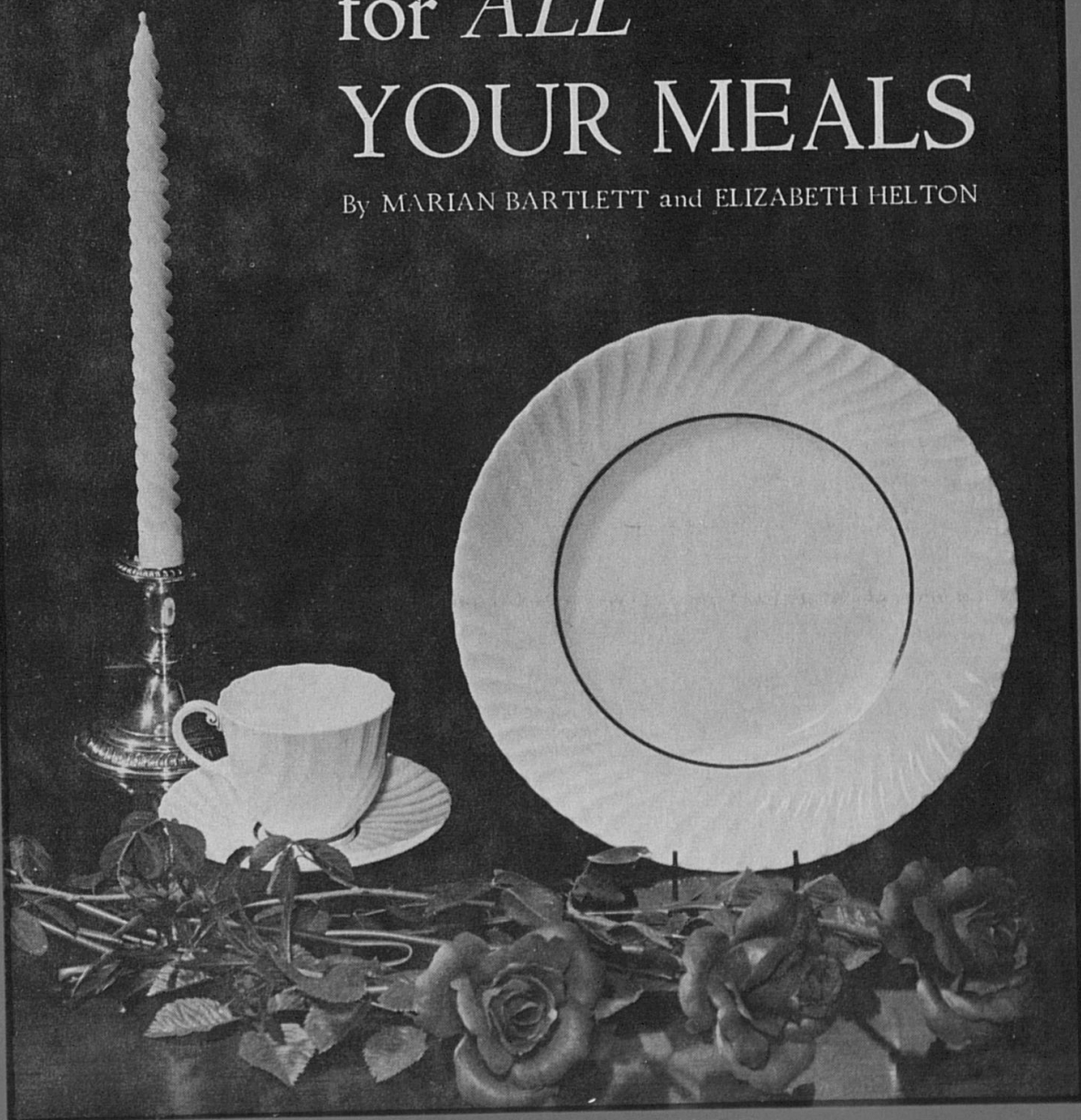


# ATTRACTIVE TABLES for *ALL* YOUR MEALS

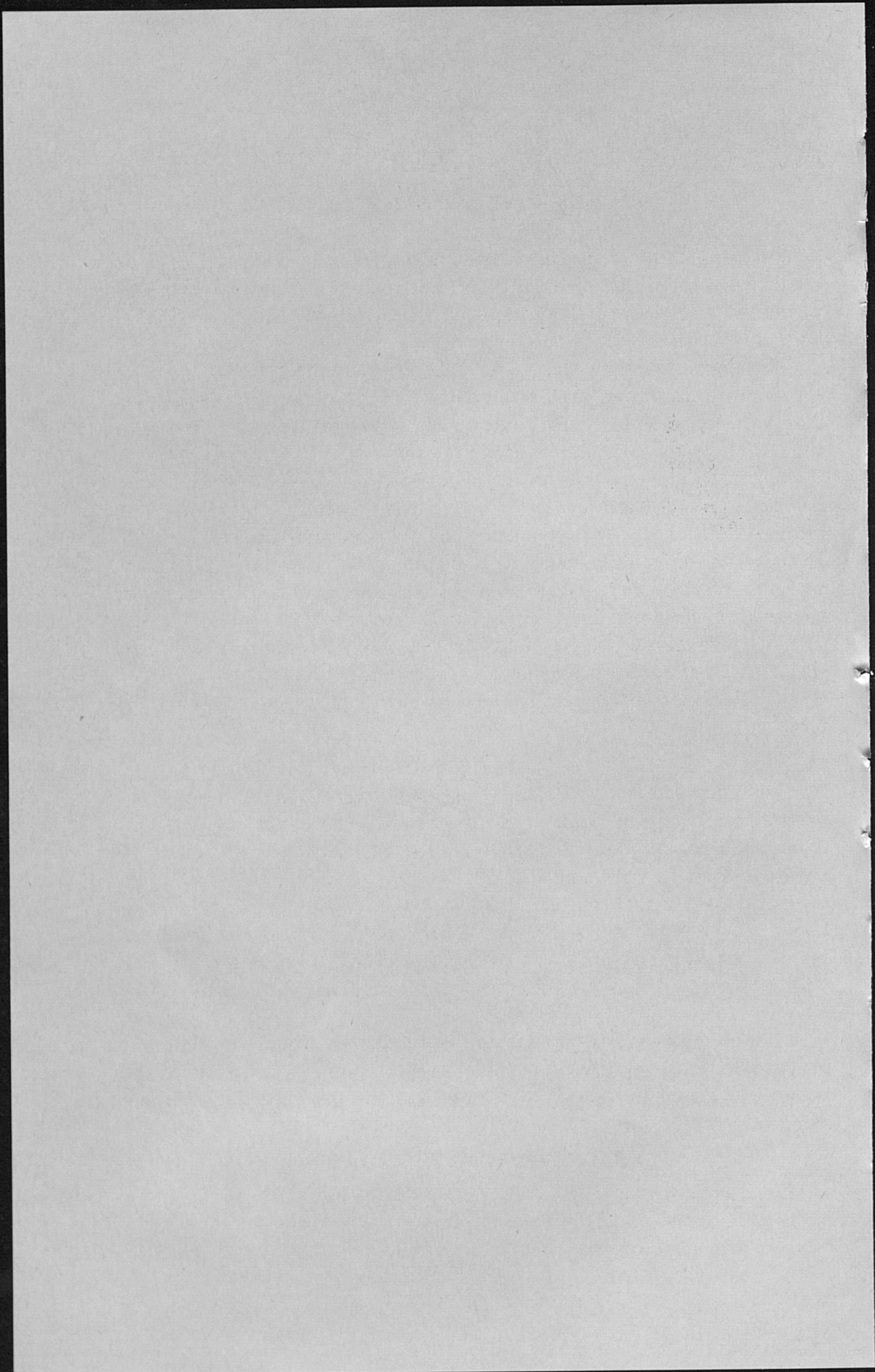
By MARIAN BARTLETT and ELIZABETH HELTON



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**UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE  
AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS**





# Attractive Tables for All Your Meals

By MARIAN BARTLETT and ELIZABETH HELTON

Gracious living depends on good food, friendly company, and an attractively set table. A beautiful table with fresh linens; correctly placed silver, glassware, and china; and an interesting centerpiece adds to the enjoyment of the meal.

The eating area in the home may be the kitchen, living room, separate dining room, or the family room. Any one of these can be made attractive and cheerful, but the table should be in keeping with the room. Fine china and candlelight do not fit in the kitchen.

Your table reveals your personality, imagination, feeling for colors, balance, and style preference. Casual living is the pattern for many families today. However, casualness should never become carelessness. Every woman would like to feel that everything on her table goes well together. A well-coordinated table results from the selection of things that blend and give the feeling of unity.

You have learned how to make livable rooms by making the walls, the floors, and the furniture go together. On your table you can use these guides for color, pattern, and texture to achieve a harmonious table.

## COLOR

Color surrounds you indoors and out. Your table setting is no exception. It may be colorful, or an attractive table may be set with china and linen of white and cream colors. The setting should conform with the room in color and mood.

Gay-colored mats may be used with plain china. Colorful china, however, will look its best with plain-colored mats. If dishes have several colors, plan your mats or cloth, flowers, and candles so they will accent the dishes either by repeating a color or using a complementary color.

Colored glassware is popular and can make an attractive table, but be sure it does not give the table a spotted look. How does the beverage look in the glass? Beverages can be unappetizing in some colored glasses.

## PATTERN AND TEXTURE

Table coverings are your backgrounds for the rest of the table setting. Texture and pattern are important in the backgrounds. Wide choices are available today. You can select fine linens for formal



**Fig. 1.— A pretty breakfast setting (informal).**

tables down to bamboo or plastic mats for the informal table. Whatever your choice for the covering, it will set the stage for the rest of the table setting.

Casual tables call for heavier fabric. Coarser weave table coverings such as burlap or bamboo give the feeling of informality (Fig. 1).

Formal tables call for more elegant, finer-textured tablecloths such as damask, lace cloths, or organdy mats (Fig. 2).

The entire color scheme will be set by the background. Lovely colors are available in every kind of mat or cloth. The background should harmonize with your china, and the color should be chosen from the china if patterned.

Pattern in the background will influence the glassware, china, and flatware used. When the background is patterned, plainer china, glass, and silverware will be best. Too much pattern creates confusion.

### **HELPFUL POINTS FOR TABLE COMBINATIONS**

1. Use plain- or simple-patterned table coverings with plain dishes. Either china or the table covering can have color. The centerpiece can be the accent. This is one of the safest combinations (Fig. 1).



2. Include one plain element in a setting. Too much pattern is confusing and disturbing. If the silver and china are decorated, a plain goblet or glass supplies the needed note of simplicity. The table covering, too, should be plain if patterned dishes are used (Fig. 3).

3. Designs and patterns in the same mood go best together. Informal stainless steel flatware needs the same informality in china and glassware (Fig. 1). Formal settings suggest dignity and elegance. Elaborately decorated silver, china, and glassware fall into the formal class. If there is color in the china, the tones should be soft and subdued. They are rarely vivid. Look for thinness in formal china and glassware (Fig. 2). Informal settings suggest gay, less elaborate patterns. One-sided motifs may be on casual silver and china. Both china and glasses will probably have a sturdier, thicker look. The colors may be brighter and sharper. Some informal glass is even massive. Avoid mixing the delicateness of fine china with the heaviness of the more casual china. Size and daintiness of pattern should be in harmony too (Fig. 4).



Fig. 2.— Formal table setting.



Fig. 3.— Informal setting using plain and figured patterns.

4. A pattern may be repeated, but not too often. The same pattern could be used on china and glassware; however, if it is used on silverware too, it becomes monotonous.

5. Confusion is created when very decorative china and ornamented silver and goblet are placed on a patterned cloth. You may achieve contrast with plain china and plain backgrounds by using variety in color. A cluttered appearance results from a crowded table (Fig. 5).

### TABLE DECORATIONS

The finishing touch, carefully selected such as flowers and/or candles, adds much to the appearance of a table. Something may be added for each meal. It does not need to be elaborate. In the spring, summer, and fall, flowers are available. Fruits, vegetables, gourds, and cuttings from some of the shrubs are good for months in which flowers are scarce. *One caution:* do not use them when they become dusty and dirty.

For floral centerpieces, follow the principles of flower arrangement. (Your county extension office has information on flower ar-

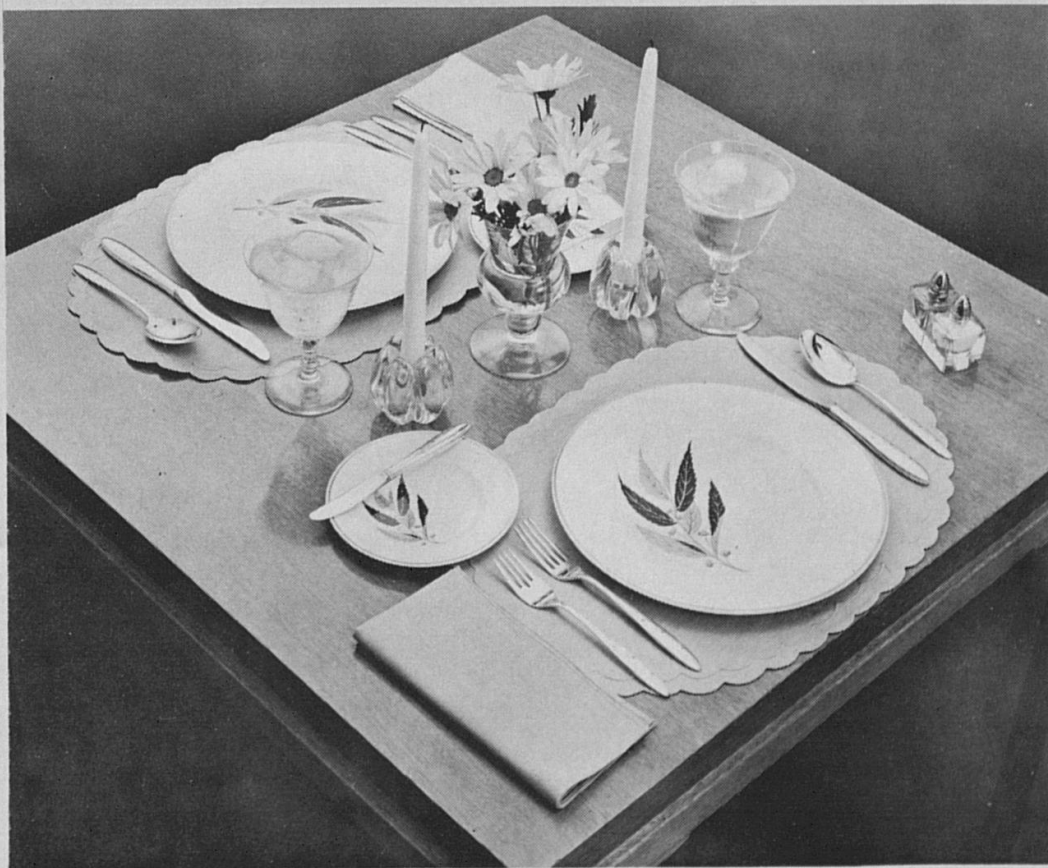


rangements.) Use colors that add to the colors of the china and table coverings. By selecting a color from the china and carrying it into the centerpiece, an attractive color combination can be achieved. White linen and china make it possible to use flowers or a centerpiece of almost any color.

Most table decorations are seen from all sides and should be equally attractive from all angles.

The rules for table decorations are simple. The arrangement should be low enough so people can see each other across the table and engage in conversation. The line of length rather than height is good for the table. The centerpiece should never occupy more than one-third of the table space in length and width. Follow basic principles of flower arrangement: harmonious colors, a point of interest, and simple forms such as horizontal, round, or triangular.

The container for flowers should be in keeping with the style of your china, silver, glass, and linen. Do not use a silver container with heavy pottery dishes and bamboo mats. And, of course, a flower container made of heavy pottery would be just as out of place with fine china, thin goblets, and a fine damask tablecloth.



**Fig. 4.— Informal setting.**

(Photo—Gorham Company)



**Fig. 5.—** Patterned place mats, plain dishes and silver.

The flowers used for a centerpiece should also match the mood of the table settings. Pretty, frilly flowers are good for a tea table, a basket of bright fruit for a breakfast table, and gourds for a picnic table.

#### **Use of Candles**

Candles are often a part of the table decoration. The light of the candles should be above eye level so the flames will not disturb people when seated. Candles should always be lighted to be cheerful and serve their purpose.

For simple tables, candlesticks with candles are more in keeping. Candelabra are used on more formal, elegant tables. The height of candles should be watched so they will be in proportion with the table and its setting.

White candles are usually used for formal dinners. For other occasions candles may be used in colors which repeat a color in the china or match or contrast with the color in the linens.

Candlesticks are available in pewter, sterling, silverplate, glass, pottery, brass, wrought iron, and others. They should be in keeping with the rest of the table settings.



## How Do You Get a Beautiful Table?

Beautiful tables are put together; they don't just happen. They are the result of:

1. *Simplicity* with an uncluttered look. The table needs to be adequate for the meal, but unnecessary articles on the table cause confusion.

2. *Color* should be used for an attractive table, but used with restraint. Not more than two colors should dominate a table.

3. *Decorations* such as flowers should be chosen wisely. They should accent color, be in keeping with the table settings, and be the center of interest.

4. *Balance* depends upon the placement of appointments and color accents so that a sense of equality is created. No part of the setting should look too heavy nor too light.

5. *Appropriateness* means the correct setting for the occasion—a setting suited for your way of serving whether it is formal or informal.



Fig. 6.— A formal dessert table with flowers and candles in keeping with the setting.



**Fig. 7.— Semi-formal table setting.**

6. *The correct setting* is all the table appointments arranged according to the basic rules for each type of meal from family breakfasts to formal dinners.

### **COVERINGS FOR YOUR TABLE**

“Table linen” is a term used in referring to any table covering. Today they are made of linen, rayon, cotton, plastic-coated fabric, cork, or paper.

The table covering is the background for china, glassware, and silver; consequently, it should be appropriately combined with them. There is a wide choice in color and texture. A change of place mats or tablecloth can change the entire appearance of the table.

#### **Buying Table Coverings**

The table covering should be harmonious with the silver, china, and glassware.

Fiber content is important. This will make a difference in the price and the wear and care. It is advisable to follow all the instructions for care.



How well are the mats and cloth made? The hems should be even with short, even, straight stitches. Handstitched hems are more attractive than machine-stitched ones. Hemstitched hems are not so serviceable as plain hems.

Check the sizing. This is a substance put into the cloth to give it body. Most cloths have some but if there is too much, it will wash out and the cloth will then become flimsy. Firmness should not depend on sizing.

To determine if there is too much sizing, rub the folds of the cloth together. If there is a change in the firmness, there is too much sizing.

When buying table coverings, consider fiber content, colorfastness, ease of care, quality of workmanship, and size.

Buy the correct size for your table. The tablecloth should be 12 to 15 inches larger than the table on all sides. Place mats are usually 18 inches in length and 14 inches wide, and are large enough to accommodate a complete place setting. Dinner napkins are 22 to 24 inches square. Luncheon and breakfast napkins vary from 15 to 18 inches square. Tea napkins are 12 inches square.

Good linen wears well and retains a good appearance year after year. Good linen looks better with continued washing. Rub the folds of the cloth together to see if there is sizing. A small amount of sizing will help keep the cloth clean.

The best quality of linens are woven with long, uniform flax fibers which makes the strongest, most even, lustrous yarns. The lower quality linens are made of short flax fibers which makes coarse, uneven yarn.

Damask, a form of linen, may be plain or figured. Double damask is heavier than single damask, but will snag more easily. Damask may be bleached or dyed. There is pure white, oyster (slightly bleached), deep cream, and pastel-dyed damasks. The oyster or cream-colored damask will wear better than the pure white damask, cotton, rayon, or plastic.

Cotton, rayon, plastics, and other synthetic fibers are less expensive than good damask. Cotton may be used alone or combined with linen or rayon. It is sometimes given a permanent finish which makes it resemble linen. Organdy and other sheer cottons may be used for cloths and mats.

Most lace cloths are made of cotton. Cotton is also combined with rayon for a soft-textured lace. It is also being made of some of the synthetic fibers such as nylon, dacron, or orlon. The finest laces are made of linen but are also the most expensive.

Plastic-coated fabrics are used a good deal for place mats. They

are made by applying thin plastic coating on fabrics. They look like cloth, but can be wiped off with a damp cloth. These are more attractive than the plastic film.

Silence cloths should be used under cloths when the table has no protective coating.

### Care of Table Coverings

If any repair work on linen is necessary, do it before laundering. Remove any spots before laundering.

Use warm suds and several rinses of clear water. Iron cotton, linen, and rayon while still damp. Your linen will look its best if it is ironed first on the wrong side and then on the right side. Fold as few times as possible. Rolling tablecloths on a cardboard tube is a good way to store large ones. Store them away from heat.

### DINNERWARE FOR YOUR TABLE

Dishes today are made of china, earthenware, or plastic.

1. China or porcelain (similar to china) gives a clear bell-like tone when tapped lightly with the fingernail. China, unless very heavy, is translucent. If a plate is held up to the light, you can see through it. China is non-porous and durable.

2. Earthenware consists of three kinds:

*Semi-vitreous* is not so glossy as china, is fairly durable, and inexpensive. If tapped with the fingernail it will not ring. Semi-vitreous dishes are porous. They are unsanitary when chipped because the dishes will absorb food and dirt.

*Stoneware* is fired earthenware that resists heat. It is sturdy and rustic and often used for kitchenware. Ovenware, which is seen so much today, is stoneware.

*Pottery* is the third kind of earthenware. It usually does not last long, for it tends to break easily.

3. Plastic ware is either very light and flimsy or heavy and durable. The heavy ones will not break if dropped. Knives, however, may scratch plastic dishes. These dishes should be rinsed as soon as possible so they will not stain. They may melt if used for cooking.

### Buying Dinnerware

What points need to be considered when you are choosing a dinnerware pattern? Dinnerware, flatware, and glassware should be thought of together. These are basic and will last a long time. Variation may be obtained in place mats, tablecloths, and centerpieces.



The dinnerware you choose should have a design that you like and that conforms with your home and furnishings. There is dinnerware that goes with modern, traditional, Early American, or Provincial furnishings.

You may find it advisable to have a breakfast set to use for everyday and a set of good china.

Questions you need to ask yourself before selecting dishes are:

Are the shapes of the dishes practical?

Are the dishes easy to handle?

Are the handles on the cups and coffee pot easy to grasp and are they on securely?

Are all the pieces easy to clean?

Check the dishes for defects such as dark spots, warped pieces, and marks on the face of the dish. Is the glaze smooth and uncracked? Hold the plate at an angle to the light; the glaze should reflect light evenly. Ask about the gold decoration. If it is coin gold it should wear well. Luster gold will cost less, but will not wear so well.

How much dinnerware should you buy? Buy dinnerware to suit the size of the family, the amount of entertaining you do, and the storage space you have available. Buy what is needed and then add to it. You can buy patterns in open stock which will allow you to purchase dishes by the piece as they are needed. Open stock means dishes will be on the market from 5 to 10 years, but not indefinitely.

There are "starter" sets which have place settings of four plates, four cups, four saucers, and four bread-and-butter plates. In many of these patterns, pieces may be added as they are needed.

### **Caring for Dinnerware**

To remove food scraps from dishes, a rubber scraper will be helpful. After dishes are scraped, they should be rinsed. Salt, vinegar, and lemon are especially hard on dishes. Wash as soon as possible, using warm water and a mild soap or detergent.

Rinse dishes carefully, dry with a lint-free towel, and avoid extremes in water temperature.

Store carefully with the least amount of stacking possible. Cups should be placed individually.

### **GLASSWARE FOR YOUR TABLE**

Glassware plays an important part in today's attractive table settings. Glass may be pressed, blown, or cut. Pressed glass is heavy, inexpensive, and good for informal use. Blown glass is normally

selected for general use. Cut glass reflects light beautifully, and is more formal.

The glass pattern you select should be in harmony with the china, linen, silver, and dining room furnishings.

If your silver and china patterns are highly decorative, choose a simple crystal pattern.

If the silver and china patterns are simple, then the crystal can be decorative. It is best to avoid the monotony of an exact match. You should aim for a harmonious table setting that will last many years.

Tall-stemmed glasses go with formal settings. A serviceable, plain pattern is good for informal occasions.

### **Buying Glassware**

1. Examine the shape and symmetry. The bowls, stem, and base should be well balanced. Pattern should follow the shape of the glass.

2. Look for clarity and lustre. Good quality glass is sparkling clear and has a lustrous polish.

3. Listen to the ring. Good crystal has a clear ring when tapped with the fingernail. Hold by the stem or at the base of the glass.

4. Feel the edges for smoothness. Fine glassware has no scratchy or bumpy edges.

5. Select from open stock. Broken pieces can then be replaced easily.

### **Care of Glassware**

Follow the same procedures given for dinnerware. The water used for washing and rinsing should be neither too hot nor too cold. In storing, avoid stacking or allowing rims to touch.

If a dishwasher is used, follow the instructions for handling dishes, glassware, and flatware that come with the machine.

## **FLATWARE FOR YOUR TABLE**

Flatware refers to knives, forks, spoons, and serving implements. It comes in sets, place settings, or it can be purchased in open stock. If a couple is just starting out, they may want to buy two place settings and add to it as they can.

A six-piece setting consists of a knife, fork, teaspoon, salad fork, butter spreader and soup spoon. A four-piece setting includes a knife, fork, teaspoon, and salad fork. The two sizes of knives and forks are luncheon and dinner size.



Flatware, available in several patterns, comes in silver, silver plate, stainless steel, and dirilite (an alloy, gold in color). Flatware made of solid metal should never wear out, because no matter how far down the metal wears the surface always looks the same.

Silver plate is made of base metal and then plated with silver. The best silver plate has many of the advantages of sterling, but is less expensive.

The quality of silver plate depends on:

1. How the base metal is finished before it is plated.
2. How well the plating is reinforced. Quality depends a great deal on the amount of silver used. The quality of silver starts at the lowest grade which is A-I Plate through A-I Plus Plate, Double A-A

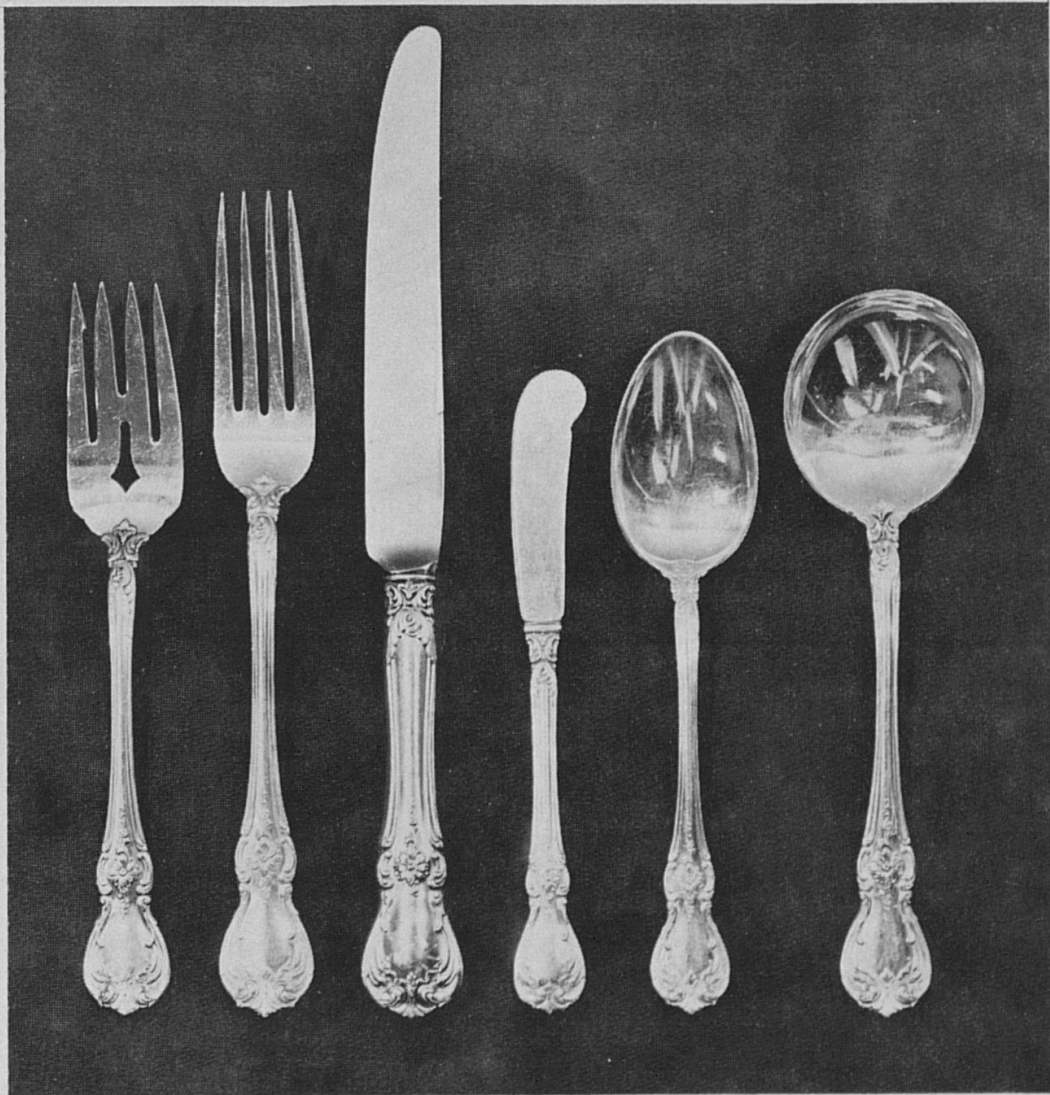


Fig. 8.— Six-piece place setting.

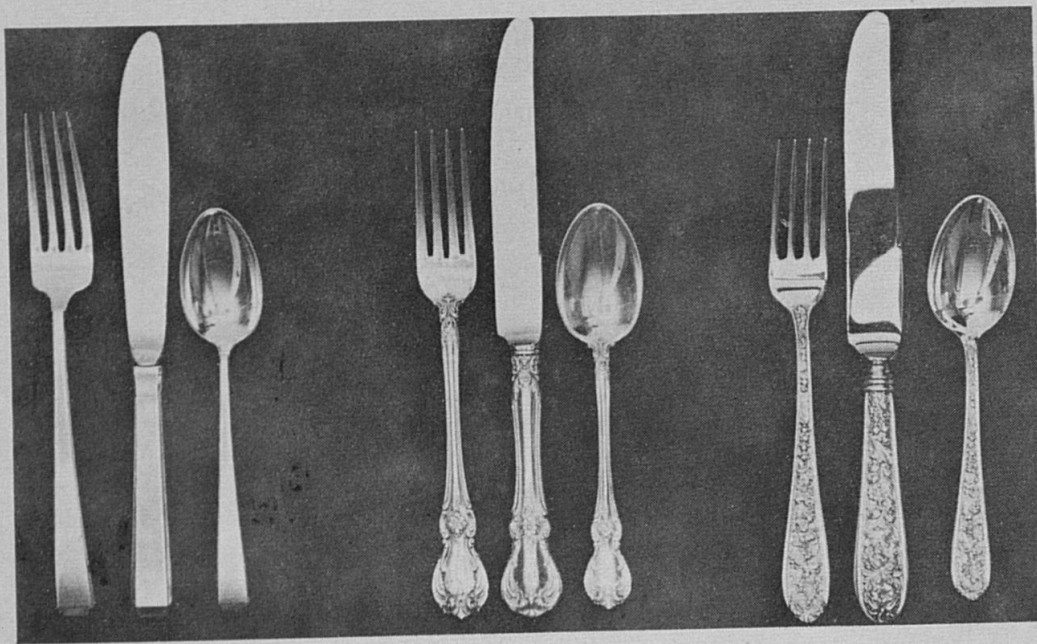


Fig. 9.— Plain, semi-ornate, and ornate silver.

Plate, A-A Plus Plate, Double Plate XX, Triple Plate (seldom used), to the best quality which is Quad Plate.

Stainless steel is used a great deal for everyday family use because it will not tarnish, and it is durable. It is usually quite simple in design.

Flatware should be chosen to harmonize with the rest of the table settings. Silver may be ornate, semi-ornate, or plain. Ornate patterns are more formal and require more elaborate table arrangements.

The semi-ornate and plain patterns go with more things and allow a wider variety of table setting combinations. The perfectly plain silver will show scratches more than the others. The small scratches seen on sterling do not harm it. These fine lines blend and give a soft, aged appearance called "patina."

### Buying Flatware

1. Buy a pattern that will combine with your china and crystal. It should be a pattern that you will like years from now as well as you do now. The pattern selected should please your husband, and fit the type of life you lead.

2. Study flatware by place settings rather than by separate pieces.

3. Judge the silver for:

*Balance.* The relationship of the figures and spaces in the design should be good. The handle should be in pleasing proportion to the rest of the knife, fork, or spoon.



*Rhythm.* The figure in the design should be repeated in a way that is pleasing to the eye.

*Harmony.* Each part of the design should complement each other part.

*Unity.* A feeling that the design is a whole, rather than a series of things.

### **Care of Flatware**

Silver flatware will be better if used fairly regularly. It will not tarnish as rapidly if used daily. Flatware should be washed as soon as possible after a meal. Don't leave it unwashed overnight if possible. Wash in hot, soapy water. Rinse and dry carefully.

Silver should be carefully put away. It should be kept in an anti-tarnish silver chest, a lined drawer, or in soft, treated-fabric rolls. Treated cloth can be bought by the yard. Salt should not be left in sterling shakers.

Hollowwear, which includes all metal pieces not classified as flatware, can be kept in covers made from nontarnishing cloth, and ordinary amounts of tarnish can be removed by using a fine cream or liquid polish. Dip-type cleaners are not recommended. Use a soft cloth and a lengthwise motion when applying the polish. After the silver is polished, it should be washed, rinsed, and dried.

### **SETTING THE TABLE**

The rules for setting the table are based on convenience and commonsense. These rules contribute to a neat, orderly appearance of the table. A correctly set table requires no more time than does the table prepared with little regard for accepted rules.

#### **Basic Rules for Setting the Table**

1. Spread a silence cloth of felt or heavy cotton material under the tablecloth. This protects the table, helps prevent noise, and gives a smooth appearance to the tablecloth.

2. The tablecloth should be placed with the center fold on a straight line through the center of the table with a drop of equal length on all sides of 12 to 15 inches. Place mats should be arranged so that the threads are parallel to the edge of the table. Mats should not be placed diagonally on the table.

3. The table decoration is usually placed in the center of the table, but it may be placed at the end (Fig. 2). It should be low and not crowd the table. The decoration for a buffet meal may be taller and placed at the back or end of the table.

4. A "cover" consists of the china, glasses, silver, and napkin for each person. Twenty to 24 inches should be allowed between the center of one plate and the center of the next plate.

5. Plates and silver should be placed 1 inch from the edge of the table.

6. Place the knife at the right of the plate with the cutting edge toward the plate.

7. Place the spoons, with bowls facing up, at the right of the knife.

8. Forks are placed at the left of the plate with the tines up.

9. Silver is arranged in the order it is to be used, from the outside in. This generally accepted rule of arranging silver, so that the first piece you use is farthest from the plate, puts you at ease in knowing which spoon or fork to use first. For example, if salad is the first course, the luncheon fork is placed farthest from the plate (Fig. 4). In formal settings, the smaller fork is placed next to the plate and used as the dessert fork (Fig. 2).

10. Place the butter spreader across the upper right-hand side of the bread-and-butter plate. The blade is turned toward the center of the plate. It may be parallel to the edge of the table or to the other silver. The bread-and-butter plate is placed at the tip of the forks.

11. The salad plate is placed a little to the left of the tip of the fork and to the left of the bread-and-butter plate.

12. The water glass is placed above the point of the knife. Other glasses are placed slightly to the right of the water glass at the tip of the spoon.

13. Salt and pepper sets are placed between each two covers in line with the glasses, or individual sets are placed above the center of each plate.

14. The napkin is placed at the left of the fork. The hem should be parallel to the edge of the table and the forks, so that the lower open corner is nearest the plate (Figs. 2 and 10). The napkin may be on the service plate for formal occasions.

15. The host and hostess are usually seated at the ends of the table. If guests are present, the female guest of honor is seated on the right of the host; the male guest of honor is seated on the right of the hostess.

### **SETTING THE BUFFET TABLE**

The buffet meal is a gracious and easy way to serve more guests than can be seated at the dining table. The buffet is a popular form



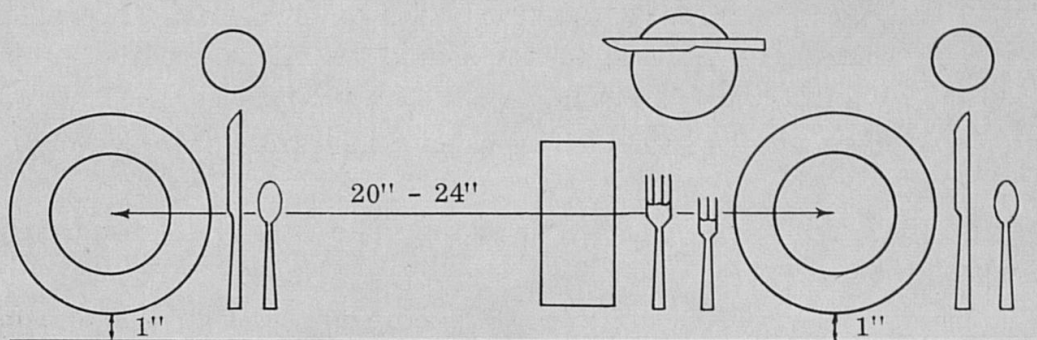


Fig. 10.— Diagram for setting a table.

of entertaining in small apartments as well as in spacious homes. The success of the buffet meal depends upon careful planning. The arrangement of the food and decorations should present a beautiful picture. The table should not appear crowded. The colors in the decorations and food should harmonize with colors in linens, china, and glassware.

The buffet table may be set in the dining room, on the porch, or in one end of the living room. Small tables may be provided so the guests may carry their served plates to these tables. Sometimes these tables are set with the serving silver; at other times, there are smaller tables or TV trays for convenience if desired.

The buffet table is usually set so guests may pass around the table. However, the table may be placed against the wall. The table decoration should be placed at the back of the table to provide a colorful background for the platters of food.

The buffet table should be arranged for ease of service. The stack of six or eight plates is placed on the left of the main course. The serving silver is placed on the right side of the dishes and platters of food. If a salad fork and spoon are to be used in serving the salad, the spoon is placed on the right and the fork on the left side of the salad bowl or platter.

Guests serve themselves to the food as they pass around the table. The service may be either to the right or left; however, it is easier to move to the left, thus having the right hand nearer the table for ease of service.

The silver, napkins, and beverage should be the last items arranged on the table as they are inconvenient to carry while serving the plate. Should the buffet table appear crowded, the silver, napkins, and beverage may be placed on a table near the buffet.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics: College of Agriculture and Home Economics, University of Kentucky, Lexington, and the United States Department of Agriculture, cooperating. William A. Seay, Director. Issued in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914.

10M-4-63