

Holiday celebration etiquette 101: Mind your manners

Written by Marcia Humphrey
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Thirteen years ago, after having just moved to the Chicago area, we met a couple at church and invited them over for dinner. Although I was a new mom, and not a great cook, I spent a lot of time and effort preparing the best meal I could for these new potential-friends. They were over an hour late getting to our house, so I started to worry. When we finally spoke on the phone a few days later, she casually said, "Oh, we couldn't make it." In my mind, I was screaming, "Why didn't you have the decency to pick up the phone and call somebody?!" Right after that call ended, in my mind, I crossed her name off my potential-friend list.

Most of us usually don't set out to be rude or inconsiderate to others, but truth is, it happens at times. Especially during the busy holiday season when many social gatherings take place, consider these helpful tips whether you are the host or the guest during the 2010 Holiday season.

Guest Etiquette:

1. Don't Come Too Early Or Too Late

Arrive no sooner than scheduled. If you show up too early, you may catch your host scrambling around, attending to last-minute details. Worse yet, she might still be in the shower (I would be). Is it a more formal, sit-down affair? If so, your late arrival may keep everyone waiting to eat. Having a good idea of the type of party helps you to be able to plan accordingly. Finally, if you accepted a party invitation and are no longer able to make it, please take the time to give the host a call or text. That way she won't needlessly worry.

2. Bring A Hostess Gift

While not required, it's a nice way to express appreciation for a thoughtful invitation. Keep it simple, of course. It could be a nice bottle of wine or sparkling apple cider, a small plant,

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flowers, a book, or a small do-it-yourself fruit assortment in an interesting container; tie a bow around it for instant cheer.

3. **Be Friendly**

Put on a smile. If you don't know many people, introduce yourself. Start with a safe question, "How do you know the host?" Work your way through the room and you just may discover a new friend before the evening is over. Lastly, if alcohol is being served, don't overindulge and get too friendly (read: don't get drunk and stupid).

Host Etiquette:

1. **Be Friendly, Put on a smile.**

After all, this was your idea, right? Relax and make guests feel comfortable right away; take their coats, offer beverages, and make introductions.

2. **Fully Stock The Powder Room**

To avoid the embarrassment of your guests having to come out and request more tissue, place several extra rolls in a pretty basket along with the Lysol Spray.

3. **Don't Expect Guests to Clean Up**

The way I see it, it's tacky to make guests feel as if they must help you clean after the party is over. Enough said!

'Tis the season to party! So keep good manners in mind while you partake in all the festivities. May your holidays be seasoned with gratitude, grace, and good people. Enjoy!

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