

CHARLES WILLIAM DAY
HINTS ON ETIQUETTE (1836)

Well-bred people arrive as nearly at the appointed dinner hour as they can. It is a very vulgar assumption of importance purposely to arrive half an hour behind time; besides the folly of allowing eight or ten hungry people such a tempting opportunity of discussing your foibles.

The lady of the house will, of course, take the head of the table, and the gentleman of the highest rank will sit at her right *hand*.

At family dinners, where the common household bread is used, it should never be cut less than an inch and a half thick. There is nothing more plebeian than thin bread at dinner.

Never use your knife to convey your food to your mouth, under any circumstances; it is unnecessary, and glaringly vulgar. Feed yourself with a fork or spoon, nothing else, —a knife is only to be used for cutting

If at dinner you are requested to help any one to sauce, do not pour it over the meat or vegetables, but on one side.

Making a noise in chewing, or breathing hard in eating, are both unseemly habits, and ought to be eschewed.

Many people make a disgusting noise with their lips, by inhaling their breath strongly whilst taking soup—a habit which should be carefully avoided.

It is considered extremely piggish to have an overloaded plate, piled up with an heterogeneous mass of edibles.

Do not pick your teeth much at table, as, however, satisfactory a practice to yourself, to witness it is not at all pleasant.

The custom of drinking toasts, and of forcing people to drink bumper after bumper of wine, until drunkenness results, is quite banished from *gentlemanly society* to its proper place—the tavern.

Nothing indicates a well-bred man more than a proper mode of eating his dinner.

Taken from Charles William Day, *Hints on Etiquette and the Usages of Society; with a Glance at Bad Habits* (Boston: William D. Ticknor & Co., 1844), 33–34, 40–41, 43–44, 47, 50.