

Mind Your Manners:

A Table Manners Guy'd for the Curious Traveller

Dining rules aren't about being fancy — they're about respect. A little context goes a long way toward turning you from a tourist into a guest. Here's your cheat sheet for the table.

■■ JAPAN

- ✗ Never leave chopsticks sticking upright in rice — it mimics funeral rites.
- ✓ Rest chopsticks on the provided rest, or fold the paper wrapper into one.
- ✓ Slurp your soup and noodles — it's a genuine compliment to the chef.

■■ FRANCE

- ✓ Place your bread directly on the tablecloth — not on the plate.
- ✓ Tear your bread. Never cut it with a knife.
- ✗ Don't rush. Meals are meant to stretch two, three, even four hours.

■■ UNITED KINGDOM

- ✓ Fork on the left, knife on the right — tines down, continental style.
- ✓ On fish and chips: vinegar first, then salt. Always.
- ✗ Don't skip the malt vinegar — it's non-negotiable.

■■ ETHIOPIA

- ✓ Eat with your hands — injera bread is both your plate and your utensil.
- ✓ Scoop together with others. The communal act is the point.
- ✗ Don't ask for a fork. Lean in and embrace it.

■■ UNITED STATES

- ✗ No elbows on the table — a rule that dates back to medieval trestle tables.
- ✓ Clearing your plate is a compliment. Leave nothing behind.

■■ BRAZIL

■■ CHINA

- ✓ Serve others at the table before serving yourself.
- ✓ Leave a little food on your plate — it signals you're full and satisfied.
- ✗ Don't feel obliged to clear your plate as you would back home.

■■ INDIA

- ✓ Eat with your right hand — it's tactile, respectful, and traditional.
- ✗ Never eat with your left hand, even if you're left-handed.
- ✓ Embrace the texture — feeling the food is part of tasting it.

■■ ITALY

- ✗ No cappuccino after dinner — heavy milk is believed to disrupt digestion.
- ✓ Order an espresso or an amaro to finish the meal instead.
- ✗ Ditch the spoon for pasta. Twirl with your fork only.

■■ MIDDLE EAST

- ✓ Accept second helpings — refusing may genuinely offend your host.
- ✓ Mezze and communal plates are about abundance. Dive in.
- ✓ Use your right hand and tear bread to scoop.

■■ MOROCCO

- ✓ Stick to your fraction of the tagine — imagine a clock and own your slice.
- ✓ Use your right hand and bread to scoop.
- ✗ Never overreach across to someone else's side of the dish.

■■ MEXICO

- ✓ Keep your hands visible on the table at all times.