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So what DO you do with that olive pit?

I know the holidays are right around the corner, based on the questions that are coming in from readers and clients.

Business meals and business events, whether a small and intimate or an elaborate networking event, are an opportunity to showcase not only your business acumen but also your social skills and dining etiquette know-how.

Those who are comfortable in all three areas can have a significant advantage over those who are not.

Here are some tips to help you capitalize on the opportunity to promote your overall business and social savvy:

What is the best way to eat an olive? Remove the olive from the serving tray and eat with your fingers. Larger olives with a pit are eaten in a few bites and then the pit is placed on the side of your cocktail plate. If you are not using a cocktail plate, the pit can be placed in a napkin or in any small dish that is designated for used toothpicks.

If you are attending a sit-down dinner and find olives in any part of your meal, the fork can be used to take the pit from your mouth. You can use your tongue to push the pit onto the fork and then place the olive on the side of your plate or onto your bread plate. I find that removing small, hard objects from my mouth in this manner can be a bit tricky, and there is high probability for error. I prefer to remove the pit with my thumb and forefinger.

What do you do if you are a fast eater and finish before the others? When attending a sit-down business meal, I recommend you try to follow the pace of the group. If you notice you're eating too slowly, it might be an indication that you are monopolizing the conversation. This would be a good time to ask a question or two and redirect the conversation to the others.

But should you be the one who has wolfed down your food while others are eating at a slower pace, this could be an indication that you are not participating or interested in the discussion or the event. That can send a message that you are self-indulgent.

Remember that eating and drinking at any business gathering is secondary to the connections you make and the opportunity to mix and mingle with colleagues who can aid in your success. Use this opportunity to your advantage and showcase your business acumen.

Jill Haney, founder of JH Image Consulting, is a certified image consultant. Reach her at 513-505-2732, jill@jhimage.net or www.jhimage.net.
