

Business meal cheat sheet

Inviting

Are you free for lunch on Friday? – This is a good informal way to invite someone to a business lunch

Would you like to have lunch next Monday to discuss this in more detail? – This is a more formal way of making lunch arrangements

I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to dinner at The Ivy restaurant at 8pm on the 31st December to discuss future collaboration between our companies. – This is a very formal (often written) invitation to a dinner at a restaurant.

Ordering

How would you like your meat cooked? – In English, the three main ways of cooking red meat are rare, medium rare and well-done. Rare is still very red inside, medium rare still has a little red inside and well-done is completely cooked all the way through.

Could we see the menu please? – Menus are usually divided into appetizers, main courses, side dishes and desserts.

Excuse me, this dish is cold, would you mind heating it up? – Even if you get the worst service in the world, a business lunch is not the time to get into an argument. Try to remain polite at all times!

Ending the meal

That was lovely, we really must do this again soon – By saying this, you can politely tell someone that you would like to leave.

Wow look at the time, I don't want to take up any more of your afternoon/evening – This is a good way to show you are thinking about your guest.

Tricky verbs

When talking to the waitress or waiter, you should use modal verbs such as can, could, would and may:

May *I have some more bread?* – “May I” is a polite way of requesting permission. Try to avoid “Can I get...” as it is too informal for business meals

Could *you bring me the dessert menu* – Could is a little more polite than “Can”

Would you mind *if I changed tables?* – “Would you mind...” is a way of asking if something would be a problem. If someone asks you a question beginning with “Would you mind...?”, you should say “Not at all” it is ok and “Actually, I’m afraid that...” if it is a problem.