

Finger Foods: 5 Tips for “Eating-on-your-feet” Events

By Rachel Wagner, August 2008

Finger foods are often a dreaded dilemma at cocktail receptions and business socials. You know the ritual. You try to meet and greet with charm and ease while delicately balancing your hors d'oeuvre plate, beverage and napkin without mishap.

It is possible to look polished and graceful while finessing cocktail food. Here are 5 tips for “eating on your feet” with poise:

- 1. Eat, then drink.** It is doable, yet tricky, to hold both a small plate and beverage together in your left hand at one time. A better option is to eat first and get a beverage later. Hold the hors d'oeuvre plate in your left hand and eat with the right hand. Then dispose of your plate and get a beverage. Hold the beverage in your left hand. This method keeps your right hand available for shaking at a moment's notice and your palm won't be wet or sticky.
- 2. Don't hover over the food table.** After serving yourself, move away from the food table. Eat and mingle in another spot. You are less likely to double dip (definitely a faux pas!), and other attendees can move through the buffet area sans congestion.
- 3. Avoid hard-to-eat finger foods.** Forget the barbecued wings. Choose items that aren't messy or sticky. Select things that require only one or two bites. Remember the food is usually meant to be hors d'oeuvres, not a large meal. Take a small quantity; never pile your plate.
- 4. Perfect your napkin etiquette.** Hold your napkin under your plate. After each bite, wipe your fingers on the napkin. Anything offered on a tray by wait staff is to be picked up with a napkin and popped in your mouth or put on your cocktail plate.
- 5. Don't put used plates back on the serving table.** Look for empty tables meant for plate and glassware disposal.

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