Translate That Menu

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That Menu
by Joanne Ryals
Textiles and Clothing Junior

A N INVITATION TO DINNER—and not at someone's home this time, but at a plushy restaurant! And with a date! It is every woman's dream to be able to face the menu like a woman of the world. Here's how to banish bewilderment with savoir-faire.

Let's straighten out the two types of menus. You'll be presented with a table d'hote or a la carte menu, or both, or a variation of one or the other.

More than often is the case that the restaurant serves table d'hote menus as well as a la carte. Whatever the case choose table d'hote. Big exception is if you aren't hungry enough to eat a full meal and the bill would be smaller with an a la carte item or two.

Table d'hote

This translates from French to American as "table of the host" and means that a complete or almost complete meal is offered at a set price.

After you have chosen an appetizer (if included in the price of the entree) and the main dish, select the vegetables—which are often a choice of two or one cooked plus a salad. Sometimes the salad is a separate course and a choice is offered.

You may order a beverage with your main course, or, more commonly, with dessert. Again you order dessert separately at the end of the main course. Maybe by now the honey dew melon sounds better than the fluffy meringue pastry.

A La Carte

In simple words this means according to the card. Be careful when ordering a la carte, and don't get carried away with the separate items and their separate prices. Just remember that a la carte servings are much larger than on the table d'hote listings. On the other hand, don't order eclairs and coffee with an air of martyrdom when he's invited you out for dinner.

So always play safe by deciding on just a few dishes—an entree, dessert and beverage; or soup, salad, dessert and beverage; or entree, salad and beverage.

If your host has had lots of experience in "dining out," he may mention some particular dish or food that happens to be famous at this particular restaurant. You may agree or sweetly veto his suggestion and order something else. To do this ordering correctly, you give your a la carte order to your host who relays the message to the waiter. Don't worry about the fact that the waiter probably heard you the first time!

Plan a Buffet

vegetable, salad or relishes, bread, dessert and beverage are the basis of your plans. Here's a menu to start you thinking:

- Club Chicken Casserole
- Cranberry-jelly Hearts
- Buttered Peas and Mushrooms
- Relish Tray
- Poppy-seed Rolls
- Strawberry Shortcake
- Coffee

Your choice of dessert depends upon your method of serving it. You may have it on the table with the rest of the food, serve the dessert individually after the main course or have everyone return to the serving table after the main course has been cleared. For after-dinner munching, serve nuts and candy hearts.

A few games will add to the fun. For the "Honeymoon Race" couples compete against the clock. The girls are given red crepe paper neckties and the men red and white aprons and two large cardboard hearts.

When the signal is given, the girl ties her necktie windsor fashion around his neck and he ties the apron around her waist. When both are dressed for their honeymoon, the gentleman escorts his bride to the other end of the room, but to save her dainty feet, he moves the heart ahead one at a time and the girl steps on them. At the finish line, the bride removes her husband's tie, and the groom the girl's apron.

Almost any game, from relays to charades, can be given a Valentine's twist. Probably you'll want to do some dancing, too.

Make careful plans and everyone, especially each hostess, will have a good time. For best results, why not keep the informal buffet a surprise from your dates? They'll be sure to be pleased with this special evening.

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