

Title:

Solving The Utensil Puzzle

Word Count:

538

Summary:

Learn the basics of utensil use in order to make your business meals proceed more smoothly.

Keywords:

utensils,business,dining,place,settings,knives,forks,spoons,meals,etiquette,manners

Article Body:

Many people know how to navigate place settings and know when to use each utensil. How to hold those knives, forks and spoons, where to put them when you are not using them and what to do with them at the end of the course or the meal may still be a challenge. Glancing around you while dining out and trying to get a clue from others may not solve the problem. A quick study of people eating out will reveal that there are almost as many ways to hold a knife or fork as there people using them.

The fork is held between the first knuckle of the third finger and the tip of the index finger with the thumb to steady the handle. This is much the same way that you would hold a pencil although observation will tell you that there are variations on that as well.

The knife is held between your thumb and third finger with the index finger resting on the top of the blade. If this seems awfully basic, look around. You'll find people gripping the knife like a dagger and holding the fork like a miniature cello.

There are two differing styles of eating: American and Continental. The difference between the two is primarily how you hold the knife and fork while taking food to your mouth and what you do with them while resting between bites.

The American Style is the one most commonly used in this country and is often referred to as the zigzag method. When you are cutting your food, the fork is in the left hand with tines down and the handle between your thumb and third finger. Your index finger rests on the back of the handle. The knife is in

your right hand at this point. Assuming that you are right-handed, when you are ready to take the food to your mouth, you put the knife down (on your plate, blade facing in) and switch the fork to your right hand. Tines go up as the food goes to your mouth.

The Continental or European Style is less formal and actually seems more efficient. The knife and fork are held the same way as they are for the American Style when you cut food. The difference is that the fork is not moved to the right hand nor is it turned tines up when food is taken to the mouth. The knife can remain in your right hand while you chew. The knife then becomes more versatile. You can use it to move food onto the back of your fork (which is kept in the tines down position). However, it is still not permissible to wave it around or use it to punctuate your conversation.

One more point to keep in mind when cutting your food; cut only one bite at a time. If you are thinking that your mother always cut up all your food at one time, that was because she wanted to be able to eat her dinner uninterrupted, not because it was good table manners.

(c) 2006, Lydia Ramsey. All rights reserved. Reprint rights granted so long as article and by-line are published intact and with all links made live.