

Interviewing Over a Meal

Wow an Employer with Your Dining Etiquette Skills!

Interviewing over a meal is a great way for an employer to assess your professionalism in a social setting. Here are some tips on showing your best during an interview over lunch or dinner.

REVIEW BASIC DINING ETIQUETTE RULES

If you haven't attended a Dining Etiquette program, be sure to review online and other resources related to the rules of dining etiquette. Knowing things like where to wait for your host, where to place your napkin, how the place setting is organized and what to do in the event of a spill, among other things, can put you at ease during this type of interview.

MAINTAIN YOUR PROFESSIONALISM THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE MEAL

When interviewing over a meal, it is important to remain professional. Getting too comfortable in a social setting can lead to errors in judgment and you want to show your best to an employer. Avoid alcohol, even if it is offered. You want to keep a clear head while answering questions from your host or others at the table.

Even if your host or others remove their jackets at the table, you are trying to make your best impression and need to keep a professional appearance.

Be polite to everyone you encounter during your interview over a meal. A recruiter will be assessing how you will represent them in a social setting.

KEEP YOUR CONVERSATION TOPICS APPROPRIATE

There are appropriate and inappropriate topics to bring up over a lunch or dinner interview. Avoid conversation regarding political views, religion or anything involving "off color" humor or stories that would cause someone to lose their appetite. Appropriate topics to ask about or talk about include:

- CAREER BACKGROUND
- EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
- THE RESTAURANT
- THE FOOD
- SPORTS
- TRAVEL
- CURRENT EVENTS
- FAMILY
- THE WEATHER
- FILM OR TV

REMEMBER IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MEAL

During a lunch or dinner interview, you will find that you are doing more talking than eating, so don't worry about whether or not you are enjoying your meal. Order something that won't be difficult to handle or messy and is in line with what your host and others are ordering. If you find the interview is over and you have food leftover, don't ask to have it wrapped. You will eat again after this meeting! Thank your host for their hospitality and let them pay the bill and the tip. You are their guest.

BE GRACIOUS TO THE END

Once you have said your goodbyes to your interviewers, don't linger in the lobby or your car in the parking lot making phone calls on your cell phone. Make a professional exit and drive away. You can update friends and family once you are out of sight from your prospective employer. Be sure to follow-up with a "Thank You".