



Surviving a Meal with your Future Employer

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As part of the interview process, typically the second or maybe even the third interview, you could be invited to have breakfast, lunch or dinner with your future employer. For some, this can be the most anxiety filled meal in the pre or post-college world.

Good communication and strong interpersonal skills are important to making a good impression. Relax and view this meal as just another opportunity to learn about the company, your intended career field, the company's corporate culture and job duties you will be expected to perform.

Chances are this meal won't be taking place in your campus dining hall and therefore dining hall etiquette will not apply. The following quick tips can help you get through these meals successfully.

Before your Meal

- Drink a glass of juice or water to keep you from "starving". An empty stomach

can be a major distraction.

- Place your napkin on your lap after everyone has taken their seat.
- Review the menu and decide what you want to order in a timely manner and order food that will make it easier to have a conversation.
- Let the host take the lead when ordering. You might consider asking "What do you recommend?"

During your Meal

- If your place is set with more than one fork - begin from the outside and work your way in.
- Use both your knife and fork, keeping the index finger extended on the handles and rest them in the 5 and 7 o'clock positions respectively - not on the table..
- Point your fork prongs down when cutting meat or food and cut only one piece at a time. Avoid cutting up all the pieces at the same time.
- Break off and butter one small piece of bread at a time; do not make sandwiches unless that is what you ordered.

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- Don't dip your food into community sauces that are supposed to be available for everyone's use.
- Stay relaxed, friendly and interested in the conversation. If there are other students there, feel free to engage them in conversation also. Stay upbeat and positive and avoid too much "college talk" with new employees who are already with the company.
- Avoid too much personal information sharing and stay away from topics such as religion and politics. Maintain eye contact throughout the meal and avoid dominating the conversation
- If you need to leave the table, excuse yourself and place your napkin on the seat.

After your Meal

- If your host insists that the waiter bring the dessert menu, he/she wants you to have one. Go ahead and order something as well.
- When you are done with the meal, place your napkin to the left of your plate and place the knife and fork prongs down side by side on the plate with the handles at

4 o'clock; waiters understand this as the "I am finished" position

- Be sure to thank the host for inviting you.

Chances are great that your future employer is very aware of how nervous you are and he/she is trying to make you comfortable. Go with the flow and keep in mind that this is just another opportunity to embrace new skills.