

Common Courtesy

Written by L.A. Plume

Wednesday, 09 December 2009 03:52

With the holidays come the dinner and party invitations.



Maybe you're going to a company party, a friend's house, or meeting in a restaurant. Keep in mind that the same courtesies apply, no matter where you are.

If you want to go to a certain restaurant at a specific time – make a reservation! This seems obvious to most of us, but I hear through the grapevine that it doesn't seem to be so. You may be lucky and get a table or a seat at the bar, but you might not. Rather than risk disappointment – make a quick phone call and reserve your spot.

Dear L. A. Plume,

Recently a group from the other side of the river descended upon one of our favorite downtown restaurants. Apparently they had called to make a reservation and were told that the dining room was full that evening. They came anyway and when there was no table for them they huffed and puffed and got as far as the bar. They were rude to not only the wait staff but fairly well ruined our evening as well with their loud and obnoxious behavior. Is there anything we could have done/said?

□□□□□□□□ *Katie*

Dear Katie,

I'm afraid that anything you might have done/said would probably only have exacerbated the situation. It was up to the manager to deal with their patrons on behalf of the other guests in the restaurant. But as you probably know, sometimes making a scene is not the answer. Those may be the sort of people you have to ignore and hope they'll go away.

□□□□□□□□ *L.A. Plume*

While you're enjoying the company you're with – put your cell phone away! Do you remember “time out” for children when they (never you) were sent to a “special chair” in the corner as punishment for bad behavior? I wish we could institute “time out” for adults who blatantly, or even surreptitiously, use their cell phones to text, or talk, while dining with friends. To you who do it – honestly, what are you thinking? It is rude. Your first statement to everyone around you is that you are not interested in the conversation, the meal, or anyone else's sensibilities. If you are expecting an emergency call and it comes through, excuse yourself from the table. If not, turn off your phone and leave it in your pocket or handbag.

Dear L.A. Plume,

I have a friend who insists upon bringing her cell phone to the dinner table – whether we're out or even at my home. I find this extremely annoying but I don't know how to approach her and ask her to stop texting or talking while we're eating. It seems to me that once someone does

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this at the table it gives license to others to do so as well. How can I politely ask her to stop?

□□□□□ Jenny

Dear Jenny,

This is a question I am often asked and I am not sure that there is a polite way to ask someone not to be rude. You could stop the conversation at the table and let everyone watch and wait for the offender to finish, but this will never happen as somehow we all seem to be embarrassed when someone conducts their private business in front of us, and our habit is to ignore and go on. "Could you please leave your phone turned off while we are at the table, as I find it is distracting not only to me, but my other guests, as well" doesn't always work either; after all – it's just that "one" call or message. These are the sort of people who put the entire soup spoon in their mouth, butter their bread without first breaking it, the very sort who have been referred to as "those who buy their silver." I have often thought that there are times when it would just be lovely to be able to put someone's dish on the kitchen floor next to the dog's bowl.

□□□□□□□ L.A. Plume

Mr. X, back from vacation (did you miss him?), comments: "There once was an awful little man who came to dinner and insisted on frozen beer out of a bottle and took calls from both his children. 'But he left the table to take the calls,' his wife said by way of explanation. They haven't been invited back. If a phone call you are waiting for is so important, then stay at home to receive it. No, I think the rule is clear: no cell phones at the cinema or the theatre or the dinner table. Switch off and enjoy your dinner, the worries of the world will wait, good company is to be treasured above all else."

You have to love this: Etiquette Avenue is one of the top twenty applications downloaded onto cell phones! (While you're catching up with the tech savvy well-informed, please remember to not access it at the dinner table.)