

SIMPLE DON'TS  
*for*  
POLITE DINING

*By*  
ROY LOUIS ALCIATORE  
Proprietor of  
ANTOINE'S RESTAURANT

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**D**on't read this article unless you are interested in the gentle and refined art of dining, or rather of dining well. To begin an article with a series of "Don'ts" may seem a bit strange, "Mais apres tout, si on sait ce qu'on ne doit pas faire pour bien manger, on sait aussi ce qu'on doit faire."

When calling for the check at the completion of the meal, the only correct thing to say is, "Garcon, l'addition s'il vous plait" and if you are in a first class restaurant, the waiter will know what you mean, for waiters in such places speak many tongues and have learned their avocation on both continents.

But since calling for l'addition is the last thing that you do at a dinner party, it is best that we begin at the beginning, Cocktails? A misnomer in my humble opinion, that conveys no meaning. Webster defines the cocktail as follows: A short drink, iced, of spirituous liquor, well mixed with flavoring ingredients, commonly including bitters. Inadequate to say the least. The French word APERITIF means something. It is defined thusly: A little alcoholic liquor taken before a meal TO STIMULATE the appetite. That word is perfect.

Where shall we go for the aperitif? That, my friends is not of the utmost importance, but rather, WHAT shall we have? This pre-prandial libation can be the making or the undoing of a well selected and carefully prepared repast, so it is well that we exercise good judgment in our selection of appetizers.

The following simple "DON'TS" I trust may be of some service to you:

(1) DON'T drink a gin fizz or any thick or sweet drink right before a meal. Such drinks may be delicious in their place, but they are decidedly out of place as appetizers. Would you drink a malted milk or a cup of chocolate just before dinner? The alcohol contained in the sweet and thick drinks makes little difference and does not offset the sugar. If the dinner is to include fine wines, what is more logical than to have an appetizer of such wines as French Vermouth, dry sherry, Dubonnet, or a combination of these wines. The aperitif BACCHUS, made with equal portions of Dubonnet and French Vermouth, with a small piece of lemon peel squeezed in, is

ideal. Appetizers made with whiskey and other palate paralyzing fiery mixtures are absolutely taboo with discreet diners. A glass of dry champagne drunk "neat" is the only foolproof aperitif.

(2) DON'T have your aperitif immediately before dinner, fifteen minutes or better a half hour should elapse between the aperitif and the first dinner course. This is important so as to allow the aperitif sufficient time to perform its function. The serving of hors d'oeuvres with the aperitif is criminal, and serves no other purpose than to defeat the very purpose for which the aperitif was intended, by taking the edge off of the appetite.

(3) DON'T, if you can possibly help it, just drop into a restaurant and order a meal. If it is to be a good meal and you know good food and you want it well prepared, go to the restaurant of your choice and make all of the arrangements with the proprietor or headwaiter a day or two in advance. This will give them time to purchase the best that the market has to offer, and likewise the Chef will have ample time to prepare each dish with the patience and skill which goes into the making of each culinary masterpiece. Order your wines, too, in advance, so that they may be brought up from the cellar to acquire the proper temperature if they be red wines, and if they be white wines so that they may be cooled to the right degree. These arrangements in advance will assure you of the very best the restaurant has to offer both in cuisine and service.

(4) DON'T let your guests do the ordering. When entertaining guests in a restaurant it is meet and proper that the host should do the ordering. If each guest orders for himself, the dinner is a failure at the onset. With uniformity in ordering, the proper wines may be selected to accompany each course, and the service both in the dining room and in the kitchen will be greatly facilitated, and the success of the party is assured.

(5) DON'T make the mistake of ordering too many things. If your guests are very hungry, order enough to satisfy them rather than to stuff them. A few well selected dishes are better than a great number chosen haphazardly. Likewise with the wines, a glass or two of dry white wine with the

fish, and a like amount of red wine with the roast should be sufficient. A liqueur or brandy with the coffee will go nicely. Guests should leave the table satisfied and gay, rather than satiated and groggy.

(6) DON'T order wines yourself if you know nothing about them. The waiter or wine steward is trained in such things, and will be glad to select a wine suited to the particular type of food you have ordered. If you know wines, you will guard against selecting a wine from a bad vintage year. Ask to be shown the bottle before it is opened to satisfy yourself that it is the wine you ordered. A little wine is first poured into the glass of the host, so that he may taste it and pass judgment upon it before the wine is served to the guests. A dry white wine is the only suitable wine to serve with fish, and to order a sweet wine like a Sauterne with this course is unpardonable, although to the uninitiated it would seem that the name Sauterne is the only white wine name with which they are familiar. Sauterne is a dessert wine, and if it is good Sauterne it is always sweet. There is no such thing as a DRY Sauterne.

(7) DON'T brand yourself as a rank plebeian by seasoning your food before tasting it. Many a Chef's brainchild has been smothered with condiments, when it should have been showered with compliments. You will notice that in first class restaurants, the condiment bottles are conspicuous by their absence on the tables. To be sure, these condiments are valuable aids to cooking, but their place is in the kitchen, where the Chef, who is a master in these things, can, and does make the proper use of them. If you are in a good restaurant, the food will be properly seasoned before it leaves the kitchen. A condiment bottle wielder is out of place in a first class restaurant.

(8) DON'T go into a first class restaurant and ask for a glass of wine. Remember that the best wines are shipped in bottles, and consequently that no self respecting restaurateur will jeopardize the reputation of his house by serving wines from jugs and barrels. By ordering wines in bottles you can be reasonably sure of the age and quality of the wine you are drinking. In like manner it is not

reasonable to expect a restaurateur to open a good bottle of wine just to serve one or two glasses out of it.

(9) DON'T hesitate when visiting a restaurant for the first time to try the specialties for which the house is famous. The chances are that you will enjoy your meal much more than if you had ordered dishes of your own selection. You can probably get much better ham and eggs at a farmhouse, and a better hamburger from a lunchwagon, than you could from a first class restaurant which does not specialize in these things. When in doubt you cannot go wrong by following the suggestions of your waiter when ordering.

(10) DON'T demand music with your meals, because if you must have music to enjoy your meal, you are not a true gourmet. Table conversation is the only suitable accompaniment of good food. Dinner dancing is an abomination, and no true connoisseur would think of combining dancing with polite dining. To enjoy your food you must be completely relaxed. To exercise while trying to assimilate food is extremely bad as any physician will tell you. Apart from that, the most skillfully prepared food will lose its flavour if it is not eaten the moment it is served. Dinner dancing is catch-as-catch-can dining and holds no place with the bon vivant.

(11) DON'T go to a first class restaurant if you are in a hurry. Time is a necessary element in the proper preparation of food, and if you cannot spare the time, you are better off at the corner drug store where they will dish you out an already prepared sandwich in short order, and it will probably taste better than a complicated culinary concoction thrown together in less than the required time. Hurry enters not into the mind of a gastrophile.

(12) DON'T go to a first class restaurant to look for bargains in food. A good restaurant caters to a clientele of epicures who are far more concerned with the quality of the food, than they are with the price. A high priced car is expensive because the materials and labor involved in its manufacture are expensive. With properly prepared food, it is the same.

(13) DON'T exercise patience with an insolent or careless waiter. He is a disgrace to the profession, and the sooner he is reported to the manager, the better it will be for everyone concerned. On the other hand a careful and solicitous waiter earns and deserves a tip or "pourboire" for his services. It is his means of livelihood. Ten per cent of the total is the accepted remuneration for this service. Don't forget to tip the "Sommelier" or wine steward if he has helped you select your wines.

(14) DON'T hesitate to make a complaint if your food is not what you expect it to be. Substitutions and exchanges will gladly be made in an effort to repay you for the inconvenience and delay thus caused you. It is only through such complaints that the proprietor can check up on the Chef and the kitchen assistants, and be in a position to make the necessary changes and corrections.

(15) DON'T make the mistake of ordering a good meal and then expect to enjoy it with ice water as a beverage. A rich meal without wine is like an expensive automobile equipped with hard rubber tires. The whole effect is lost for the lack of a suitable accompaniment. Rich and heavy foods which are unpalatable with water can only be appreciated and enjoyed with a suitable wine. Wine warms the stomach and hastens digestion.

(16) DON'T judge or misjudge a restaurant by its appearance. Many are the misguided restaurant owners who place greater emphasis on the decore than on the food and cuisine. Inversely, you will also find that excellent meals are to be had in dubious attics and unpretentious cellars. The quality of the cuisine is the sole criterion by which a restaurant is to be judged.

(17) DON'T go into a first class restaurant to order only a cup of tea or a plate of ice cream as the profits to the house from these items will not even pay for the laundering of the tablecloth. Tea rooms for tea, and ice cream parlors for ice cream, and good restaurants for skillfully prepared food.

(18) DON'T go into a restaurant if you wish only to drink. Go to a bar or cocktail lounge instead. You will find it much more suitable. A restau-



rant's "Raison d'etre" is the serving of food, and drinks are served only as an accompaniment to food. The people who drink without eating are the ones who become stupefied by alcohol.

(19) DON'T, if you can possibly avoid it, change your order after it has once been definitely given. The reason for this is the fact that once your order reaches the kitchen, the Chef immediately begins the preparation thereof, and should the order be changed then, nine times out of ten, the first article ordered becomes a total loss for the house. That is the reason why you will notice that the bill of fare disappears like magic once the order has been taken.

(20) DON'T bring your own wines or liquors into a restaurant where liquor is sold. It is as bad as bringing your own food. Restaurants pay a very high tax for the privilege of selling liquor, and it is no more than fair that they should get this business. Should you bring your own liquor for some reason or other, you may expect to pay a service or corkage charge.

(21) DON'T make a wry face if your waiter suggests snails or sting ray. The escargots Bourguignonne and the Rai au Beurre Noir of France are poems in food. Remember also that in various parts of the world, the following are classed as delicacies: alligators, armadillos, bamboo chrysalides, buffalo, camel's hump, elephants trump and foot, locusts and grasshoppers, kangaroo, parrot, opossum, cuttlefish, seals, snakes, whale fins, squids and countless other strange things. In the selection of foods one should be guided by taste rather than by prejudice.

(22) DON'T order an old and expensive wine with a plain and ordinary dinner. An inexpensive wine will do as well. Rare old wines should be drunk on special occasions, when the menu warrants a good bottle.

And now we have come to the point when it is time to say,

"Garçon, l'addition s'il vous plait"

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