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Passover Etiquette: Observing Seder

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Passover Etiquette: Observing Seder



Mazel tov– you’ve received an invitation to your friend’s Seder celebration! If you’re like most people attending their first Seder, you have a etiquette questions about how to dress, what to do, and what to expect at this sacred meal shared among friends and family. In honor of Passover which falls, between April 10-18

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this year, we're sharing eight insights for first-time Seder guests to navigate this ritual meal and embrace

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SHARON SCHWEITZER, J.D.

1. **RSVP in Advance:** Respond within 24 hours of receiving your Seder invitation so that the host may prepare for the correct number of guests. Seder dinner is complex, requiring much preparation and planning. A quick RSVP demonstrates your appreciation and respect for this special religious tradition. Remember that a traditional Seder can last several hours, so plan ahead and schedule

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an *overnight* babysitter for the occasion.

2. **Seder Research:** Before attending your first Seder, it's a good idea to [familiarize yourself](#) with the order of the meal, the rituals, and expectations for guests. Although a gracious host will guide guests through each course, it's helpful to know the basics of breaking matzah and when to wash your hands.
3. **Dressing for Dinner:** When attending Seder, dress elegantly and modestly in conservative silhouettes and subdued colors. A knee-length dress with a cardigan or a skirt and blouse for women, and slacks, a button up, and jacket for men are appropriate depending on location. If you're still unsure of attire, ask the host or a family member.
4. **Kosher Hostess Gift:** Always bring a small gift to express appreciation for their hospitality – make sure it is Refrain from offering any gift with yeast or wheat, or any food prepared in dishes or with utensils used for unleavened food. A fruit tray, kosher wine, pre-arranged flowers, or a Passover book are culturally appropriate.
5. **Before Arriving:** Have a small bite of protein before you arrive, as Seder kicks off with a litany of prayers and blessings before the main dishes are served. It may be a while before dining actually begins. Noshing on a protein bar or a small chicken breast at home or work, before departing for the Seder, will tide you over so you may enjoy the holiday traditions without impatience and hunger cravings.
6. **Follow the Leader:** Typically there will be a leader, possibly the host or hostess, who leads the table in the prayers, blessings, and rituals of Seder. The [Haggadah](#), a Jewish booklet that describes the order of Seder, with food descriptions, and the Exodus story is used. If you're unsure of what to do, look to the host as a guide.
7. **Remember Mealtime Manners:** Many of the foods served at Seder, such as [charoset](#), [challah](#), and bitter herbs, are deeply symbolic and key elements of this 2,000-year old tradition. Be polite, adventurous, and take at least one bite of each food served. You may be surprised by dishes you

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like! Keep an open mind and show appreciation for the host's preparations.

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8. Embracing Interculturalism: Attending your first Seder

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offers a unique chance to learn more about the historically

rich tradition of Passover that has united the Jewish people for over two thousand years. Come ready to learn

and politely ask questions about rituals. Your host will appreciate the chance to share insight about their beliefs

and culture. Embrace the opportunity to expand your knowledge of global traditions and share a food-laden,

tradition-rich Seder with friends.

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Sharon Schweitzer and Amanda Alden co-wrote this post. [Sharon Schweitzer, J.D.](#), is a cross-cultural trainer, modern manners expert, and the founder of Protocol & Etiquette Worldwide. In addition to her accreditation in intercultural management from the HOFSTEDE centre, she serves as a Chinese Ceremonial Dining Etiquette Specialist in the documentary series [Confucius was a Foodie](#), on [Nat Geo People](#). She is the resident etiquette expert on two popular lifestyle shows: [ABC Tampa Bay's Morning Blend](#) and [CBS Austin's We Are Austin](#). She is regularly quoted by [BBC Capital](#), [Investor's Business Daily](#), [Fortune](#), and the [National Business Journals](#). Her Amazon #1 Best Selling book in International Business, [Access to Asia: Your Multicultural Business Guide](#), now in its third printing, was named to [Kirkus Reviews' Best Books of 2015](#). She's a winner of the [British Airways International Trade Award](#) at the 2016 [Greater Austin Business Awards](#).

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