

Chapter 18

Serving Food

Making Meals Special

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

Atmosphere plays a big part in enjoying a meal. Parents will often sing while feeding a baby or set a child's place with a plastic plate and cup decorated with cute animals in order to create atmosphere.

As young adults, a special touch at mealtime can still be as simple as your favorite background music or tableware. With a little planning and practice, you can add a more elaborate flair "for your dining enjoyment."

Setting Up

Setting the table is a natural place to start to set a mood. Choose an attractive tablecloth or place mats. A clean, but attractive kitchen towel may be enough when eating alone or serving an informal meal for two. A colorful paper towel or napkin can make a difference even when serving a snack.

A creative choice in tableware can make meals more interesting. You might find one-of-a-kind soup mugs or inexpensive plastic tumblers with cartoon characters at garage sales. Save odd-shaped jars to use as just-for-fun glassware.

For a more lasting effect, consider using table decorations. They should brighten the table appearance without blocking conversation, eye contact, and the serving of food.

- ◆ **Flowers** are classic decorations that can be arranged in many ways. A single rosebud in a vase brings a note of elegance. A bowl of blooms adds a colorful splash to the table. Enjoy fresh flowers. A bouquet can fill a teapot or mug. Choose flowers with a mild scent that does not conflict with food aromas.
- ◆ **Candles**, such as votive candles, can lend a restful, intriguing air. Set them on mirrors, or nestle them in small bowls or flowerpots, sunk into sand or colorful corn kernels. You might try floating tea lights in a small bowl of water.

- ◆ **Harvest bouquets** are eye-catching. Fill a bowl or basket with seasonal fruits and vegetables as a centerpiece. Use varieties of apples, grapes, or squash with a few nuts or leaves for contrast.
- ◆ **Local color** takes advantage of decorations that are native to your area, from seashells, to pinecones, to Spanish moss. Bunches of foxtail tied with bright ribbon have a rustic, homespun appeal.
- ◆ **Food** can be prepared in unusual or fun ways. Mold a gelatin salad in a heart-shaped cake pan. Bake a meat loaf in a disk shape, and decorate it as you would a layered cake with catsup "frosting" and a trim of overlapping pickle slices.

Finding a Theme

Have you ever longed for warm, blue skies in the middle of a cold, gray winter? Well, dig out the picnic gear, and set the table with a vinyl tablecloth and plastic dishes. Serve milk from a vacuum bottle and sandwiches from a plastic storage container. At other times, a story or history lesson might inspire you to re-create a pioneer experience.

- ◆ **Day at the beach** Use beach towels as a tablecloth, decorated with shells and plastic grass "seaweed." You might serve hot dogs, baked beans, and other barbeque foods, garnished with "fish" snack crackers.
- ◆ **French café** Set the table with a red and white checked cloth and a few globe candles or single flowers in vases. Leave a menu at each setting, listing the foods you are serving in their French translations. Check the library for French tapes or CDs for background music.

Although themes will enhance a meal's appeal, remember that it is your enthusiasm, your family, and your friends that make the meal special.

(Continued on next page)

Thinking Critically

1. You are hosting your soccer team for a meal the day before a conference match. What style of service would you use? What tableware would you need? What table decorations would you use? Explain your answer.

2. What style of service does your favorite sit-down restaurant use? What are the advantages of using this style of service?

3. What makes a meal pleasant and enjoyable for you? Why?

For Further Study

- ◆ Plan a theme event at a local preschool or elementary school. Themes may include a Dr. Seuss birthday party, a pumpkin farm harvest, a grandparent's day event, a career day, or a favorite storybook character. Carry out your plan. Then evaluate and write a summary about the success of your event. Submit your summary to your teacher.
- ◆ Design decorations for the school cafeteria meal line. If possible, carry out a simple version of the decorations to each table. Analyze the atmosphere you created. Write a summary about the impact you believe these decorations will make on students' enjoyment and overall impression of the meal.
- ◆ Make a flannel board. Using brightly colored felt pieces, cut out typical table-setting pieces. Use the flannel board to teach elementary or middle school students how to set a basic table setting. Demonstrate how each setting would change for plate service or buffet service.
- ◆ A brunch can be an easy and inexpensive way to entertain. It is served between the usual breakfast and lunch hours. The menu typically includes breakfast foods, such as fresh fruits, muffins, and egg dishes. It may also include meat, poultry, fish, vegetables, or other lunch foods. Plan a weekend brunch to celebrate a birthday or other event. Decide what beverages, breads, fruits, and other foods would go best with this theme. Plan your menu with an eye toward nutrition and festivity. What style of service would you use? What tableware and table decorations would you use? Summarize your plan in writing and submit it to your teacher.

Chapter 18

Etiquette

Diplomatic Etiquette

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

A few simple rules of etiquette will guide you easily through corporate dinners, business meetings over lunch, and other formal occasions where meals take precedence. For example, you may someday, depending on your future occupation, be asked to attend a state dinner at the White House. Under such circumstances, the meal would follow a traditional pattern of diplomacy, and you would be expected to know how to conduct yourself using proper mealtime etiquette.

Before a state dinner at the White House is served, guests are escorted into the State Dining room, where they are shown to their places. Until the president and guests of honor sit down, other guests remain standing.

Once everyone has been seated and the food served, you would be expected to change conversational partners with each mealtime course. For example, if you were speaking with the person on your right during the first course, you would speak with the person on your left during the second course. During the third course, you would switch back to the person on your right.

If you went to dinner at a friend's home, you would not dream of staying until your friend and the rest of the family went to their bedrooms.

However, at the White House, it is bad manners to leave a state dinner until after the president (and his family) has retired to the presidential quarters.

If you ever take a government post with the diplomatic corps, you may be stationed overseas. Then you would be expected to know the etiquette of the country to which you are assigned.

Etiquette has been important among ruling classes for centuries. Members of royal courts were expected to display impeccable table manners. So important were table manners at the court of Russian Czar Nicholas II that Grigory Yefimovich Rasputin starved at many a court banquet rather than display his ignorance of etiquette.

Raised as a peasant, Rasputin did not know how to use a knife or fork when he first began to attend dinners at court. He could eat the finger foods that were served before dinner and managed to eat his soup with a spoon. However, when the next courses were served, he didn't know which piece of silverware to use.

Rasputin cleverly hid his ignorance. He kept so busy talking to his table companions that nobody noticed when the servants removed his untouched plate. Arriving home from the banquet, Rasputin would say to his daughter, Maria, "I'm starving. Give me something to eat!"

(Continued on next page)

Thinking Critically

1. List some advantages and disadvantages of formal rules of etiquette.

2. What do you think is the purpose of having people talk to the person on one side for one course and to the person on the other side for another course? Would the same rule apply with a small group of people? Why or why not?

3. Suppose you are at a state dinner. A guest sitting nearby does not seem to know which piece of silver to use. What would you do?

For Further Study

- ◆ Investigate the etiquette followed at state dinners in another country. For example, you might research the etiquette to use when dining with the royal family of England or Arabia. Summarize your findings in a brief report and submit it to your teacher.
- ◆ Conduct research about the eating customs of a country you might like to visit. Report on these customs to the class, informing your classmates of what they should know before visiting that country.
- ◆ If you enjoyed the story about Rasputin, you may wish to read the cookbook *Peasant to Palace*, by Pate Barham, who wrote the book based upon information passed on by Rasputin's daughter, Maria. In addition to some of Rasputin's favorite recipes, the book is full of stories about this colorful figure and his family.