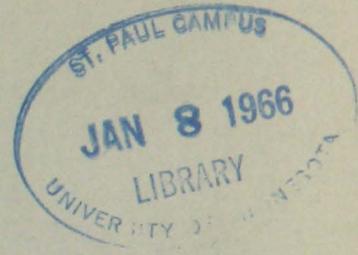
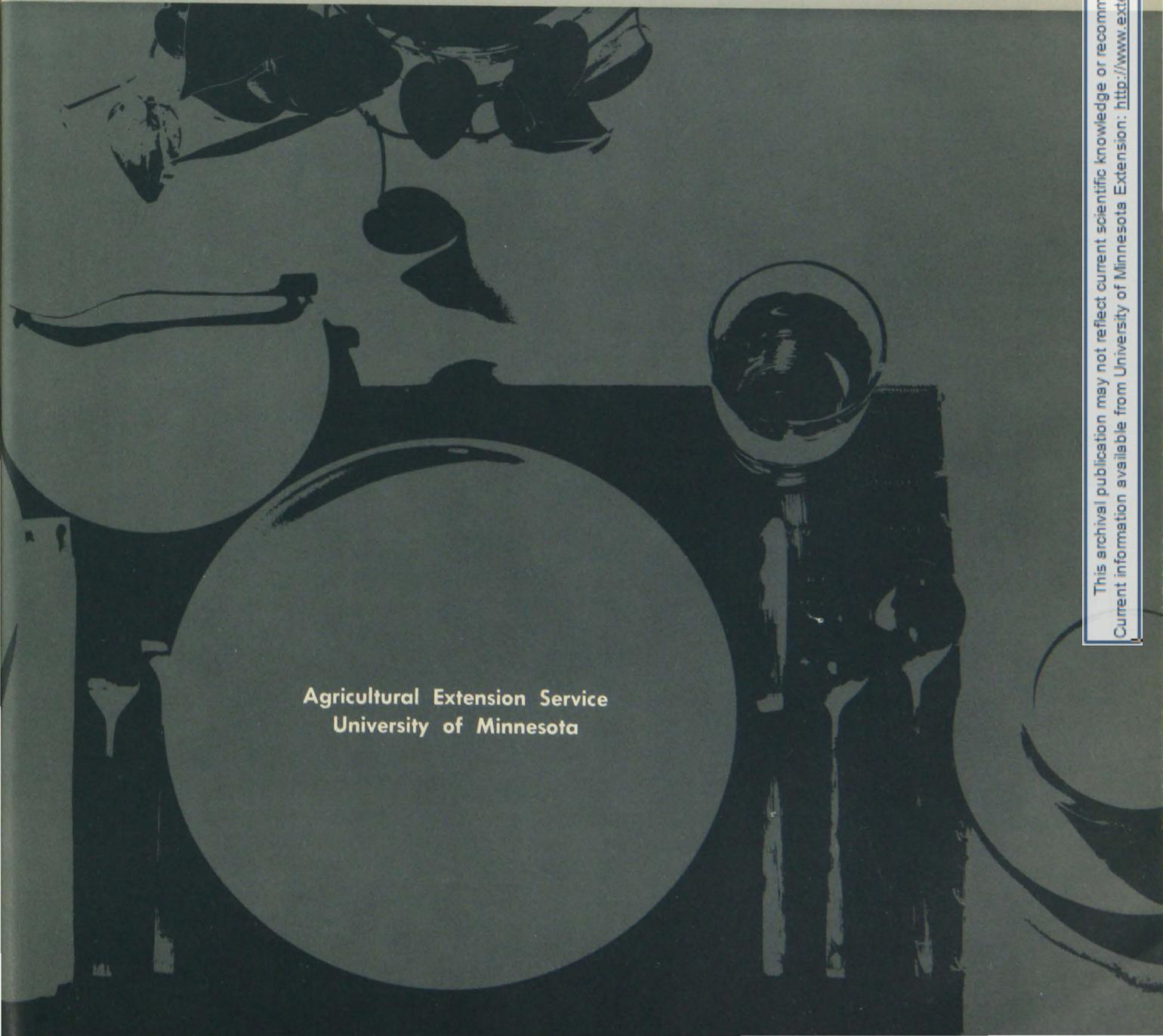


Family Meal Service



MILDRED DUNN

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Agricultural Extension Service
University of Minnesota

FAMILY MEAL SERVICE

Mealtime can be an occasion the family looks forward to with pleasure. In today's living, it may not be possible for the family to be together for every meal. When the family does gather around the table, interesting conversation, good table manners, and good food, attractively served, can make mealtime a happy experience for all.

Certain customs for serving food and for mealtime manners have developed through the years. These customs are based on thoughtfulness for

others, convenience, and common sense. Customs vary from one country to another. Even though some may seem unusual to us, we should learn to appreciate the customs of other countries.

Each family has special needs, however, and you must decide the most practical way to serve your meals. The suggestions for table setting and service in this bulletin are ones commonly followed in our country.

BASIC TABLE SETTING

An attractively set table adds to the enjoyment of the food you serve to your family and friends. Keep these points in mind when setting the table:

- Be sure the table covering is spotlessly clean and free from wrinkles. The food will look more inviting on an attractive background.
- Choose a table covering, napkins, dinnerware, glassware, and silverware that go well together in color, design, and texture.

THE TABLE COVERING

Tablecloth

When a tablecloth is used, center it evenly so the overhang is the same at the ends and sides of the table, if possible. If the cloth will not allow for the same amount of overhang on all sides, place it squarely on the table, not cornerwise, which would leave the corners of the table uncovered.

A pad underneath a tablecloth improves the appearance, prevents noise, and protects the table top from hot dishes.

Place Mats

Place mats are commonly used for table coverings today. They come in a variety of shapes and colors and may be made of plastic, cork, straw,

cellophane, or fabric. Use one mat for each place setting. Place the mats one-half to one inch from the edge of the table.

Napkins

The napkins may either match the tablecloth or place mats, or contrast in color. For informal occasions, paper napkins are often used.

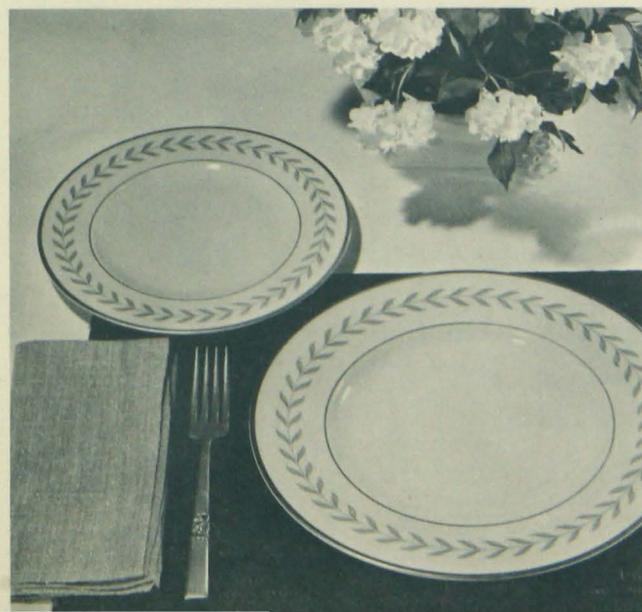
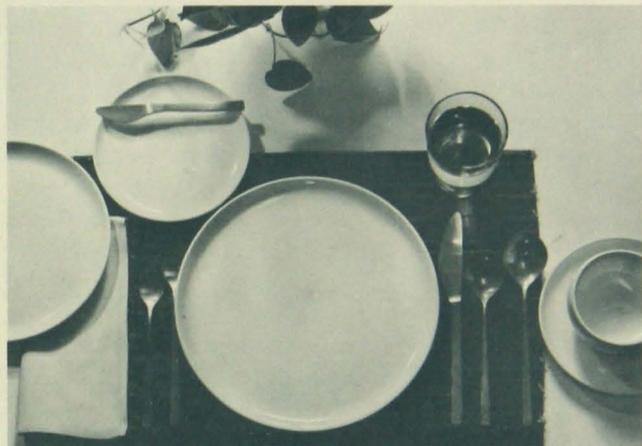
Table Decorations

A few flowers which harmonize with the table covering and the food make an attractive centerpiece. Other types of arrangements — fruit, small plants, vegetables, and leaves — can be equally pleasing. When a centerpiece is used, it should be low enough so that people seated at the table can see over it.

SETTING THE TABLE

The space for each person's plate, silverware, glass, and napkin is called the cover. Allow at least 20 inches of space for each cover, more if possible, to avoid crowding. Space the covers evenly.

Handle plates, glasses, and silverware carefully to avoid leaving finger marks. Hold a plate by the edges, glasses near the bottom so you do not touch the rim, and silverware so your fingers do not touch the tines of the fork, blade of the knife, or bowl of the spoon.



Plates

Place — or leave space for — the dinner or luncheon plate at the center of the cover, one inch from the edge of the table or place mat. If a bread and butter plate and salad plate are used, they should be placed as shown in the first photograph. When only a salad plate is used, put it just above the fork as shown in the other photographs on this page.

Silverware

Place the pieces of silverware one inch from the edge of the table or place mat and close together, but not touching each other. For meals served at home, not more than three pieces of silver are placed at each side of the plate; in restaurants, sometimes you will find more. Put the knife at the right of the plate with the sharp edge toward the plate. Most people are right-handed and use the knife in this hand for cutting.

Place the spoons to the right of the knife in order of their use, beginning at the outside of the cover. If a bread and butter spreader is used, lay it across the top of the bread and butter plate and parallel to the edge of the table, or across the right side of the bread and butter plate.

Place forks, with the tines turned upward, at the left of the plate. No special fork for salad is needed when the salad is served with the main course. When the menu does not call for a knife, you may place the fork or forks at the right next to the plate.

Silverware for the dessert course may be placed at each cover just before the dessert is served. Put this spoon or fork at the right of the plate.

Glassware

Place the water glass at the tip of the knife. If milk or another cold drink is served, place it to the right of the water glass and a little nearer the edge of the table.



Napkins

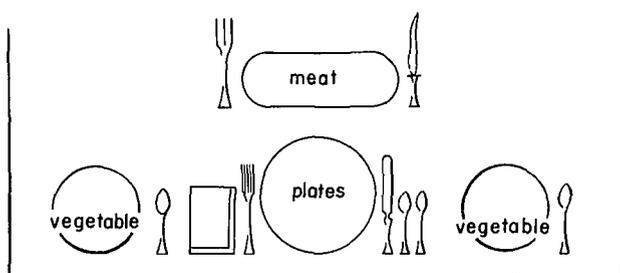
Fold the napkin simply in an oblong or square, and put it at the left of the fork. If the cover is crowded, you may place the napkin between the

knife and fork, or on the plate. The first arrangement is preferred. Place the napkin so the lower open corner is nearest the plate. Occasionally, the design of a napkin makes it impossible to follow this rule.

PLACING ACCESSORIES

Serving Silverware

If silverware is needed for serving, place it on the table beside the dish of food or at the server's place, not in the food. Once a piece of silver is used, it should be left in the serving dish. Silver placed by the meat platter and vegetable serving dishes is shown below:



Salt and Pepper

Place individual salt and pepper sets at the top of each cover. When one set is to be shared by two people, place the set between the two covers in line with the water glasses and within easy reach. If fewer sets are used, put them where they will be most convenient.

Beverages

Place the pitcher of water or milk on a plate or pad near a person who will be responsible for re-filling glasses, unless someone is waiting on the table. The pitcher may be put on the table, if there is room, or placed on a side table.

If tea or coffee is served at the table, place the pot, cups and saucers, and if space permits the creamer and sugar, at the server's cover, as convenient. The saucers can be piled and the cups arranged in two's. Turn all the cup handles in the same direction at an angle convenient for the server. The complete tea or coffee service may be placed on a tray in front or at one side of the server.

Placing the Chairs

Place the chairs so that they need not be moved any more than necessary when the family is seated. Do not have the chairs so near the table that they break the straight line of the drop of the tablecloth.

Jelly, Bread and Butter, Pickles

Place such foods as jelly, bread and butter, and pickles parallel to the edge of the table so they are within easy reach to pass.

LAST-MINUTE DETAILS

Be sure everything is ready before you call the family. Have the temperature of the room right for comfort. Arrange the curtains so the light is good or, if necessary, turn on the lights.

Hot foods should be served hot and cold foods should be served cold. If the serving dishes are warm, the hot foods will stay hot longer. To warm the dishes, rinse them in hot water just before using. Chill the dishes that you use for

cold foods in the refrigerator.

See that the bread or rolls and butter, pickles, relishes, and salad are on the table. Hot breads may be covered with a napkin or served in a covered dish.

Fill the glasses three-fourths full. Have the water or milk pitcher three-fourths full and in a convenient place.

TABLE SERVICE

You have a number of choices in serving a meal. The type of service you select depends on the preference and needs of your family. Some families vary the service to fit the occasion. Even the simplest form of table service, when it is well done, can be made attractive and inviting. The suggestions for setting the table are applicable to any type of service.

Informal Family Service

Informal family service will save time. For this type, the table is set with a dinner or luncheon plate in the center of each cover. All of the food is placed on the table just before or after the family is seated. Place the main part of the meal with the serving silver before the cover at the head of the table, which is usually at the host's place. Put the other dishes of food on the table where they may be reached and passed by other members of the family. The dessert and beverage may be served at the table or from the kitchen.

Usually the person sitting nearest a serving dish is asked to pass it. He may be asked to serve himself first; otherwise, he will serve himself when the dish is returned. If the food is passed in the same direction, either to the right or to the left, no one person will be passed two serving dishes of food at the same time. Passing to the right is preferred because one can take the dish in the left hand and serve himself with the right hand.

English Service

Another type of informal table service is the English Service. With this service, all the food for one course is served at the table, usually by the host or hostess, but sometimes by both. The plates and hot food are placed at the server's cover just before or after the family sits down. A family member sitting next to the host may assist by serving the vegetables or the gravy. For convenience, it may be necessary to rearrange the cover of the person who serves.

The filled plates are usually passed down one side of the table until all the persons on that side are served. Then the host serves those on the other side, and himself last. The hostess passes, or she may ask someone to pass, the bread, butter, and other foods. If second servings are offered, the plates are passed to the host who again serves the food.

In English Service, the dessert and beverage are usually served at the table by the host or hostess. A variation is to serve the dessert in individual portions from the kitchen.

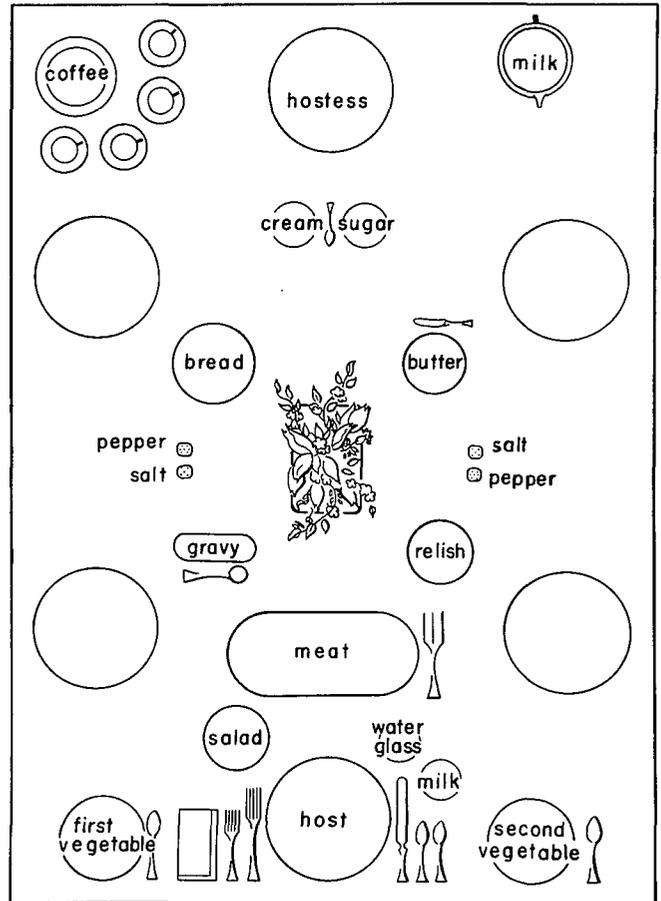


Plate Service

Plate Service is an easy way to serve a meal when the dining table is small for the number of people to be served. In this service, portions of food are put on individual plates in the kitchen and placed at each cover immediately before or after the family sits down to eat.

Tray Service

Tray Service is often a convenient way to serve when the family wants to watch a favorite television program during mealtime, or in the summer when the family wishes to eat out on the porch or in the yard. Arrange the dishes, glasses, silverware, and napkins on each tray as for an individual cover. The food is placed on individual plates and served to each person.

Clearing the Table

The person who waits on the table need not excuse himself when he rises. If the kitchen is a distance from the serving area, it will save steps to use a tray for carrying the soiled dishes. When a tray is used, place it on a side table or buffet. Do not try to hold it in one hand while removing the soiled dishes with the other hand.

Remove the serving dishes before the individual covers are cleared. The following order is preferred: (1) the main serving dishes, such as meat platter, vegetable dish, gravy dish; (2) the bread plate and relish plates; (3) the salt and peppers; and (4) the individual covers. Start with the hostess' cover and remove the others around the table to the right; or start with the cover at the hostess' right, and remove the hostess' cover last.

Remove all plates — dinner or luncheon, salad, and bread and butter — from the left of a cover.

It is easier to use your left hand, as it is farther away from the person seated. Clear only one cover at a time unless there is only a plate and one other dish at each cover; then two covers may be cleared. Remove cups and saucers from the right side of the cover. When it is necessary to crumb the table, use a napkin and a plate.

Serving the Dessert and Beverage From the Kitchen

When served from the kitchen the dessert is in individual dishes. Use the same order of serving as is used in removing the soiled dishes. Serve from the left with your left hand. Serve the beverage in cups from the right with the right hand; place the cups and saucers beside the spoon, and with the handle at a convenient angle.

COURTESIES AND TABLE MANNERS

Courtesies

Make good table manners an everyday habit. Your family appreciates courtesy as much as your friends do.

For guest meals, the hostess goes to the table first so she may tell the guests where to sit. Usually the guests and older members of the family go before the younger ones. It is a nice courtesy for a family member to take a guest to the dining room.

Stand behind the chair until the hostess is seated. Boys and men do not sit down until all the women and girls are seated. It is courteous for a man or a boy to draw out a chair for the lady seated next to him. It is also appropriate for a younger member to do this for an older person.

Seat yourself from the left side of the chair, when possible. Seating everyone from the same side eliminates the awkwardness of two people coming between the same chairs.

Conversation at the table should be cheerful and pleasant. Try to find topics of interest to other people. Be a good listener.

Wait for the hostess to suggest leaving the table. Arise from the left side of the chair and return the chair to its position at the table.

Guests should arrive about ten minutes before the hour set for the meal. A hostess need not wait longer than fifteen minutes for a late guest.

Guests may leave at any reasonable time after dinner unless some entertainment has been mentioned. When they are leaving, guests should tell the host and hostess how much they have enjoyed their hospitality.

Personal Manners at the Table

Hold the napkin close to your lap when you fold or unfold it. Dinner napkins and most luncheon napkins are large enough to be half unfolded on your lap. When the meal is over, you may wish to fold your napkin, if it is a cloth one, into its original fold so that you can use it again. A guest for only one meal places the napkin loosely beside his plate. A guest for more than one meal does as the hostess does with her napkin. If you need to get

up from the table during a meal, place the napkin on the table at the left of the plate.

Ask to have foods passed if they are out of easy reach.

When you pass food in a dish without a handle, be careful not to let your fingers rest within the dish. If the dish has a handle, turn it toward the person who is about to take the dish.

Use the serving silver to remove food from a platter or serving plate; never use your own silver.

If you are asked to pass food, place the serving silver in the dish, and pass it to the person next to you. The hostess may say, "Please help yourself to the bread and pass it." In this case, you would help yourself first.

Do not play with the silverware or hold it upright on the table. Leave the knife and fork on the plate when not in use. When you pass a plate for service, or when you have finished eating, leave the silver near the center of the plate.

Use a spoon to stir a beverage and to test its flavor and temperature. When you are not using it, lay the spoon on the saucer. Do not leave the spoon standing in the cup. If there is no saucer or plate under a beverage such as iced tea, place the spoon on your dinner plate.

Dip the spoon away from you when eating soup. Sip, without noise, from the side of the spoon.

Do not talk while you have food in your mouth.

Notes

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