for that course. The water glass goes inside the red wine glass and a little above it. The white wine glass goes on the outside of the red wine glass and a little closer to the flatware. If there are other wine glasses used they can lined up behind the first two glasses.
- **WHEN NECESSARY** (this is restaurant style!): The flatware for dessert goes directly above the plate. The fork goes closest to the plate with the tines pointing to the right. The spoon goes above the fork with the bowl pointing to the right.
- The flower arrangements should not be above eye level.
- Try to set the candelabras so that everybody can make eye contact.

SEATING GUESTS



This is a guessing game at best. You will place people at the table according to social rules and your boss will come along and rearrange the lot. I have spent an hour getting the place cards set and then my employer would come along and shift the whole table around. To avoid this game of musical place cards I put out the head and foot place cards and the guest of honor and wife cards and give the rest to the lady of the house to do as she sees fit. (Then the husband will come along and the whole process starts over). The basic rules for the table are:

- Your employer will decide which is the head and foot of the table.
- The guest of honor will sit to the right of the lady of the house. There are two schools of thought as to the seating of the hostess. One is that she sits at the foot of the table but this may mess up the man woman man setting order. The other way is for the guest of honor to sit at the foot and the hostess to sit to his right. The wife of the guest of honor will sit to the right of the host. This is subject to change according to the wishes of your employer.
- Serve the guest of honor first. If you are the only server finish that side of the table. Then serve the wife of the guest honor and her side of the table. The man of the house is next and the lady of the house is last.

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