

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

Extension Division

THOMAS P. COOPER, Dean and Director

CIRCULAR NO. 239

(Revised)

THE FAMILY MEAL HOUR

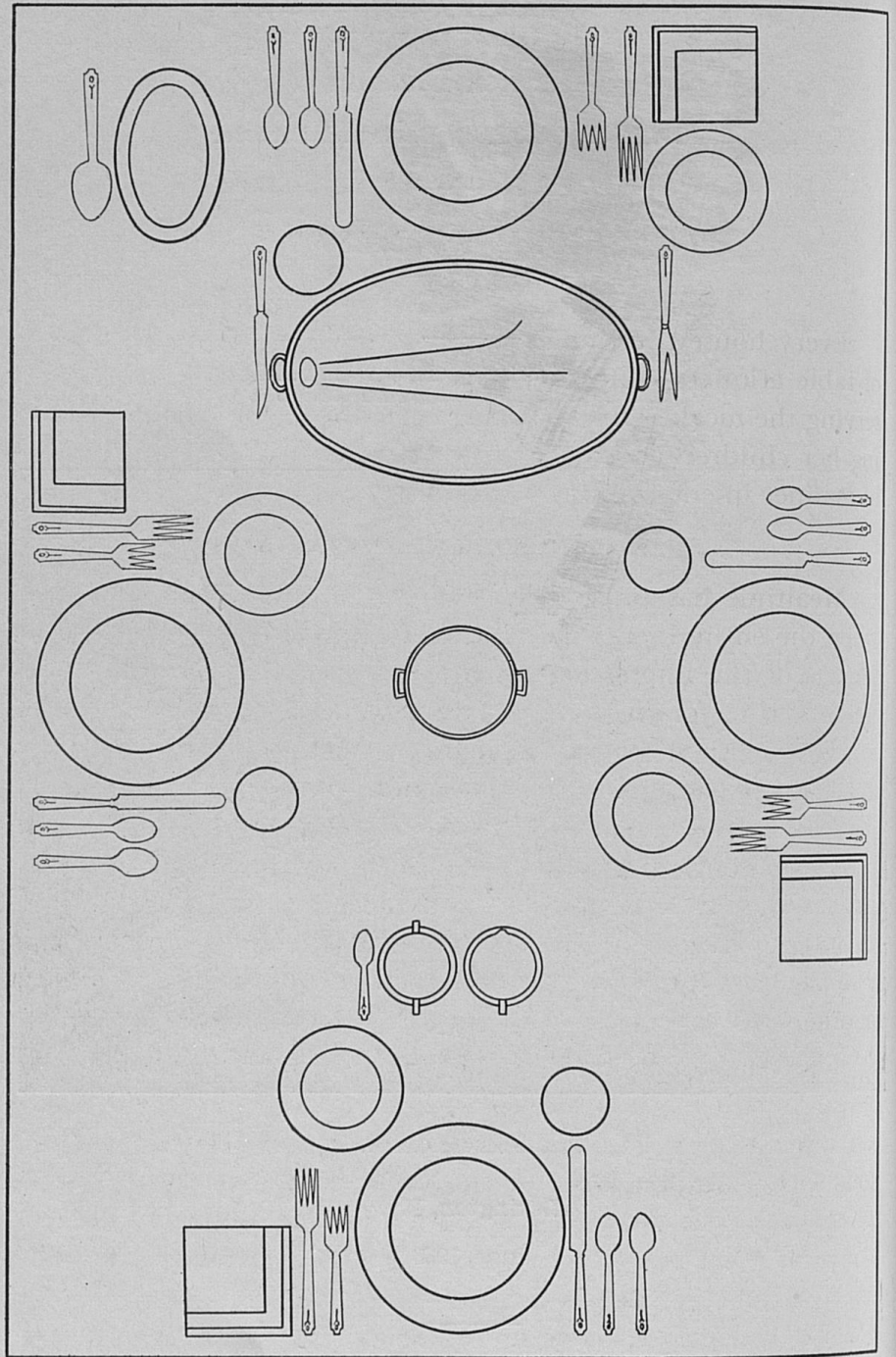


Table set for dinner.

Lexington, Ky.

June, 1939

Published in connection with the agricultural extension work carried on by co-operation of the College of Agriculture, University of Kentucky, with the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and distributed in furtherance of the work provided for in the Act of Congress of May 8, 1914.



Correct placing of china, silver and linen for meal service.

Circular No. 239

(Revised)

THE FAMILY MEAL HOUR

By FLORENCE IMLAY and PEARL J. HAAK

Every housewife should have a knowledge of the general rules of table etiquette and the accepted forms for setting the table and serving the meal. This knowledge gives her self-confidence in teaching her children good table etiquette and manners, as well as ease of manner in entertaining guests.

THE ATMOSPHERE OF SOCIABILITY

Mealtime has come to be one of the few occasions of the day when the entire family meets; therefore, it should be an hour when reports of the interesting activities of the members are shared, as well as a time for satisfying the physical needs of the body. In other words, there should be such a joyful, harmonious spirit of congeniality during the meal hour that no member of the family would be willing to be late or absent from a meal. Teasing, quarreling, discussing petty troubles or unpleasant experiences should never be permitted; neither should it be a time for scolding or nagging at children about poor table manners. It should be remembered that the child who has been trained to be well mannered and to respect the rights of others will not make an exception of the meal hour.

The very young child should be provided with utensils which he can handle, such as a plate with a rim, or a bowl from which to eat, a small, short-handled fork and spoon and a small, light-weight mug with a handle. His food should be mashed or cut in very small pieces so that he can pick it up with a fork or spoon and get it from the plate without spilling. Parents should understand the underlying principles for developing good food habits, and work to teach their children to eat new or disliked foods which are essential to health. When this procedure is followed and when the older members of the family are courteous and good-mannered, there will be little necessity for direct teaching of good table manners to the

young child. A feeling of self-confidence is attained by children as well as adults when they are accustomed to dining in an atmosphere of culture and refinement at home.

GENERAL RULES FOR SETTING THE TABLE

Writers differ in their methods of placing the silver, china and glassware on the table and many housewives are confused by the diversity of directions which are found in magazine articles, bulletins and books. A good point to keep in mind is that all rules for setting the table should be based upon the convenience of the persons at the table, of the one who is serving, and on the artistic effect. The following directions are generally accepted as good form in table setting:

1. Clean, well-ironed linens should be used.
2. All lines of the linen should run either lengthwise or crosswise of the table. Runners should be placed either lengthwise or crosswise of the table, not diagonally across it. When doilies are used, the threads should run parallel to the edges of the table.
3. A silence cloth of felt or very heavy cotton material should be spread under the tablecloth to protect the table, to help prevent noise and to give a smooth appearance to the tablecloth.
4. A space of twenty to twenty-four inches should be allowed for each cover or person at the table.
5. Straight lines parallel to one edge of the table are preferable to diagonal lines, in placing silver, china and glass on the table.
6. The silver and plates should be placed about one inch from the edge of the table.
7. The knife should be placed at the right of the plate with the cutting edge of the blade toward it.
8. The spoons, with bowls up, should be at right of knife, in the order in which they are to be used, from the outside in toward the plate.
9. The forks, with tines up, should be at the left of the plate, in the order in which they are to be used, from the outside in toward the plate. When a knife is not needed, the forks are placed on the right of the plate.
10. The napkin usually is placed at left of the fork, with the folded points along the edge of the table and toward the plate, but may be placed on the plate.
11. The water glass should be placed at the point of the knife or, if the table is crowded, at the tips of the spoons.
12. The bread-and-butter plate, if used, should be placed at the tips of the forks, with the butter spreader crosswise of the plate.

13. The salad plate should be placed at the left side of the cover near the tip of the fork. If bread-and-butter plates are used, the salad plate is placed below the bread-and-butter plate, toward the edge of the table.
14. The cocktail fork or the fruit spoon should be placed on the plate with the cocktail or fruit.
15. The dishes used for jelly, pickles, relishes, etc., or for main-course foods, when informal, family-style service is used, should be placed in such a way as to give a balanced effect.
16. The jelly spoon, pickle fork, etc., should be placed by their respective dishes and parallel to one edge of the table.
17. When the food is to be served by the father of the family, the plates should be placed directly in front of him, with the meat platter in front of the plates and the dishes containing vegetables and sauces to the right and left of the plates.
18. The beverage should be served by the mother or from the kitchen when the main part of the meal is served by the host. The cups and saucers should be placed at the left of her plate and the beverage service at the right, when served by the mother.

SEATING THE GUESTS

The seating of guests at the table should be done with great care. The places to the right of the host and hostess are the only ones which have to be definitely kept in mind. The lady guest of honor should be seated at the right of the host and the gentleman guest of honor at right of the hostess. If the occasion is not in honor of some particular person, the seat at the right of the host or hostess should be given to an elderly person in the group or someone who is dining in the home for the first time. Common interests, congeniality and temperament should be kept in mind in seating the other guests. At a party, it is customary to seat a man between two women or vice versa and usually not to seat members of the same family next to one another. If place cards are not used when the family has guests, the hostess should enter the dining room first and direct the seating. When place cards are used, the host and lady guest of honor should enter first and the hostess and gentleman guest of honor last. If the hostess serves the meal herself, she should sit at the end of the table nearest the kitchen door and the host at the opposite end. If maid service is used, the hostess should sit facing the kitchen door.

SERVING THE MEAL

A nicely served meal adds an atmosphere of grace and simple dignity to the home that is difficult to attain in any other way. The plan of service which is used should depend upon the convenience of the housewife, the amount of help for serving, the length of time allotted for eating, the formality of the occasion and the cooperation of the host in serving the plates. The three customary ways of serving the family or the family and a few guests are:

1. To have the foods of the main course in large dishes on the table and each person serve himself.
2. To have the plates served in the kitchen and placed before each person at the table by some member of the family or by a maid.
3. To have the food served at the table by the father and mother of the family.



Table set for breakfast.

Food Passed at the Table, Each Individual Serving Himself. Many families ordinarily use the practical method of placing the food on the table and having each person serve himself. A few general points to keep in mind when serving in this manner are:

1. Set the cover carefully for each person according to the rules for table setting.
2. Warm the serving dishes before filling them with hot food.

3. Place the serving dishes containing the hot food on the table just before the family is seated at the table.
4. Arrange the dishes of food on the table to give a balanced effect.
5. Place the meat platter or meat substitute dish in front of the father, the dish containing potatoes or other main starchy food at his left and the other foods so that they will be passed in an orderly fashion.
6. Begin the service by having the father pass the meat or meat substitute to his right and follow it with the potatoes or other starchy food. Serving may be reversed by placing the main dishes in front of the mother. She will help herself first or pass the dish to the person on her right.
7. Ask the persons nearest the other dishes of food to help themselves and pass them.
8. Keep dishes of food going to the right.
9. Have each dish passed around the table and placed where it was originally.
10. Clear the table, if possible, between the main course and dessert.
 - a. Remove first the dishes which have contained food and then the plates and silverware.
 - b. Leave the water glass and beverage cup on the table to be refilled. The dishes may be removed from the table by some member of the family. The easiest method, however, is to have the food dishes, plates and silverware passed to the mother who places them on the bottom shelf of a tea wagon at her left.
11. Have the dessert served by some member of the family from a tea wagon, side table, buffet or, if hot, from the kitchen.

Plates Served in the Kitchen. This is an easy and attractive way of serving a large group at the table. The cover is laid for each person according to the general directions for setting the table. Usually a cocktail, caviar, or some other appetizer is placed on each plate when the table is set. Individual salads also may be placed on the table before the family is seated or the salad may be served on the plate with the other foods. The dishes of the first course should be removed from the table before the second-course plates are served. Rolls, foods difficult to serve on the plate, and relishes, are usually passed by a member of the family or a maid. Foods are repassed so that anyone wishing a second serving may have it.

Plates Served by the Father and Mother at the Table. This method has more charm and dignity than any other method of service. It does take more time than the other methods, but may be used when the members of the family are not hurried or on special occasions.

Plates are stacked directly in front of the father. If a large group is present, six or eight plates should be placed on the table at one time and the supply replenished. The meat platter or main dish is placed back of the plates and the other dishes containing vegetables and sauces at the right and left of the person serving. The beverage should be served by the mother of the family, when the main part of the meal is served by the father. The cups and saucers are placed at the left of her plate and the beverage service at her right. If the beverage is not served with the meat course the mother may wish to assist the father by serving a vegetable sauce.



Table set for luncheon.

In all methods of service the following general directions are used in serving and in clearing the table:

1. All food except beverages should be placed on the table from the left of the person served.
2. The coffee should be placed at the right of the spoons, with the handle of the cup parallel with the edge of the table.
3. The salad, if served with the main course, should be placed at the left of the cover.
4. The foods to which persons help themselves, such as rolls, should be passed to the left, with the dish held just above the level of the table.
5. One should never reach across the table in front of a person.

6. Glasses should be filled three-fourths full just before the diners are seated. If possible, do not lift the glasses from the table when refilling them. If persons are seated so close together that it is impossible to fill the glasses without moving them, take hold of the bottom of the glass. Never take hold of the top of the glass.
7. The mother or the hostess usually is served first, in order that she may observe the first plate and know that everything has been served properly. At company meals the guest of honor should be served next and those to her right in order around the table. This is permissible at informal family dinners. When small children are eating with the family, they should be served first in order that the mother may cut the meat, spread the bread, etc., for them so that there will be no delay in eating when the entire group is served.
8. The first serving should be small enough so that a second helping may be taken if desired.
9. When guests are present the hostess should always take a second helping of some food as an invitation to guests to take a second serving.
10. The food dishes, such as meat platters, vegetable tureens, jelly dishes, etc., should be removed first.
11. The plates, knives, forks, spoons and other eating implements should be removed second.
12. The dishes for the last course should not be removed while the family and guests are seated at the table.



Table set for family dinner.

THE BUFFET SERVICE

Buffet service is a delightful and convenient method of serving a large number or an uncertain number of guests. The menu may be much simpler than that for a meal served at the table, but the artistic effect and atmosphere of the buffet meal may be just as charming and attractive as in any other method of service. The meal may be served in the dining room, in the living room, or on the porch or the lawn.

The table should be spread with an immaculately clean, well-ironed linen or lace cloth. Some decorations such as a bowl of gay flowers, lighted candles or both should be used to give a festive air to the table and room. Small tables with linen covers at which guests may eat may be placed about the house, porch or lawn, or the guests may hold the trays or plates on their laps.

The menu for a buffet meal should be carefully planned, and should not include foods which are hard to handle or cut, as a heavy meat or raw vegetable salad. The foods should not be watery, such as tomato salad with French dressing. Creamed dishes should be served in timbales. The menu usually consists of two courses, with the main one on the central table and the dessert on the side table or tea wagon.

The guests may pass around the table and help themselves or, at more formal affairs, may be seated at small tables and the plates may be served to them from a center table. When the hostess wishes to give a more festive atmosphere to informal affairs than is possible when the guests help themselves to all food, she may have friends sit at each end of the table, to serve such foods as the hot dish or the salad and beverage.

When the guests are expected to serve themselves, the plates should be placed at the end of the table at which the guests will start. Cold foods such as sandwiches and salads should be placed next to the plates and then the hot dishes and beverage with the water glasses, silver and napkins at the end of the line. When guests serve themselves, care should be taken to eliminate unnecessary dishes, silverware, and tall sherbet glasses or goblets. The dessert may be passed or the guests may serve themselves.

After the main course, the hostess and a friend or two clear the small tables or take the plates from the guests, but at very informal

affairs each person may put his or her plate at a designated place when thru.

AFTERNOON TEAS

A real spirit of hospitality must pervade an afternoon tea to make it a success, whether it is just having two or three friends together for an hour's chat or a large affair with many guests. Gaiety is the keynote of a successful tea and may be created by bowls of flowers, lighted candles, colorful dishes, tiny attractive napkins, dainty refreshments and with everywhere an atmosphere of sociability. These happy occasions have taken the place of the stiff, cold receptions of a few years ago.



Table set for tea.

The hostess may serve from a tea wagon or a small table, to a few friends or guests. At larger affairs she should have the table set and have one or two friends sit at each end pouring the tea, coffee or other beverage.

The tea service is placed directly in front of the one serving, the plates to the left and the cups at the right. Not more than six or eight cups should be on the serving table at a time. The other foods, such as sandwiches, cakes, nuts and candies, are placed on the tea

table. The service may be buffet style with the guests coming to the table for their beverage and helping themselves to the other foods, or the plates may be served and passed to them. If there is a choice of drinks, guests should be asked their preference. When the plates are served and passed the accompaniments for the beverage, such as cream, sugar and lemon, should be passed. Plates should be taken from the guests by those assisting the hostess.

TABLE DECORATIONS

A low bowl with a few well-arranged flowers always gives an attractive appearance to the table. A mass of flowers makes the table look over-decorated and a high bouquet interferes with conversation across the table. Delicately perfumed flowers should always be used in preference to those with a strong odor, as the latter may be disagreeable to someone at the table. Artificial flowers or decorations should be used only for feature parties such as Halloween, Valentine's day or Fourth of July.

Lighted candles, especially long tapers, give a festive air to the evening meal and may be placed near the center or at the ends of the table. Place cards may be used, at breakfast, luncheon or dinner parties, to designate where guests are to sit. The card is placed on the napkin or above the cover. They may be plain or, if the occasion is a special celebration, they may carry out the decorative scheme.

TO MAKE THE COMPANY MEAL A SUCCESS

1. The menu should be planned so that not more than one dish will have to be prepared in the last few minutes, such as broiling the steak, making croquettes, or arranging the salad.
2. A simple meal should be planned so the hostess will not be over-tired and ill at ease.
3. Guests who have a common interest or who are congenial, should be invited.
4. No more guests should be invited than can be entertained comfortably.
5. The hostess should see that all members of the group enter into the conversation at some time during the meal.
6. Topics of controversial nature, such as politics, and religion, should be avoided.
7. If the hostess serves the meal she should get up from the table as quietly and unobtrusively as possible.
8. When the hostess is away from the table, the host should make an added effort to guide the conversation into interesting channels.

9. A meal should never be delayed more than fifteen minutes for a belated guest. When he arrives the host should arise to greet him but the hostess remains seated.
10. Apologies for food should never be made.
11. Attention should never be called to the food or service.
12. Sociability should be the atmosphere at every meal.

POINTS IN GOOD TABLE MANNERS TO TEACH CHILDREN

1. Sit erect at the table.
2. Take small bites of food. Chew slowly and quietly with the mouth closed.
3. Ask for a small serving rather than refuse a disliked food.
4. Butter only one small piece of bread at a time.
5. Eat all foods with a fork or a spoon.
6. Use the knife only in cutting foods.
7. Avoid putting fingers into one's mouth or handling one's hair while eating.
8. Leave small bits of solid food or amounts of liquid on a plate or in a dish, if it cannot be taken up with a fork or spoon. Never leave the spoon standing in a cup or sherbet glass.
9. Use a fork for eating cake with soft frosting.
10. Dip spoon from you in eating soup, vegetables, sauce, etc.
11. Never pick up or tilt a dish while eating.
12. Talk quietly and do not gesticulate while at the table.
13. Wait until all are served before starting to eat.
14. Stand behind the chair until all are ready to be seated.

HINTS TO THE GUEST

1. Arrive five to fifteen minutes before time for serving the meal. It is most discourteous to accept an invitation and then fail to attend the party without notifying the hostess.
2. Stand behind the chair at the table until the hostess indicates that it is time to be seated.
3. Take your seat from the left of the chair.
4. Slip the napkin off the table and unfold it on the lap.
5. Eat some of all foods which are served and do not talk about dislikes in food.
6. Enter into the conversation but never monopolize it.
7. Avoid becoming excited and starting an argument.
8. Ignore any embarrassment of the host or hostess.
9. At the end of the meal, place the napkin on the table, unfolded if a guest for one meal, folded if for a longer period.
10. Arise from the table when the hostess gives the signal for doing so.



Table Etiquette. Dip spoon away from you, when eating soup.

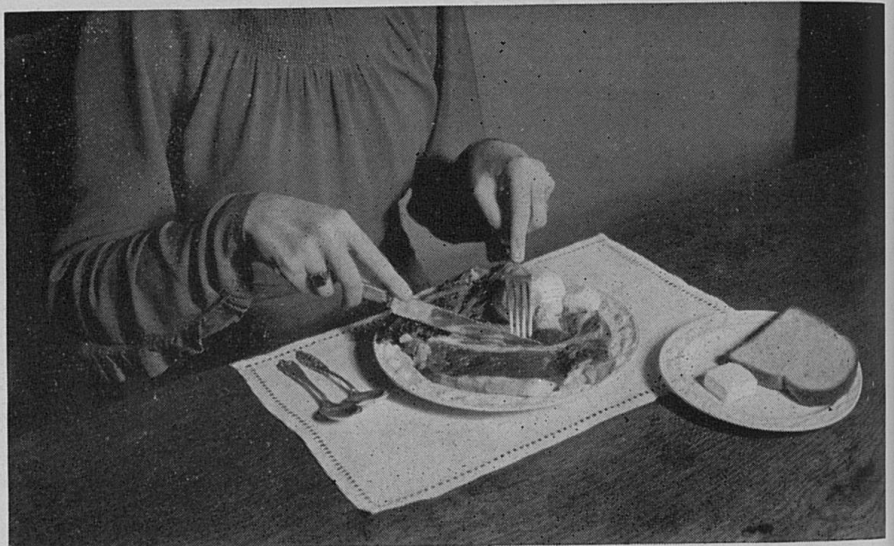


Table Etiquette. Correct way to hold knife and fork, when cutting food.

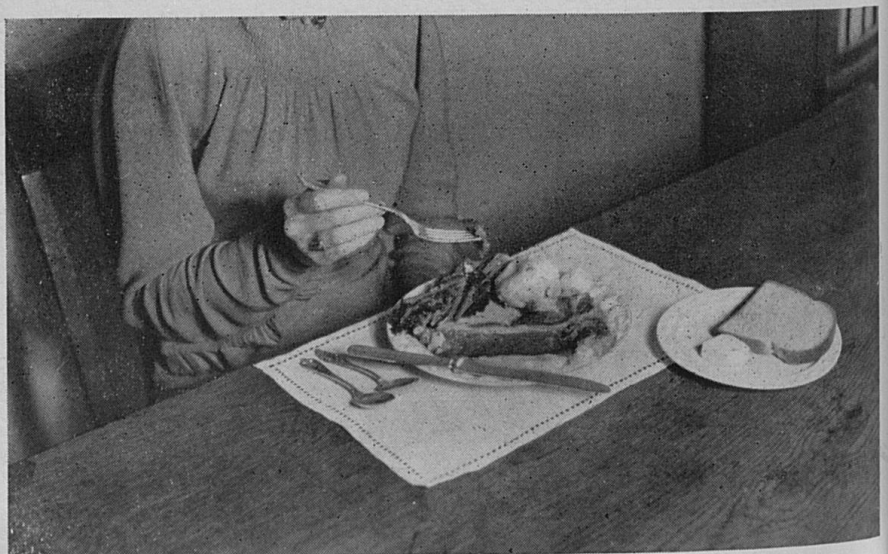


Table Etiquette. Food is carried to the mouth by the right hand, on the fork with prongs up.

the
lap.

sauc

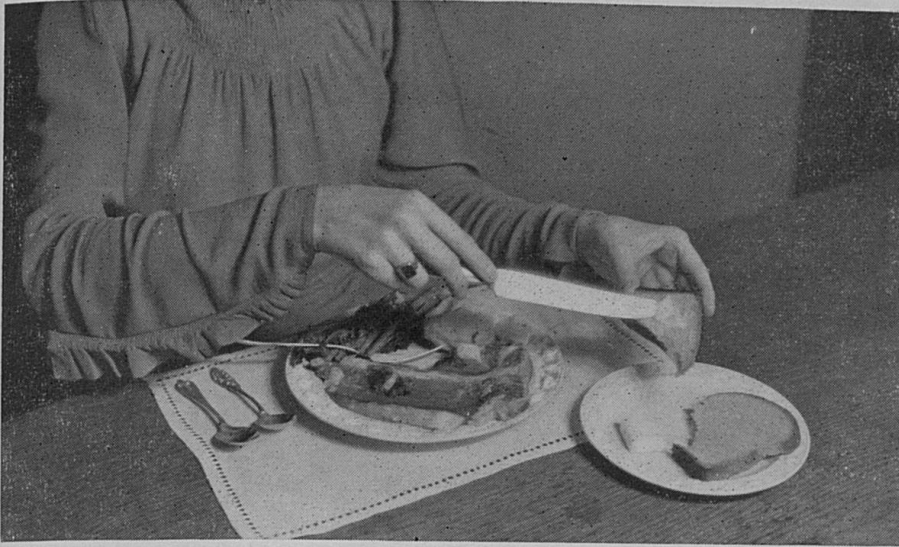


Table Etiquette. A small portion of bread is spread at a time.

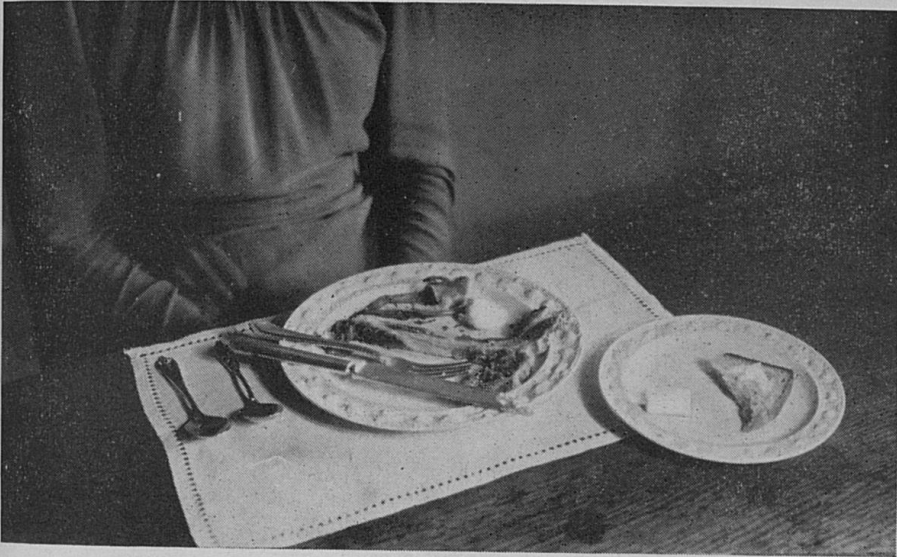


Table Etiquette. The knife and fork are placed side by side with the sharp edge of the knife in and prongs of the fork up, when finished eating. The hands are held in the lap.



Table Etiquette. The dessert spoon is placed on the plate, the coffee spoon on the saucer and the napkin on the table, when the meal is finished.

