DISH DIRECTORY — GUIDE

Restaurant Etiquette for Business Meals

The host usually books, welcomes guests, and pays the check, so confirm the plan in advance to keep a business meal smooth.

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A business meal mixes hospitality with work, and small courtesies carry real weight. The host sets the tone, guests follow it, and everyone keeps the focus on the people at the table. These habits help the meal serve the business goal.

Who Books and Hosts

Clear ownership of the plan prevents confusion before anyone sits down.

- The person who proposes the meal usually books the table and acts as host. That includes picking a place that suits the guests and the purpose.
- The host confirms the time, place, and party size with the restaurant. Sharing these details with guests in advance shows care.
- The host arrives first and greets each guest on arrival. Being seated and settled when guests walk in sets a calm tone.
- If roles are unclear, settle them in a short message beforehand. Asking who is hosting is normal and avoids awkwardness later.

Arriving and Seating

First minutes shape the whole meal, so give them attention.

- Arrive on time or a few minutes early. If you run late, send word so the table can plan.
- Let the host guide seating, and offer guests the better seats. In most settings the host takes the seat nearest the room entrance or the server station.
- Silence your phone and keep it off the table. Giving the table your full attention is a basic sign of respect.
- Stand to greet newcomers and make brief introductions. Names, roles, and one warm line are enough.

Ordering With Good Judgment

What you order says something about your judgment, so keep it simple and considerate.

- Let the host order first and follow their lead. If they skip courses or drinks, do the same.
- Choose dishes that are easy to eat while talking. Avoid messy, noisy, or strong smelling food that distracts from conversation.
- Stay near the middle of the menu on price. Ordering the dearest dish looks careless, and the cheapest can seem pointed.
- Mention dietary needs briefly and without apology. A simple note to the server keeps things

moving.

- Treat the server with the same courtesy you show the table. Guests notice how you speak to staff.

Paying and Splitting the Check

Money handling should be graceful and nearly invisible.

- The host pays the full check in most business settings. Arrange payment quietly with the server, ideally away from the table.
- Guests should not reach for the check or argue about it. A sincere thank you to the host is the right move.
- Among peers with no clear host, agree on splitting before the meal. One person paying with later settling is smoother than dividing items at the table.
- Check the bill for accuracy with a quick glance. If an error appears, raise it with the server discreetly rather than at the table.

Pacing and Closing the Meal

The end of the meal deserves as much care as the start.

- Match the pace of the table rather than rushing or lingering alone. Watch the host for cues on when to move between courses.
- Raise business topics at a natural point, often after orders are placed. Let small talk open the meal before work talk begins.
- Signal the close by summarizing next steps and thanking everyone. The host usually gives this cue first.
- Do not hurry guests out once the check is paid. A few unhurried minutes over the last course leave a warm final note.
- Follow up with a short thank you message after the meal. It confirms the relationship beyond the table.

Frequently asked questions

Who pays the check at a business meal?

The person who invited or is hosting usually pays the full check. Settle this before the meal to avoid an awkward moment at the table.

What should I order at a business dinner?

Order a mid-range dish that is easy to eat while you talk. Let the host order first and follow their lead on courses and drinks.