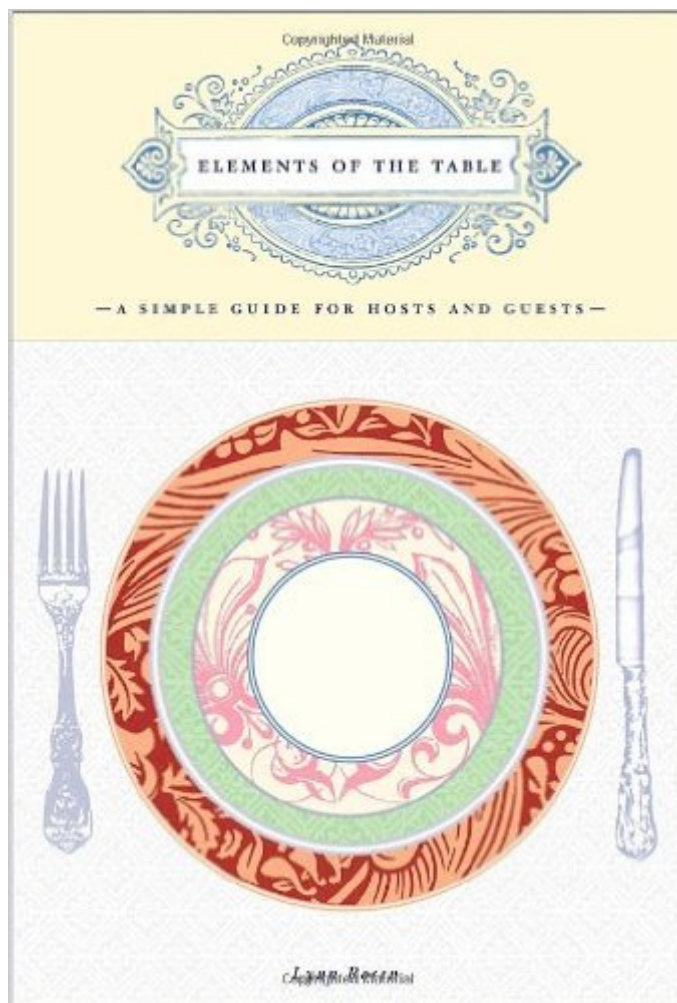


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Elements Of The Table: A Simple Guide For Hosts And Guests



Synopsis

Elegance is the art of not astonishing, said Jean Cocteau, but often the idea of a formal dinner party is intimidating to both hosts and guests for one reason: the table setting. Why is there a spoon above my plate? Do I really need five different glasses? Where do I put my napkin when I leave the table? Lynn Rosen comes to the rescue with this practical, charming, and informative guide to all things tabletop. Organized by category, Lynn's advice is sensible, her explanations are clear, and her historical asides will provide plenty of lively dinner conversation. You'll learn about: Napery. What to do about that crease in your tablecloth, how to use a table runner, and the history of napkin rings (hint: they came into use not for decoration, but for an exceedingly practical purpose!) China. The difference between a rim soup bowl and a rimless coupe soup bowl, when to bring out the coffee cups, and why we call it "china" • Silver. Basic rules for arranging the setting (evenly spaced, about a half-inch apart, with the handle bottoms lined up), using flatware to signal you've finished eating, and why the fork was slow to catch on as a dining implement Crystal. How to tell a red wine glass from a white wine glass, when to use a doff glass, and what famous European queen is said to have been the model for a champagne coupe glass Table Décor. Why place cards are always a good idea (and where to put them), the evolution of centerpieces, and how to turn a napkin into a cardinal's hat, a bishop's mitre, or even an artichoke Elements of the Table covers everything from linens to basic etiquette, so your next dinner party (whether you're hosting or attending) will be a relaxed celebration "and the only astonishment will come at the end of the night, when you realize how much fun you've had.

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Customer Reviews

I have this really odd trait, one that frankly, I'm ashamed to admit to in our instant culture of gratification, where doing something leisurely is considered to be, well, lazy. I love dinner parties, especially ones where you can linger over dinner, and talk and use beautiful things, savoring each flavour, and getting to know people. Sadly, this is an art form that is going by the wayside, drowned out by fast food, haughty doyennes such as Martha Stewart, and the haunting suspicion that maybe we're enjoying it too much. Bah! I say to that. There's something special to being able to set a table properly, and to dress things up during the holidays, or when friends come to call. It forces you to slow down, take a deep breath, and enjoy what you're eating instead of attacking what's on your plate like a timber wolf. Recent studies have proved that families that manage to sit down together to eat have fewer problems, and the incidents of drug abuse and the like are lessened. If that doesn't make parents sit up and notice, I don't know what will. But sitting down to a meal that's presented on fine china, with silver and crystal to boot, can be pretty intimidating. Why so many plates? Why drink champagne out of a tall skinny glass (hint: to keep the bubbles in)? And silverware -- that can drive a person to pulling their hair out and swear off using knives and forks altogether....

Author Lynn Rosen breaks down the intricacies of table setting and decor in five simple chapters, each one beginning with the basic setting, then moving on to what you eat with, and then what is used for serving. Along with these, there are an introduction talking about a brief history of tableware and china, and an afterword on the minimum of good manners at the table.

Napery: That is, tablecloths and napkins, when to use them, and when it is appropriate not to. One curious thing I discovered was the origin of napkin rings, and how to signal that you're finished eating, or just stepping away for a moment from the table -- very useful to know in a restaurant. A cute tidbit that is scattered around the book are little questions and answers on etiquette or history of various customs.

China: Plates and bowls and cups -- how do you sort them all out? Rosen patiently explains how to 'read' your place setting as it were, and how to use it to figure out what you're going to be served so you can pace yourself. Nothing can be more embarrassing than eating, and discovering that you don't have room for dessert.

Silver: If you think deciphering china is bad, silverware can be the horrors. We can usually figure out the difference between say, a dinner fork and a salad fork, but how about a fish fork, and how do you use it? Rosen provides a truly mind-boggling list of all sorts of silverware, and some of the more obscure pieces that are out there. If such a thing interests you, she suggests checking out antique stores to find them.

Crystal: Crystal, I confess, is something that terrifies me. I am frightened of breaking a piece, and it's taken me years to get comfortable handling it. Not only does Rosen cover such ordinary things as water goblets,

wine glasses and champagne flutes, but also all of the different varieties of barware -- used to serve spirits or cocktails in. There's also some interesting little bits of trivia as well. Tucked in between these two chapters there's a list of the top ten etiquette errors, and how not to make them. It's one of the more useful sections, and very handy if you're going to some fine restaurant and you really don't want to look like some unwashed heathen in front of your date. Yes, gentlemen, we women really do notice these things, and will take that into account for when the next time you call -- and whether or not to accept. Table Decor: Candlelabra, and all that frou-frou that goes on a table. But the best part of this chapter were the instructions and diagrams for napkin folding. And why not? It's fun to make your guests go oooh! when they sit down to the table. And it's not that hard either. For the fact that this is just over a 120 page book, there's a surprising amount of detail in here. Along with the text, there are simple line drawings showing how a place setting is arranged, and what goes where. One of the nicer bits are some mouthwatering shots of very fine china from Haviland, and crystal from Orrefors. The design of the overall book tends for the pretty side, with coloured borders and prints scattered throughout, and nearly every sort of tableware has a picture to help identify what it is. Most of all, and the reason why I fuss about with the setting just as much as I do with the food and drink to be served is that it says something vital to my guests: You are important enough to me that I want to treat you to my very best. It's not a display of snobbery or money or any of that, I just want to make things fine. Rosen's writing style is clear and free of most jargon, and there's a bit of humour to it all, which helps the reader to relax and enjoy the book. This one isn't nearly as complete or thorough as Suzanne von Drachenfels' *The Art of the Table*, but it is very handy for anyone who is trying to decide on tableware for themselves, or has inherited or been gifted with a set of silver or tableware, and trying to decide what it is for. Four stars overall. Recommended.

If you're looking for a delightful primer on table manners and table pieces - silver, china, glass- this is a great little book. If you have a daughter interested in entertaining, a great present. Nice for your first apartment or even a little engagement gift. Lots of great info on when to use which piece, serving, manners, and even history on pieces and/or how certain etiquette evolved. Jam packed little volume - one of my favorite finds of late. I was specifically looking for soup spoon and soup bowl etiquette and got all my answers and many more. Wonderful for such a small volume.

I really enjoyed this book. First off, I liked the design. It's a lovely looking book. The pictures are gorgeous but sharp and clear so you can see what a butter plate looks like and finally get the difference between a fish knife and a regular one. The pages are thick, glossy, and cream colored.

There's nothing cheap about the way this book was put together. I liked Lynn Rosen. Her "voice" comes through very well. She's authoritative without coming off a mean and she's comforting as well. She offers solutions to those of us who will never have a full set of flatware but still want to entertain. And on top of that the book has flashes of gentle humor and historical asides. All in all, this was well worth my money. It taught me something and entertained me.

Fun little book full of great information on putting together a proper table setting. More people should familiarize themselves with such things because it is such a good feeling to KNOW you are doing it right. It is further a good feeling to have a host that values his/her guests enough to take the extra steps to present things well. There is surprisingly little effort involved in doing it right...this little book shows how.

Very helpful and precise! This book is easy to understand and the diagrams are very helpful. It took the stress out of setting my Holiday party table. Highly recommended!

One of the best books I've ever purchased! The book is gorgeous and gives details of how to properly entertain using silver, china and crystal. This is perfect for any southern lady and a must for brides.

This is a fun little book to have as a reference. The cover is pretty, and the information and pictures provide great basic information when setting a table or folding a napkin!

I wanted a "how to" with explanations of place settings. This meets my needs. I might have liked a few more pictures of place settings. The section on folding napkins is very good and has lots of options with great pictures. There are many historical references I enjoy. I like the book and find it useful.

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