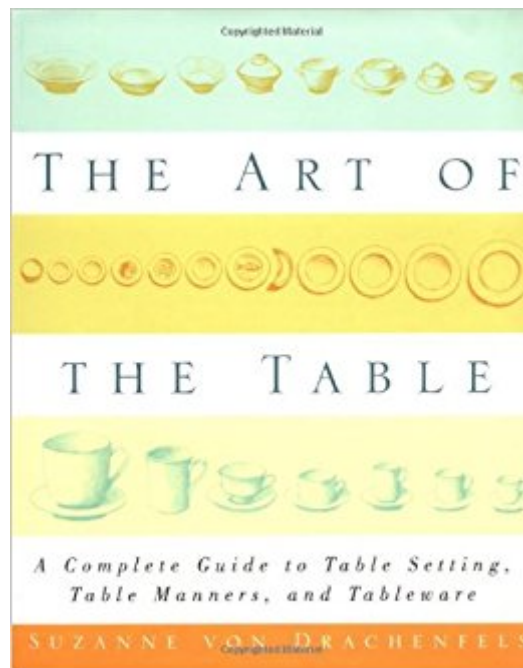




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The Art Of The Table: A Complete Guide To Table Setting, Table Manners, And Tableware



Synopsis

Coming together to share a meal is one of our most vital traditions. Whether dining with friends, family, or business associates, we know that an elegant setting and gracious manners bring a sense of harmony and order to the occasion. Yet when it comes to knowing precisely how to set a table for formal and informal dining, which fork is for dessert and which for the appetizer, how to serve different types of wine -- even how to eat certain foods -- many of us are not fully confident. Suzanne von Drachenfels learned this firsthand in her career as an expert on table setting, tableware, and etiquette. Conducting seminars throughout the country, she would hear the same questions again and again: Should bread be buttered entirely or bite by bite? What is the purpose of holding a wine glass by the stem or the base? Is handmade crystal worth the price difference? The Art of the Table answers all these questions and more. A treasure trove of timeless information, this complete guide is to the table what Joy of Cooking is to the kitchen. Von Drachenfels shows us how to select, lay, and use tableware to enhance any dining experience, and how to properly store and care for it -- whether it's your grandmother's porcelain or everyday stainless steel. She provides guidance on mixing and matching tableware patterns; the basics of coffee, tea, and wine; menu planning; napkin folding; and the proper service techniques for all types of entertainment. So as not to let the lore of the table fall away, she delves deep into the history of specific tableware and the customs we keep, making today's practices understandable. For the novice host, this is an easy-to-follow, step-by-step guide with more than one hundred helpful illustrations. For the host with more experience, it is a rich and exciting source of new ideas. Like its author, whose passion for the table is contagious, The Art of the Table is an authoritative, elegant, and sophisticated resource for all one's dining needs.

Book Information

Hardcover: 592 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; First Edition edition (November 8, 2000)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0684847329

ISBN-13: 978-0684847320

Product Dimensions: 9.5 x 7.7 x 1.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 28 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #521,619 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #97 in Books > Cookbooks,

Food & Wine > Entertaining & Holidays > Tablesetting #6711 in ÃÂ Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design #57315 in ÃÂ Books > Reference

Customer Reviews

Do you know how to set the table? Worry about your dinner manners? Finally, with *The Art of the Table*, Suzanne von Drachenfels comes to the rescue with a truly comprehensive guide to the correct use of tableware and confidence-building information about proper dining etiquette. Von Drachenfels, a former Tabletop Consultant for dinnerware makers Fitz & Floyd, defines the vocabulary of tableware and explains the selection, use, and care of dinnerware, flatware, stemware, and table linens. She expertly details the basic service techniques for all types of entertainment, and even includes advice on menu planning. Learn how to read the labels of wine bottles or how to filet a fish at the table; learn where and when to sit down and the proper way to eat finger foods. Spicing up the how-to text are fascinating tidbits of social and culinary history. Who knew, for instance, that the first napkin was a lump of dough or that ancient Egyptian feasts often concluded with a coffin laid out with an imitation skeleton to remind diners to appreciate the bounteous gifts of life? The author reveals the origins of everyday expressions--such as "eating humble pie"--and covers the history of table manners to shed light on the commonsense reasons behind today's customs. Food service professionals--restaurateurs, service staff, and caterers--will find the book an indispensable guide to the correct way to set a table and present food, but anyone who has a need or yearning to know the nitty-gritty of table setting, table manners, and tableware will be sure to find answers to all of their questions and more in this exhaustive reference book.

--Robin Donovan

Nancy Dunnan coauthor of *The Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette* Suzanne von Drachenfels's charming book, *The Art of the Table*, combines the history of what we eat with how we eat in a way that will appeal to those who entertain, those who are interested in the history of civilization, and those who simply want to know what the rules are. -- Review

My best friend, who collects silver, recommended this book to me; the combination of *THE ART OF THE TABLE* and eBay is a dangerous, but pleasurable one. I was afraid it would simply be an extremely high-ticket etiquette manual. While it explains what fork to use -- and I never knew there were so many kinds of forks! -- it also explains the history and craftsmanship behind flatware and dishes with a fascination I could well appreciate and a level of knowledge I had to respect. The level

of care and detail is intimidating. I rather doubt I'll ever entertain in diplomatic circles, which is kind of a shame because now I'd know what to do! For daily life, I'd say more care&feeding of tableware is definitely indicated, and I'd be glad of a maintenance section: what to do when things scratch, things break, etc. And I'm going to put my sterling in the dishwasher ANYHOW. Reading this book is like looking at holiday catalogues: you understand why they used to be called wishbooks. I'm proud, however, that my friends say I set a lovely table (they're good guests, which is an art in itself), and I'm determined now NOT to keep the "good stuff" stored away because it's too good to use. von Drachenfels has added to my quality of life, as well as my credit-card balance. I'd say I came out the winner.

Yes, I'm odd - I can read books like this the way some people read a novel - devouring them from beginning to end. I am a manners junkie, and love setting a beautiful table. This book helps me do that - the sections on plates, flatware and tablecloths are extensive. I wish there were more photographs, rather than drawings, but most relevant things are illustrated. There is a very small section on serving tea, another interest of mine, which could be much bigger. While the history of how different conventions developed isn't really relevant, they were worth the price of the book for me. I wish she had spent more time describing flatware and service pieces that are no longer commonly used - like sardine forks, aspic servers, and sugar sifters. All in all, the book is an excellent resource that I will use often.

As a long-time collector of place settings in porcelain, antique china, contemporary china, sterling, crystal and elegant glassware, I found this book to be comprehensive in scope -- defining each place setting piece and its usage, as well as including lots of information on service, care, manners, and protocol. It would have been further enhanced by some color photographs of a variety of well-set tables. The author also covers the history and many classifications of dinnerware and flatware and stemware and linens. However, one disappointment was that, in her chapters on the history and types of dinnerware, while she covers a variety of countries and sources -- including Chinese, Islamic, Italian, German, English, and American -- she astonishingly totally omits all mention of French porcelain (notably that from the city of Limoges). She never even mentions the Haviland companies or others in Limoges, considered by many to be among the finest makers of porcelain using some of the strongest, whitest clay in the world, and producing thousands of designs. Antique Haviland & Company dinnerware pieces are in great demand today and come in every imaginable design and shape and size and purpose. These pieces are a study in Victorian dining -- a style for

each type of food in each of the thirteen courses of the formal Victorian dinner, and should surely have been mentioned in any overview of dinnerware pieces and their history. But to most readers this would be a minor point. The history coverage is not the main point or value of the book, in my mind. It is a well-researched coverage of lots of information relating to the table settings themselves, all in one place. I had learned much of this over the years as I collected and read about table setting pieces, especially dinnerware and sterling, but to have a single reference is an excellent contribution and would have made my information-gathering easier while I collected and learned. And, as someday these pieces will be passed on to my daughters, this book will be an invaluable accompaniment on table settings and entertaining using these collections -- it is my belief that they should be used and enjoyed, not packed away for some special day that never arrives, because it's too much trouble to get them out or for fear of damage. Setting a nice table is an art that makes for gracious entertaining as well as for daily family dinner settings that make each meal special -- whether with fine antique china and sterling or with simple attractive pottery and stainless. For someone interested in table settings and all the subtleties of dining, this is an excellent source of information.

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