

MetroLife

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For that finishing touch

Rasha Shaath attends etiquette school and finds out there's more to good manners than please and thank you!

They say manners maketh the man (or the woman), but in today's world, where we seem to have slacked off on the idea of social graces and decorum, manners have taken something of a back seat. For many, the mere mention of 'etiquette' conjures up images of coiffed women having high tea with their pinky fingers sticking up in the air, but in a city like Dubai, etiquette may just be the way for us all to get along.

At the newly opened Finishing Touch, the Academy of International Etiquette and Savoir-Vivre located at Dubai Knowledge Village, good manners and refined social behaviour are viewed as essential complements to

life in the city. According to Ghada Slim Melki, the marketing director: "Elegant table manners or proper greetings are no longer things of the past or 'what our parents used to do'. They have become an essential requisite for our modern business and social context."

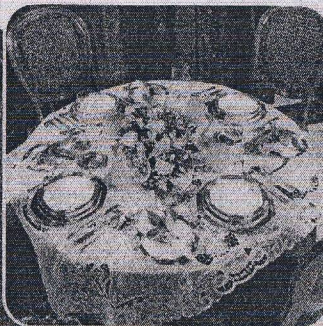
In fact, the idea behind Finishing Touch is that etiquette softens rapport and sets a common code of conduct that crosses any cultural idiosyncrasies.

"When you live in a multicultural city such as Dubai, you realise that the basic rule - the starting point for any successful relations between our cultures is respect and consideration," Ghada adds.

"You cannot engage in a smooth relationship if you do not know and respect the differences."

If you're scratching your head, wondering what social or professional context would require you to tap into the etiquette rule book then stop right there.

From appropriate gifts for dinner parties to the rules of RSVP-ing and table manners, think of proper etiquette as a way of being respectful and refined, things we can never have too much of. Finishing Touch offers programmes and courses related to different aspects of social and professional life such as General Behaviour, Table Etiquette, Invitations and Dress.



GET SET: A full formal table layout.

Codes, Entertaining clients, Correspondence, Corporate relations, Expat Etiquette and even Youth Etiquette. In addition, they offer courses that complement a refined lifestyle, what they call 'Art de Vivre' such as Floral Art, History of Art, Tea Etiquette, Coffee Tasting and more.

ETIQUETTE 101

Oscar Wilde once said, "The world was my oyster but I used the wrong fork." While the many ZP-southerners of my generation, good manners were discarded long ago in the name of 'simplifying' things.

With that in mind, I attended 'Invitations - Host and Guest Duties' at Finishing Touch and it was a real eye-opener.

The course was taught by Gison Mehrabzad, who led the session by taking the 'trainees' through the different aspects of the duties for the guests and the hosts at a variety of social functions - from an informal dinner to a black-tie gala.

If ever there was a rule of thumb to follow when dealing with an invitation of any kind, it is that interesting people, good food and a pleasant setting are the vital ingredients of a good invitation.

The indispensable elements are the hosts and the spirit they bring to the occasion.

But it's not just

about who you

invite, it turns out

- according to

Gison - that hosting or

attending a dinner

party is a social mine

field and I picked up

plenty of tips that will

help me avoid some

major 'faux pas' in the

future.

Each function

requires different

things and timing

is key. And

while invita-

tions can be

anything

from a sponta-

neous same-day

phone call to a

formal invita-

THE RULES

GUEST DOS:

- Be punctual but never, ever early.
- Dress appropriately.
- Compliment the food.
- Thank your hosts.

GUEST DON'TS:

- Don't criticise or complain. If at a restaurant do not send something back. If you must, eat around a hair but do not point it out.
- Don't bring a guest.
- Don't change your place at a seated dinner.
- Don't be a double dipper.
- Don't be the last to leave.

tion to a wedding sent four to six weeks in advance, written invitations are always preferred and emails only acceptable for casual/informal events - never for formal occasions.

Written invitations, it turns out vary from event to event, and each one requires a certain wording.

If RSVP is requested, you must always reply as soon as possible and always use the same form to reply - written requires a written reply which basically means you can't just 'fudging your answer' from 'no, I will not be able to attend' to 'yes, I will be able to attend'; you must never just inform the host on the same day that 'Guess what? I'll be there with bells on after all!'

The rules, Finishing Touch says, are just as complicated for the host. You should always have a detailed check list of things needed for a smooth occasion.

Time management is key to ensure that you are ready and free to greet guests as they arrive and give them your full attention: minus your hair curlers.

And while dinner with the Queen is not very likely, seated dinners in the presence of a guest of honour still require certain place settings that follow either the French Seating or the English Seating arrangement (the difference is where the host

and hostess are seated and

where the guests of

honour is in relation

to them - always to the

right apparently!)

And as for who 'digs in'

first? No matter how hungry

you are, the first bite is

always taken by the host or

hostess, who then encour-

ages the guests to begin.

And finally, when toast time

comes along remember

absolutely no clanging or

banging on a glass. The

toaster should simply rise

and hold up his/her

glass and the toastee

never drinks or holds

up their glass.

Who knew?

For more informa-

tion contact

Finishing Touch at

04-427 2432 or

visit www.finishingtouch.ae

