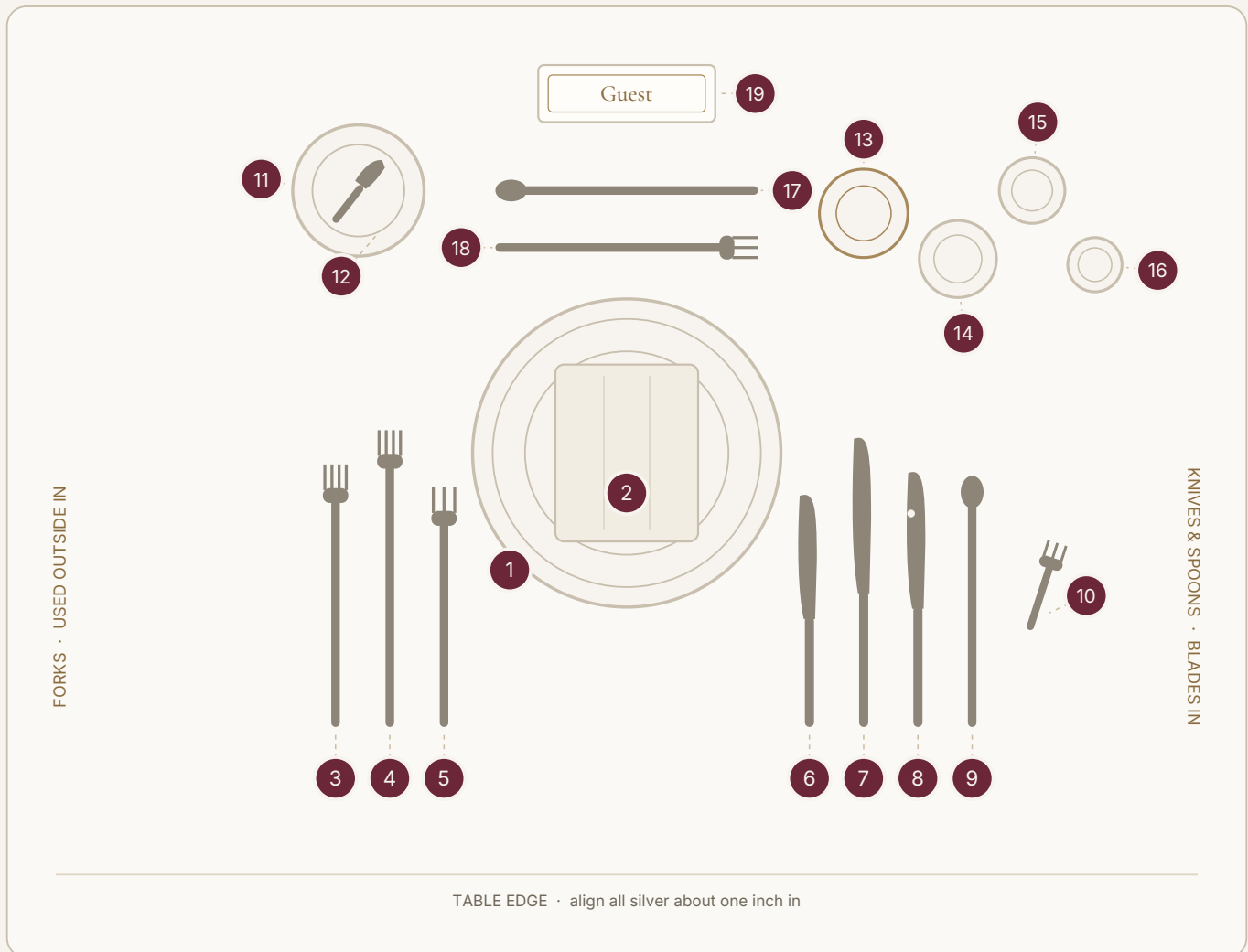


The Formal Place Setting

Laid for the classic six-course order: shellfish, soup, fish, entrée, salad, dessert. Numbers match the legend below and the interactive diagram online.



LEGEND

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Service plate (charger) | 8 Fish knife | 15 White wine glass |
| 2 Napkin | 9 Soup spoon | 16 Champagne flute |
| 3 Fish fork | 10 Oyster fork | 17 Dessert spoon |
| 4 Dinner fork | 11 Butter plate | 18 Dessert fork |
| 5 Salad fork | 12 Butter knife | 19 Place card |
| 6 Salad knife | 13 Water goblet | |
| 7 Dinner knife | 14 Red wine glass | |

Key Positioning Tips

Eight rules that govern every formal table, and the three questions that get a guest through a setting they did not lay.

- 1 **Outside in, in course order**
A formal setting is laid so the implement furthest from the plate is used first. Work inward, one course at a time. If you remember nothing else, remember this — it answers almost every question a guest has.
- 2 **Forks left, knives and spoons right**
The only fork ever laid to the right of the plate is the oyster fork (10), which rests in or beside the bowl of the soup spoon. It is the single exception to every other rule on this page.
- 3 **Knife blades always face the plate**
At every level of formality, without exception. A turned-out blade once read as a threat to the neighbour on your right; the convention survives because it signals consideration.
- 4 **Never more than three of any implement**
Three forks, three knives, and no more. When a fourth course precedes dessert, its utensils are brought in with the food rather than laid in advance.
- 5 **Bread left, drinks right**
The butter plate (11) sits above and slightly left of the forks; all glassware sits to the right, above the knives. This one phrase resolves nearly every crowded table.
- 6 **The water goblet anchors the glassware**
Set it directly above the tip of the dinner knife (7), then arrange the wine glasses to its right in the order they will be poured. Each glass is removed as its course is cleared.
- 7 **Nothing is laid that will not be used**
A spoon with no soup and no dessert is a mistake, not a flourish. Dessert utensils (17, 18) may be laid above the plate in a strictly traditional setting, or brought in with the dessert plate — both are correct.
- 8 **An inch from the edge, and symmetrical**
Align every piece of silver the same distance from the table edge — about an inch. Centrepiece dead centre, an even number of candlesticks, and nothing at eye level between guests seated opposite.

READING A SETTING YOU DIDN'T LAY

1. **What is furthest out?**
That is what you use next. Nothing else needs identifying.
2. **Which bread plate is mine?**
The one on your left. Glasses on your right.
3. **What is the host doing?**
When a setting is ambiguous or wrongly laid, follow the host. Matching the table beats being technically right at it.

WHAT YOUR CUTLERY SAYS

Resting

Continental: knife and fork crossed on the plate, tines down, blade turned in. American: knife at the top edge of the plate, fork beside it, tines up. Either way, the plate stays.

Finished

Knife and fork side by side, handles at roughly four o'clock, blade turned in, tines down (continental) or up (American). The plate may be cleared.

A diagram tells you where the fish knife goes. The rest is judgment.

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