



Toe the Line



A 4-Her's guide to Buffet Etiquette

Most of us would consider the buffet to be the less formal version of dining; however, many times buffets are set up for business meals and receptions. Generally these are areas where we want to make a good impression. There are some very basic skills that can help you maintain a positive image in the face of the dreaded buffet! Remember – common courtesy goes a long way toward proper etiquette.



Stand In Line: No butting in or swimming against the tide to speed your journey through. Think of it as a great time to chat with the people in line and network. *Never complain about the line, the food or the wait.* Others don't need you to put a damper on their enjoyment of the event.

Help Yourself: (as you will at many buffets) Use serving utensils when you help yourself. *Fingers do not count as serving utensils.*

Patience is a Virtue: *Never take anything from a serving plate and stick it directly into your mouth.* Nor should you start eating from your plate while still in line. Wait until you return to your table.

Don't Let Your Eyes Be Bigger Than Your Stomach: It is bad manners to heap your plate high and then not eat most of it. You can return several times (more opportunities to meet more people!) taking smaller portions, but *never fill your plate to overflowing.*



Think It Through: Try to eat your courses in some acceptable order. It's unappetizing for others to look at a plate filled with oysters, salad, roast beef, chocolate mousse all at the same time.

Use Your Self-Control: Just because this is a buffet, *do not turn this into an "all you can eat" occasion.* Remember that any business dining experience is never about the food; it is always about business.

Ready, Set, Go: The rules of basic table manners apply at a buffet as with any other meal, with one exception- you don't have to wait for your entire table be seated to begin eating. Because the buffet line can be a lengthy process, you may begin eating while your food is still warm, however, you should wait for at least a few of your companions to be in place before eating.

Simple Reminders: Don't touch food and replace on the buffet. Don't put your face into food to get a sniff. Do not lick your fingers as you go through the line. Don't fidget with your hair or clothing while in line. Don't try to carry everything at once, return for a beverage if necessary.

Denny, 2004

References: <http://www.drdaveanddee.com>; <http://www.canoe.ca/LifewiseEtiquetteladies03>; <http://www.easyfunschool.com>; <http://www.etiquetteessentials.com>; Etiquette International – New York.