

SURVIVING THE FEAST TABLE

From Baroness Lady Genievieve de'Charbonneau*

Did you ever go to an event and not know anyone and feel out of sorts? Have you ever shared a feast table with strangers and no one talked to you because you are alone, or aren't from the area, or are simply new?

These are fairly common scenarios in the Society today. For some gentles who are new, or are from out of the area, or have been inactive for a while or may be shy; an introduction to the local members of the hosting group may be in order.

When sharing feast table space with others be polite and introduce yourself and those others in your company. Frequently, if you are new and/or from out of the area finding a place to sit and eat can be intimidating; let alone sitting with aloof gentles that won't take the time to at least introduce themselves let alone chat with you.

Members of the group hosting the event; it is also your responsibility to be friendly and polite. Sharing your table with others also means introductions are in order; as well as including the gentle in conversation if they are so inclined.

Considering seating arrangements, it helps to place ladies with hoops and servers on the outermost part of the table. It just makes it easier for both gentles not to have to hop over and/or squeeze past obstacles.

If you are off-board or are bringing other things to drink and eat; please try and reduce the mundane factor. That is hiding and/or covering up those soda bottles, beer cans and Tupperware. When the feast does arrive, remember that there are others that wish to eat as well.

Don't take more than your equal share of any dish. Having myself being victim of, "whoops, there's only one slice of beef left for three people"; it is rather impolite. After every one has been served and there are any leftovers seconds are fine.

For those volunteering to serve, or who have been called away on an emergency, etc. please leave them something to eat; or at least ask them what they want you to save for them.

Now, for the tricky part of the feast, the bird/roast/ miscellaneous meat dish has arrived. If it hasn't been cut into portions it needs to be carved. While there are some gentles that have no compunction about shredding their meat with their fingers; others prefer their meat carved. Carving is not an impossible skill to learn.

In period, it was expected that a gentleman be as accomplished in this as possible and to take this opportunity to show off their skill and deftness. So, if you know how, offer to carve or teach someone how. If you don't know how to carve, volunteer to learn. There's probably someone present who is willing to teach you. Just be careful; you wouldn't want glazed chicken your trying to carve sliding into some lady's lap and ruining her garb or onto the floor.

One of the first rules in carving is make sure you have enough room, secured your sleeves (if applicable) and that you have a sharp, reasonable sized carving knife and fork. Reasonable sized

means what you can handle the knife comfortably and safely. In general, beef or pork should be cut on the grain and sliced thinly. Chicken/fowl needs to be separated by jointing the bones.

The other particulars on actual carving need to be taught in person. So, if you already know how to carve, please pass on this knowledge. There will be many grateful ladies who will appreciate your skill.

If there is any food left at your table after everyone has eaten, leftovers may be taken home. Just leave the serving dishes. If you want any of the other leftovers; it is customary to wait until the kitchen crew has decided what they want. Often they will consolidate the leftover and set them out for those who wish to take home or donate it to a local food bank.

Cleaning your dishes in the bathroom sink often causes problems with the plumbing and is messy. This sometimes can cause the hosting group to lose the site for future events. Walking off and leaving your dishes for others to deal with is also discourteous. Often, it is easier to plan ahead by packing extra plastic bags to transport the dirty dishes home. General clean up, if you stay late, and/or live nearby help out if you can, it just makes life a little easier all the way around.

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