



# HOW TO HOST A FORMAL DINNER

**Course: TECM 2700**

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## INTRODUCTION

When you think of formal dinner, the following things come to mind: formal attire, proper behavior, formal dinner setting, and perfect arrangements. These instructions are for people who would like to be a great host at their home and venues who also have limited knowledge of how to organize a formal dinner. This manual is designed to take the stress out of hosting a formal dinner party. It will contain detailed information regarding

- Invitations
- Décor and Table Setting
- Food
- Entertainment

Each section will give excellent tips for performing each task. Please consider that not every situation can be covered but this manual can guide you to a solution. It is expected that you asked people on their schedules see what other events are going around at that time, and then finally make a decision on the event date.



THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY IS REQUESTED  
AT A REHEARSAL DINNER FOR

*Kristina* AND *Mark*

DECEMBER 9, 2011 AT 7:00 P.M.

THE BILTMORE ROOM  
290 EIGHTH AVENUE • NEW YORK, NEW YORK

REGRETS ONLY TO (212) 555-1212

## Chapter 1

### Invitation



# Chapter 1: Invitation

## Relay Information

Invitations are an important part to hosting events. They are an easy way to relay information to guests.

### Step One

Your invitations should always cover

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- Why

Each point should be as accurate as possible.

### Step Two

After establishing these points the next step is selecting a stationary to hold your message. It is important to select an appropriate stationary that properly represents your event. For example, Inviting people to a graduation party using “It’s a Boy” stationary would confuse your guests.

### Step Three

After filling out vital information on your chosen stationary the only thing left is to deliver or mail the invitations. Please make sure all addresses are correct before mailing the invitations.



Figure 1: Stationary

## E-invitation

Everyone is busy and has a tough time replying to hand written letters or phone calls in a timely manner. So the alternative proposition is to use e-invitations. Those who have access to internet will appreciate your concern. Please don't forget to mention the option of +1 guest for each of the invited guests; otherwise you will have a false perception of how many people are attending your dinner. There are many websites that use e-invitation in different designs and patterns; most of the websites are free.

The screenshot shows a web interface for creating an e-invitation. At the top, it says "JOIN US" in large white letters on a black background, with "Formal Dinner Event" below it. To the left of the event details are illustrations of various wine and cocktail glasses. To the right, the event details are listed: Host: Shaika, Phone: 789-060-6563, When: Sunday, July 8 at 6:00 PM, and Where: The house of the host, 786 Beach Ave, Miami, FL 42561. Below this is a form with three tabs: "Enter Details" (selected), "Add Guests", and "Invite Options". The "Enter Details" tab contains several input fields: "Event Title" (Formal Dinner Event), "Event Type" (Dinner Party), "Host" (Shaika), "Phone" (789-060-6563), "Location Name" (The house of the host), "Address" (786 Beach Ave), "City" (Miami), "State" (FL), and "ZIP" (42561). There is a "Message" text area on the right side of the form, and a "Change Design" button in the top right corner. A small note at the bottom right says "Where is this on my invitation?".

Figure 2: E-invitation



## Chapter 2

### Décor and Table Setting



## Chapter 2: Décor and Table Setting

### Décor

Formal parties do not need a lot of decorations. For themed dinner parties, or holiday parties, you can place small themed decorations around the areas where your guest will socialize. The decorations should be simple and eloquent, while also not cluttering the area. Here are a few rules to follow when decorating for your dinner party.

- Make the table setting the center of attention
- Place tasteful candles in the middle of the table
- Place name holders that match your theme or occasion
- Add fresh flowers to the center of the table (optional)
- Leave lots of space on the table
  - Cluttering the table can give your guests a bad experience



**Figure 3: Formal Table Setting**

### Ambiance

When setting up for your dinner party you will need to consider the ambiance. You want to have a soothing atmosphere for your guests to relax and socialize. The best way to set a soothing atmosphere is by using soft lighting and good dinner music.

### Lighting

Soft lighting is always better and can be achieved by using candles.

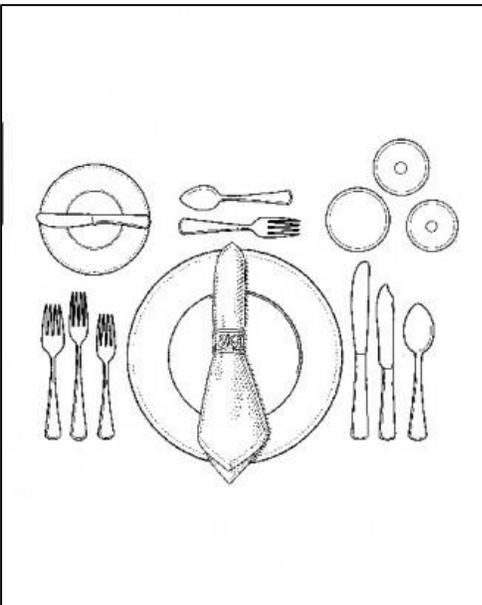
## Music

When choosing the music that you will be playing, be sure to plan the music around the guests that are coming. Choosing the music based on your guests taste is the best way to insure a pleasant atmosphere.

## Table Setting

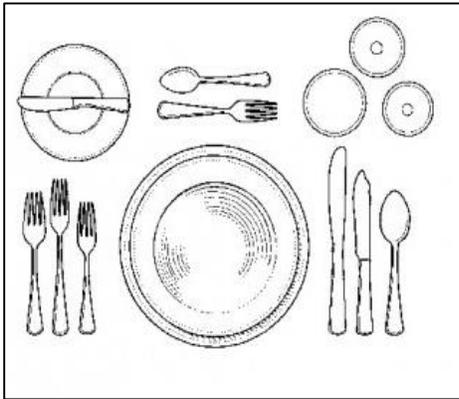
When you set up the formal dinner table, use a traditional five-piece place setting. The rules for setting up a formal dinner table are easy once you learn the basics. The basic steps for setting up a formal dinner table include:

1. Place a large dinner plate where each guest will be sitting
2. Align flatware with the bottom of the large plate
  - Place the forks to the left and the knives and spoon to the right
  - Place the flatware in the order your guest will be using them from the outside (first to be used), in towards the plate (last to be used)
3. Place a desert spoon and fork horizontal above the dinner plate
  - Place the spoon above the fork
  - Place the spoon handle towards the right
  - Place fork handle towards the left
4. Place the bread and butter plate above the forks on the left
5. Place the butter knife horizontal on the middle of the bread and butter plate
6. Place the water glass above the dinner knife
7. Place the white wine glass to the right of the water glass
8. Place the red wine glass to the top center of the water glass and white wine glass
9. Place the napkin on top of the plate

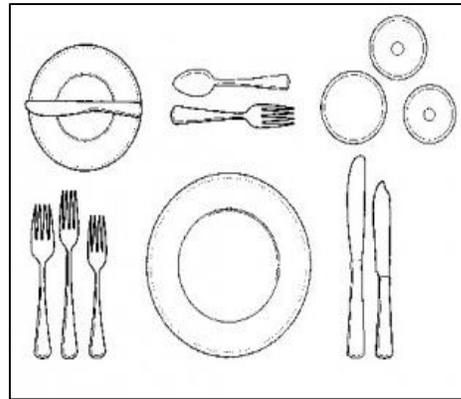


**Figure 4: Formal Dinner table setting**

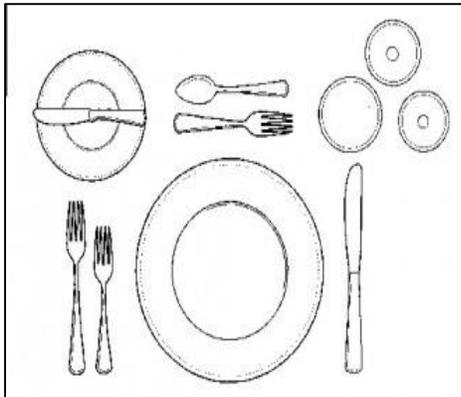
In figure 4 you can see how a formal dinner setting should be set up before you bring out the first course. If you are serving soup for the first course, place the bowl of soup on top of the dinner plate. As each course is finished, remove the used plate and utensils and bring out the next course on a new plate. Place the new plate in the center where the dinner plate once was. For the desert course bring out a cup of coffee and spoon and place it to the right of the desert plate. Below is how the table should look after each course during a normal five course meal.



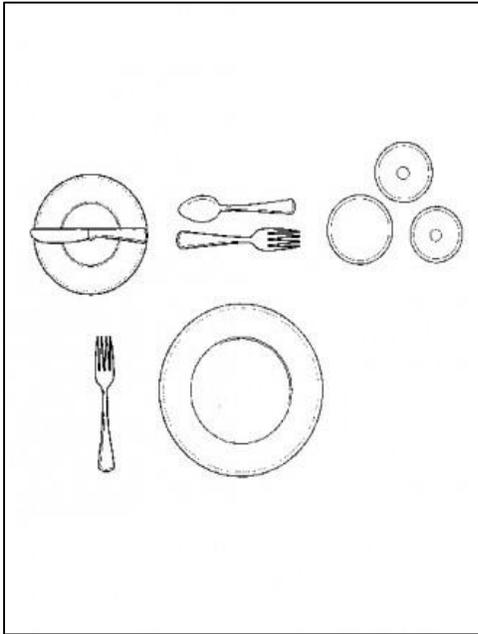
**Figure 5: First Course (soup)**



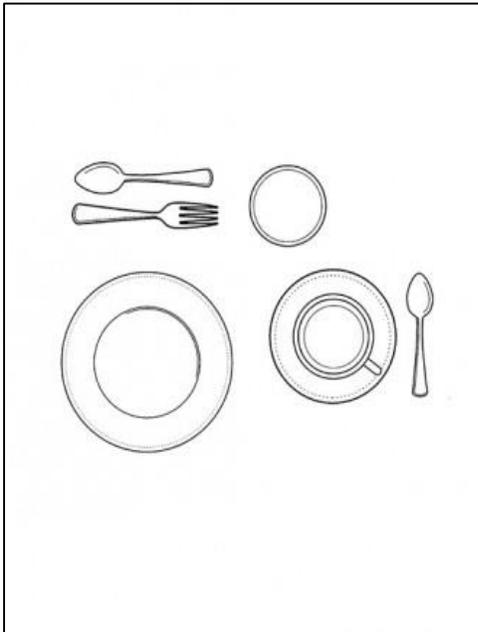
**Figure 6: Second Course (Fish)**



**Figure 7: Third Course (Main course)**



**Figure 8: Fourth Course (Salad)**



**Figure 9: Fifth Course (Desert with Coffee)**



# Chapter 3

## Menu



## Chapter 3: Menu

### Preparing For the Dinner Party

Preparing for a dinner party can be very time consuming and stressful. Follow the instructions below to make sure you have plenty of time to prepare and that your guests are happy with the food.

- Plan a balanced menu for the dinner party in advance
- Plan simple back up dishes in case something goes wrong with any of the original dishes
- Plan cocktails that you will server to your guest
- Decide if you will be pairing wines with each course
- Find out if any of your guest are allergic to any of the ingredients that you will be using
- Make sure you have all the tools necessary to produce your dishes
- Buy all ingredients the day before
- Set aside ample time the day of the party to prepare the courses
- Plan carefully the cooking order and cooking time needed for each dish

### Planning a Well-Balanced Menu

When planning the menu there are several things to consider and a couple rules to follow.

Things to consider when planning a menu include:

- Consider the season
  - Summer, plan light food such as salads and cold soups along with fresh vegetables
  - Fall and winter, plan heavier foods such as stews or a roast
  - Incorporate seasonal fruits and vegetables that are best at that time of year
- Consider the limitations of your time and kitchen space
  - Limited oven space
    - How much time is needed in the oven for each course?
    - Do courses need to be cooked at different temperatures?
    - Do you have enough big pots and pans to cook everything in?
  - Limited time
    - Will you have enough time to cook dishes that take a long time to prepare?
- Consider the guests that are coming
  - Types of food your guests enjoy or expect
    - Do your guests like spicy foods?
    - Do your guests like sweet dishes?
  - Allergies your guest may have
    - Do your guests have any allergies?
    - What allergies do they have?

After considering the season and the limitations of your time and kitchen, there are a few rules to follow.

- Balance the dishes
  - Do not server two heavy or spicy dishes back to back
  - Do not server two rich dishes back to back

## Cocktails

Plan to server cocktails to your guests as everyone arrives to the dinner party.

- Serve cocktails for a minimum of an hour from when the party starts according to the invitation
  - Allows time for all your guest to show up
  - Allows your guest to relax after arrival
  - Allows your guests to socialize
  - Gives enough time for each guest to have a couple cocktails
- Offer two or three varieties of cocktails, including
  - Wine
  - Spirits
  - Soda, juices and water
- Offer spirits based cocktails that are male and female friendly
  - Serve Vodka or Gin based cocktails for females
  - Server Scotch or Whisky for the males

Along with cocktails you may also decide to server snacks or hors d'oeuvres. Serving snacks or hors d'oeuvres is optional. If you decided to serve snacks or hors d'oeuvres make sure they have compatible flavors with the dishes that will be served with dinner.

## Pairing Wines

You may decide to serve wine with dinner. When you serve wine with dinner you will want to pair your wine with the food you are serving. When pairing the wine with the food you are serving you want to bring out the best characteristics of the wine. Here are a few rules to follow to make the best pairings.

- Serve a dry rosé with hors d'oeuvres
- Serve an unoaked white with anything you can squeeze a lemon or lime on
- Serve low-alcohol wines with spicy foods
- Match tannic reds with rich red meats
- Match wine with sauce if using a lighter meat
- Serve earthy wines with earthy foods
- Server lighter wines with deserts

Figure 10 below will help you chose the right wine to pair with the dishes you are going to be serving.

<i>Wine &amp; Food Pairing Chart</i>																	
	Chocolate	Fruit/Creamy Desserts	Dishes with Cream Sauce	Dishes with Tomato Sauce	Shellfish	Sole/Halibut	Salmon	Spicy Food	Poultry	Game	Lamb/Duck	Pork	Veal	Beef	Strong Cheese	Mild Cheese/Cream Dips	
<b>White Wines</b>																	
Chardonnay					✓	✓	✓		✓							✓	
Sauvignon Blanc			✓		✓	✓			✓							✓	
Pinot Grigio					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓	
Riesling		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓				✓	
Gewurztraminer		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓				✓	
Chenin Blanc		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓			✓				✓	
Viognier						✓	✓		✓							✓	
Muscato		✓														✓	
<b>Sparkling Wines</b>																	
Extra Dry: Medium Dry			✓		✓	✓											✓
Brut: Dry			✓		✓	✓											✓
Prosecco		✓															✓
<b>Blush/Rose Wines</b>																	
White Zinfandel		✓						✓	✓			✓					✓
Rose: Dry		✓					✓		✓			✓	✓				✓
<b>Red Wines</b>																	
Cabernet Sauvignon	✓									✓	✓			✓	✓		
Merlot										✓	✓			✓	✓		
Pinot Noir							✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Syrah/Shiraz										✓	✓			✓	✓		
Zinfandel				✓						✓	✓			✓	✓		
Sangiovese				✓						✓	✓			✓	✓		
Tempranillo				✓						✓	✓			✓	✓		
Chianti				✓						✓	✓			✓	✓		
Beaujolais							✓		✓			✓	✓	✓			
Malbec				✓						✓	✓			✓	✓		
Petite Sirah										✓	✓			✓	✓		

Figure 10: Wine and Food Pairing Chart





## Chapter 4

### Entertainment



## Chapter 4: Entertainment

### Category

Entertainment is a form of activity that holds the attention and interest of audience. The entertainment can be provided according to the size of the venue. This venue size can be categorized as small, medium and large. Another key factor determining the type of entertainment is the budget. The budget can be divided into three categories - small, average and unlimited budget. The following shows what you can do for entertainment based on the different budgets and venue combinations. You can take ideas from the lists and customize them as needed.

### For a Small-sized Venue (< 100 people)

- Hire a local comedian.
- Hire a magician.
- Hire a caricature artist.
- Book a palm reader to make psychic predictions.
- Put winning tags on the bottoms of certain plates, so that the people sitting at the table with these marked plates receive certain prizes.
- Give each person a custom gift basket or even a wine glass filled with reflections of that person's life and personality.



**Figure 11: Small Venue**

### For a Medium-sized Venue (100 - 500 people)

All the activities from the small venue can be used here. In addition, the following ideas can also be implemented:

- Hire a violinist or harpist to play during the dinner in order to add a musical touch to the atmosphere.
- Book a vocal improvisation group to take requests and make them into an entertaining performance.
- Hire a celebrity impersonator to perform as well as sign autographs and take pictures with guests.
- Book a digital caricature artist who composes his or her photos digitally on a computer instantly in front of you with different backgrounds of the photo. The guests can take these customized photos as souvenirs.



**Figure 12: Medium Venue**

### For a Large-sized Venue (> 500 people)

All the activities from the small and medium sized venues can be used here. In addition, the following ideas can also be implemented:

- A living statue can be a great idea for almost any event. The living statue should be chosen according to the theme of the party
- Hire a mentalist to read the minds of the guests. This is creative way that the performer can interact with the audience.
- Acrobat performances also provide a lively addition to an event.
- Singing group can be dressed as formal waiters. This catches guests off guard and provides entertainment into the dining experience.
- Dueling pianos can make the audience involved with the entertainment
- A marching band can be a dramatic way to introduce someone special at the event.
- Hire an opera singer for a classy event or gala.
- Hire a street performer like a sword swallower or snake charmer to attract the crowd based on the theme of the event.
- Do karaoke for a variety of songs.
- Put a spin on dinner which will help to keep your guests engaged in what is going on.



**Figure 13: Large Venue**

### Low Budget (< \$5000)

- Usually low budgets are associated with small-sized venues. However, low budgets can also be extended to medium and large-sized venues.



Figure 14: Small budget

### Average Budget (\$5000 - \$10000)

- Usually average budgets are associated with medium-sized venues. However, average budgets can also be extended to small and large-sized venues.



Figure 15: Average Budget

## Unlimited Budget (> \$10000)

Usually unlimited budgets are associated with large-sized venues since the entertainment options are limitless. However, unlimited or high budgets can also be extended to small and medium-sized venues. In addition to the activities mentioned in large-sized venues, the following ideas can also be improvised.

- Hire a famous musician to compose and perform songs spontaneously at the event.
- Hire an ice sculptor who can sculpt according to the theme while people watch it being carved.
- Hire formal waiters who are trained to dance and sing with certain tunes to create an engaging dining experience.
- Book hula hoop dancers to mingle on the dance floor with guests.
- Hire specialized international dancers to perform after dinner to provide culture experience into the event.



Figure 16: Unlimited Budget



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## Images

Front Cover

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Figure 1

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Figure 2

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Figure 3

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Figure 10

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Figure 11

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Figure 12

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