

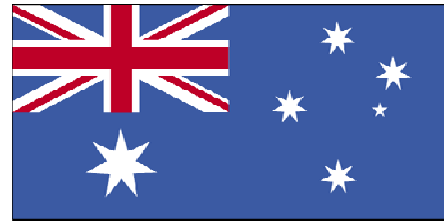
# **International Dining Etiquette guide**

**A guide to conducting  
business over a meal**

Brought to you by:  
Elmira College  
Students in Free Enterprise

Information taken from: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov) and [www.executiveplanet.com](http://www.executiveplanet.com)

# Australia



**Capital:** Canberra

**Currency:** Australian dollar (AUD)

**Location:** Oceania, continent between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean

## While conducting business...

- ☞ If you are invited out for a drink, don't bring up the subject of business unless your host does so.
- ☞ Australians do not pick up the tab automatically when they invite people out to dinner. The exception would be if it's a special occasion and they offer to pay either before the meal or at the conclusion of the meal. Australians assume they will go "Dutch" when making casual arrangements to go out.
- ☞ Australian table manners and settings are similar to those in North America, only more relaxed.
- ☞ Kangaroo meat is considered a delicacy in this country, although most Australians have never tried it.
- ☞ It is customary for guests to bring a bottle of wine for their hosts.
- ☞ In an Australian pub, bear in mind that each person is expected to pay for a round of drinks which is called a 'shout.' Neglecting your turn to pay for a round will only create a bad impression.

## What to talk about...

- ☞ Australians find arguments and opinionated conversation entertaining, so don't hesitate to express your views if they are sincere and informed. It is common for Australians to make provocative statements during conversation and it is expected that such provocation is responded to with humor.
- ☞ Australians like to criticize themselves, but they are not receptive to criticism from others. This can put you in a difficult position, especially if the conversation shifts to animated denunciations of Australia and Australians. Should you show any signs of agreement, abuse will likely be heaped upon you and/or your home country.
- ☞ Don't boast about yourself or your company's accomplishments. Instead, Australians prefer to judge your competence and abilities through your actions.
- ☞ Your Australian companions will be quick to let you know if you have introduced a subject that "crosses the line." Topics which are currently controversial in Australia include migration and aboriginal issues. It is advisable for visitors to Australia to avoid these topics of conversation unless raised by your host.
- ☞ Australians try not to draw too much attention to their academic qualifications or personal achievements. It is perceived to be arrogant or 'showing off' to talk about your own accomplishments. People who make a lot of references to their education and other professional qualifications in conversation may be subject to teasing. The 'tall poppy syndrome' means that Australians often avoid standing out or being a 'tall poppy', as they will not be respected by others.

# Egypt



**Capital:** Cairo

**Currency:** Egyptian Pound (EGP)

**Location:** Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Libya and the Gaza Strip, and the Red Sea north of Sudan, and includes the Asian Sinai Peninsula

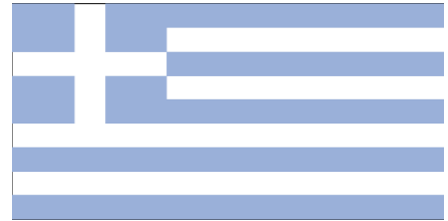
## While conducting business...

- ☞ No business is conducted on Friday, the Muslim holy day. Most people don't work on Thursdays, either. Generally, the working week takes place from Saturday through Wednesday.
- ☞ Business hours vary widely. In the winter, many businesses close for much of the afternoon and reopen for a few hours in late afternoon. A typical business schedule would be 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the summer; 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the winter.
- ☞ Sit with both feet on the floor. Showing the bottom of your shoes to someone is considered an insult which may be ignored in a tourist hotel but is less likely to be by a conservative businessperson.
- ☞ Refrain from using hand gestures, for example, in motioning someone over. Call them by name, as in Egypt and much of the rest of the world, such hand gestures are often considered rude.
- ☞ Giving a small gift in a business meeting is an old and established custom in Egypt. The gift need not be too expensive, and in this regard, usually should not be, as it might be an embarrassment. Yet it should probably have some meaning. A gift is expected, and you may be very embarrassed without one, as you will probably be given something by the businessman or government official.
- ☞ While tipping is a common occurrence in the tourism industry, government officials and business people should never be offered a tip. For business people, the profit motive of the business deal will be their reward.
- ☞ Business cards should be printed in English on one side and in Arabic on the reverse.
- ☞ Do not eat everything on your plate. Leaving a small portion of food is a sign that you have had enough.
- ☞ When eating in an Egyptian home, adding salt to your food is considered an insult, since this may imply to your hosts that the dish is bland or otherwise inadequate.
- ☞ Visitors are expected to follow Egyptian standards of modesty. Even though it can be extremely hot in this country, most of the body must remain covered. For women, a well covered, shapeless appearance is the desired effect, not necessarily one that is flattering to the figure. While a hat or scarf is not always required, it is wise to keep a scarf on hand.

## What to talk about...

- ☞ As everywhere else, stay away from politics and religion. Most foreign business people know little of either which concerns Egypt, or even if they do, they can quickly get in trouble by broaching these topics. Beyond religion and politics, it is usually best to stay clear of questions about the Egyptian business person's family, and particularly female members of the family. Asking about the welfare of his or her family in general, or about specific male members of the family is as far as such discussions should usually be taken.

# Greece



**Capital:** Athens

**Currency:** Euro (EUR)

**Location:** Southern Europe, bordering the Aegean Sea, Ionian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, between Albania and Turkey

## While conducting business...

- ☞ Head Nodding means "no" in Greece while tilting one's head side to side means "yes." Waving with an open palm is called a moutza and is considered a great insult in Greece with the closer the hand is to the other person's face, the greater the insult. "Thumbs up" and the "ok" hand signals both represent vulgar or obscene gestures in Greece. Greek people in general are very hospitable and will go out of their way to welcome and make you feel comfortable in their home.
- ☞ Women in Greece have equal employment rights as do men. However, while the number of women in the workforce has increased in recent years, the trend has been that a woman works only until marriage at which time she usually leaves the workforce. This trend seems to stem from the church's position that womanly duties are to the children and the household, a concept which still persists in Greek society today. This is especially true in the more rural settings. Women are in fact the glue that holds the Greek family together. Within the family, they are well respected by both husbands and children and in fact are the dominant guiding force for the familial unit. Family The nuclear family is the fundamental unit of Greek society. It is a society in which people are born into collectives of tightly bonded people known as an extended family. Families consist not only of a parents and children, but also of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins etc. that actively take part and are integrally involved in everyone's everyday life. The elderly are respected, addressed by courteous titles, served first and usually reside with an adult child toward the end of their lives. Children are raised by the collective and everyone in a particular family maintains his/her collective's interests even to the extent of lying, cheating, stealing, or disobeying the government. Many businesses are family owned and are passed on from generation to generation. A major goal for many Greek families is to own an apartment or house which are difficult and expensive to obtain.

## What to talk about...

- ☞ The Greeks as a whole have much contempt and distrust for the government. One example of protecting one's family against the government is the widespread avoidance of individuals paying taxes in Greece. It is such a problem that there is an entire segment of the economy that cannot be accounted for which enables many people to live at a higher standard than would be expected. This is a situation which the government is now attempting to resolve.

# Spain



**Capital:** Madrid

**Currency:** Euro (EUR)

**Location:** Southwestern Europe, bordering the Bay of Biscay, Mediterranean Sea, North Atlantic Ocean, and Pyrenees Mountains, southwest of France

## While conducting business...

- ☞ It is quite acceptable to conduct business over meals in Spain. Indeed, going out (for coffee, lunch, *tapas*, dinner...) is a vital ingredient in all successful negotiations. It is not, however, the time for doing business in itself (financial matters have no place at table) but for establishing the personal relationships - based in mutual trust and community of interest - that are essential to achieving your goal.
- ☞ Invitations to a Spaniard's home are extremely rare and constitute a mark of true friendship. Sometimes an invitation to a Spanish home may be extended only for the sake of politeness and you can feel free to decline; but, if you are invited a second time, it would be most churlish to pass up this rare, privileged opportunity. Because business entertaining ordinarily takes place in bars or restaurants rather than at home, however, you may be invited to a private home for drinks before moving on to dinner in a restaurant.
- ☞ You should refrain from the American habit of switching your fork to your dominant hand when eating and keep both hands above the table at all times.
- ☞ You should make an effort to eat everything on your plate, as it is considered bad manners to waste food, and you should accept a second helping only if you are confident that you can finish it.
- ☞ When you have finished, you should place your knife and fork side by side on the plate. If you leave your utensils crossed or at opposite sides of the plate, it will be assumed that you have not finished and/or want more to eat.

## What to talk about...

- ☞ The quality of your character is the measure of the respect that you deserve in this rather old-fashioned culture so you should try not to place too much emphasis on your professional experience and business success during conversation or to judge everything Spanish by North American [or even North European] standards. Modesty is valued above assertiveness but there is no place for self-deprecation in a culture that emphasizes personal pride and honor [*orgullo*].
- ☞ Welcome topics of conversation include: Your home country; Your travels, especially in Spain; [Spanish] art, architecture and pre-20th century history; Spanish traditions [e.g. flamenco]; Spanish wines and sherry; Sport, especially football [soccer]; Bullfighting [if you and your counterpart share the same enthusiasm or hostility]; Politics [with care and only if you really do know what you are talking about]; Family, especially [your host's] children.

# United Kingdom



**Capital:** London

**Currency:** British Pound (GBP)

**Location:** Western Europe, islands including the northern one-sixth of the island of Ireland between the North Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea, northwest of France

## While conducting business...

- ☞ The best time for a serious and productive business meal is lunch. Breakfast meetings are not popular (even in London). After-hours drinks or a light supper afford the opportunity for informal soundings and gossip but are not really appropriate for earnest discussion. Dinner tends to be reserved for more sociable or celebratory entertaining when spouses are quite likely to be invited and talking shop is mostly off the menu.
- ☞ Although British businessmen tend to emphasize short-term results rather than long-range objectives, they are generally interested in long-term relationships rather than quick deals.
- ☞ Precedent plays an important part in decision-making. The British tend to follow established rules and practices and company policy is the primary authority at all levels of the organization. A proposal stands a better chance of success if it conforms to the way things have been done in the past. Decision-making can be a slow, deliberate process and rushing or putting pressure on the decision-maker is usually counterproductive; in the end, the Managing Director (the most senior executive in the majority of British companies) will reach a final decision that may be unilateral and is effectively irrevocable.
- ☞ Good manners are founded in respect for your fellow humans and are largely universal (or at least prevail throughout any given culture); they do not require instruction manuals. The only sensible rule is to behave in such a way as to cause neither embarrassment nor annoyance (at the risk of seeming hypocritically prescriptive, this might include making an effort to eat and drink at the same pace as the rest of the group, not speaking with one's mouth full, not stretching across the table, not waving one's cutlery about and not licking one's knife). If you are a guest, follow the host's instructions and/or lead; if you are the host, whatever you say goes. Act with confidence and, however bizarre your behaviour, the worst that can happen is that your British companions will regard you as an eccentric foreigner.

## What to talk about...

- ☞ Most Britons are reserved by nature and often find it difficult to indulge in small talk with a complete stranger. Indeed, there are situations where idle conversation is actually frowned upon, for example when traveling on the London underground; in these circumstances, a newspaper will act as a defensive tool in public whilst also providing potential material for subsequent social intercourse in private.
- ☞ Topics of good conversation include the weather (always a safe starting point); sport (particularly football/soccer); animals (usually safe - though beware vegetarians if you like to eat them); British history, culture, literature, art, and popular music; current affairs; your immediate surroundings and positive experiences in the UK; how good the food is (things have changed in recent years!); real ale (i.e. traditional British beer)

# Russia

**Capital:** Moscow

**Currency:** Russian ruble (RUR)



**Location:** Northern Asia (the area west of the Urals is considered part of Europe), bordering the Arctic Ocean, between Europe and the North Pacific Ocean

## **While conducting business...**

- ☞ Business dining is gaining popularity; dinner usually begins around 6pm.
- ☞ Business hours 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday
- ☞ Schedule appointments far in advance
- ☞ Gift giving is greatly appreciated
- ☞ Only refer to very close friends by first names
- ☞ Toasting is very important and you should only begin to eat after someone has made a toast
- ☞ Eye contact is very important
- ☞ Wearing your coat in office buildings and many public places is considered poor etiquette.

## **What to talk about...**

- ☞ Speak in a calm tone of voice
- ☞ Attempt to speak even a few sentences of their language
- ☞ Confidence is shown by touching another person during conversation
- ☞ Russians are enthusiastic about discussing politics, culture, and history
- ☞ Personal questions are usually avoided
- ☞ Avoid discussion of religion, and the Holocaust, as well as any complaints about Russia

# Peru

**Capital:** Lima



**Currency:** Nuevo Sol (PEN)

**Location:** Western South America, bordering the South Pacific Ocean, between Chile and Ecuador

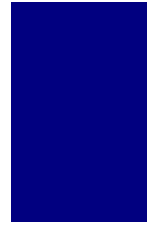
## While conducting business...

- ☞ As a general rule, business is not discussed during dinner.
- ☞ Your Peruvian contacts will take notice of where you are staying. Staying at one of the finer international hotels in Peru will help you create a good impression as a visitor.
- ☞ Lunch is the largest meal of the day and is eaten around 12:30 p.m. This meal will consist of several courses, beginning with soup and ending with fruit for dessert.
- ☞ Most dinner invitations will be for 9:00 p.m., which means dinner will probably be served around 10:30 p.m. Arrive around thirty minutes late, and stay about thirty minutes after the meal ends.
- ☞ When you are extending a dinner invitation, be sure to suggest that you meet around 9:00 p.m., which is the typical dinner hour in Peru. Because it is considered proper to arrive late, prepare for your Peruvian guests to arrive closer to 9:30 p.m. After the meal has been finished, your guests will stay for another 30 minutes or more before taking their leave.
- ☞ When invited to a Peruvian home, you should bring a gift. Your host's spouse might appreciate receiving quality chocolates from your country. If your host has children, you can take along a gift from your favorite sports team or bring toys that children in your own country would like to receive.
- ☞ In this culture, you are encouraged to eat all of the food that has been served to you, rather than leaving some of it on your plate.
- ☞ Beer is the most common alcoholic beverage in Peru. Be aware that Peruvian beer tends to be rather strong.
- ☞ The "continental" style of dining is a must: the knife stays in the right hand and the fork remains positioned in the left. These utensils are never switched.

## What to talk about...

- ☞ Welcome conversation topics include: asking about your Peruvian contact's family; discussing your own family; sights you've seen in Peru; restaurants in the particular area you are visiting
- ☞ Topics to avoid during conversation include: inquiring about a person's ancestry [especially if it is Indian]; the Peruvian government; terrorists; politics in general; drugs; prices that have been paid for certain items

# France



**Capital:** Paris

**Currency:** Euro (EUR)

**Location:** Western Europe, bordering the Bay of Biscay and English Channel, between Belgium and Spain, southeast of the UK; bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Italy and Spain

## While conducting business...

- ☞ Business lunches are preferred to dinners. Actual business, however, is not supposed to be conducted during lunch or dinner. Sharing a meal is intended to help establish a personal acquaintance. If business has to be discussed, wait until dessert is served.
- ☞ A business lunch is a formal event starting with an appetizer, followed by a main course, cheese, dessert and coffee.
- ☞ The person that extended the invitation for the meal or drink is expected to pay.
- ☞ The most honored position is at the head of the table, with individuals of the greatest importance seated first to the left and then to the right of the head of the table. If a couple is hosting, one will be at one end of the table, the other at the opposite end.
- ☞ The French do not switch knives and forks, as Americans do. When both are to be used, the knife remains in the right hand, and the fork remains in the left.
- ☞ There are often many additional pieces of cutlery. If you are unsure of which utensil to use, the best policy is to start from the outside and work your way in, course by course.
- ☞ When the meal is finished, the knife and fork are laid parallel to each other across the right side of the plate. If you put both utensils down on the plate for an extended period of time, it is a sign to the servers that you are finished, and your plate may be taken away from you.
- ☞ When not eating, keep your wrists resting above the table.
- ☞ Portions are generally smaller than in the United States, but with a larger number of courses.
- ☞ You may ask for more water, but not wine. You are supposed to wait for your host to serve you. If you are hosting, you must make sure the glasses of your guests are filled. In a reputable restaurant, the wine waiter will serve all the guests.
- ☞ You are expected to eat everything on your plate; refrain from asking for seconds.
- ☞ Eating well is a priority throughout the country, and French food has many regional differences. Some of the world's finest seafood can be found along the Normandy and Brittany coast; if you have the opportunity, try the oysters, which are unique. Similarly, fresh seafood and fish, grilled outdoors, are representative of cuisine along the Cote d'Azur. Lyons is known for its substantial, family-style food, such as sausages, meats, and cooked vegetables. In the country, the meats and pates reflect the north German influences of the Alsace. As you move further down the countryside, typical fare includes fine cheeses, meats, breads, vegetables, and herbed dishes such as bouillabaisse and ratatouille.

## What to talk about...

- ☞ Be prepared to answer questions about your own country, especially regarding political matters and its history.

