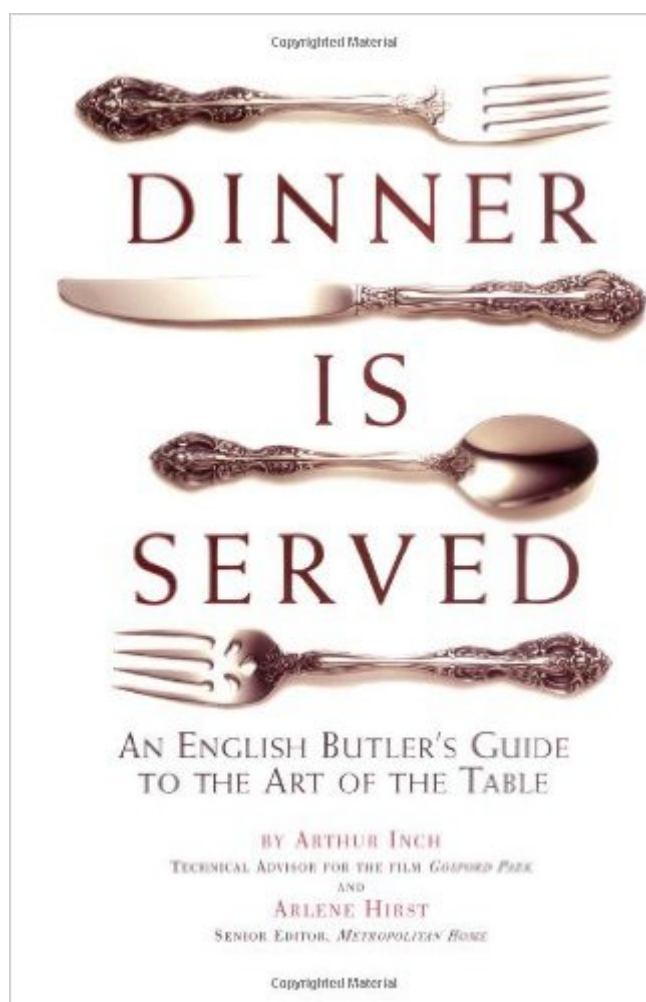


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Dinner Is Served



Synopsis

Elegant entertaining is always in style, and who better to explain the finer points of the art of the table than Arthur Inch, a veteran English butler who served as technical advisor for the film Gosford Park? With a historian's appreciation for the traditions of fine English homes, he discusses the elements of the table, including flatware and silver, china and glassware, serving vessels, and table decorations, as well as table and serving etiquette. "Although most of the book is written in a formal tone, the writers aren't above occasionally letting loose, and they amuse themselves with such pretty tricks as making music with glassware. This guide is fun to read as a light history as well as for preparation for a formal dinner. --Publishers Weekly

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In "Dinner is Served", Arthur Inch hopes to leave us with the rapidly disappearing rules for old-fashioned gracious living. With his extensive experience in service, he is most definitely qualified to do so, and yet he only offers glimpses of his total knowledge. While many of the things in this book will never actually be used by the average person due to their expense and impracticality, there is still much that can and should be put to use in every-day living. While some may view these rules or standards as superfluous or even snobbish, the fact is that these have all been developed over many years and each has its own very legitimate reason for being. The complaints I have with this book are ones that could have been easily remedied. When discussing and describing the various types of tableware, more pictures would have been useful. Only select pieces have been

illustrated, leaving the others subject to the whims of the imagination. And while he mentions several different napkin folds, and even specifies his own personal favorite fold, he never explains how to make these folds or shows how they are supposed to look. The sections on how to be the perfect host/hostess and guest, and on how to eat certain different foods could prove to be useful in reducing the potential for embarrassment in the future, and the section explaining the hierarchy of menservants was quite interesting, even if only as a history lesson that serves to demonstrate the logistical nightmares that formal dining can create.

In exploring the history and customs of fine dining, I have found sources to fall into two categories. First I find commentary from etiquette "experts" (some more authoritative than others!). The classics were largely written in the 19th century, and lay down the basic framework. Modern versions are often just restatements of the originals, and attest to the relatively unchanging nature of dining protocols. These have proven useful, if only to confirm that point. The second type of source comes not from commentators but from first person participants. "Dinner is Served" is a premier example. Written (well, co-written) by a butler with over fifty years of real world experience in service, this book gives you the information from a different perspective! For those interested in delving into this topic, I'd classify this as a "must read." On the good side, the authors have included a bibliography and a nice Glossary of Terms (although sadly no index). On the bad side, the illustrations are incomplete, not always relevant, and occasionally incorrect (I blame the publishers for this), so I would not rely on them as authoritative. Fans of Downton Abbey (which must be given credit for a resurgence in interest in this topic) should go back and watch again Gosford Park (on which Arthur Inch served as a technical advisor) and especially the extra features on the DVD, for a look at the author's work in action. I'm glad to own this book, but do not recommend that you rely on it as your sole authoritative source on the topic. In a similar vein I can also recommend "The Butler's Guide to Running the Home and Other Graces" by Stanley Ager and Fiona St. Aubyn and "A Butler's Guide to Table Manners" by Nicholas Clayton.

First off, I'm going to say that I don't necessarily disagree with what the other reviewers had to say. It is a light book and might be considered more historical than instructional. However, I borrowed the book from the library so I guess I'm not as sour about 'crushed expectations.' I do feel like what the book offers is offered well. I have some kind of idea about the "gracious living" Inch describes throughout the book. I also learnt some practical things that I can choose to apply. Given that this book is sold for such a cheap price (there's at least one listing for four dollars shipped at the time of

writing), I'd recommend giving it a read if you are interested in the mentioned topics. Admittedly, if you only care about contemporary table etiquette, you can probably find more pertinent books.

This is an invaluable book from a completely successful (consummate professional) English butler Mr. Arthur Inch & co-author Arlene Hirst. It hooked me from the first page on & provided a detailed bibliography for further edification of formal & informal dinning. Easy to read & well illustrated, for a small book, it sets up the steps needed to adhere to in order to continue the civilized dinning pattern of Western culture.

Wonderful short reference for prospective butlers or persons who are recreating Edwardian Dining. Further reading should include Forgotten Elegance, THE guide to flatware and table setting.

Very informative, and interesting information valuable information, it your in the etiquette area, restaurant service or just for information great !

This book is great if you are into your home and entertaining with style and flair. I will refer to it often, I am sure.

A exquisite and necessary manual for any gastronomic critic. Simply amazing.

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