

Five Tips on Chinese Banquet Etiquette

By Susie Hart

1. The seating arrangement is determined by the host. Always wait to be seated rather than seating yourself.
2. A banquet is an opportunity, a time to get to know your hosts on a personal level, not to discuss serious business issues, so ask about their family, hobbies, children's schooling etc.
3. Do not eat or drink anything (except tea) until the host has delivered the welcoming toast and begins eating. If you are the guest of honor, you should also make a toast a few minutes after everyone has begun eating. Never drink your alcoholic drink alone, if you want to take a sip from it, find someone else at the table that you can toast with and then you can drink.
4. During the meal, your hosts may place food on your plate for you as a sign of respect. Don't feel obliged to finish everything in your plate, and its best to finish the meal with something left in your plate to show that you have eaten so much you can't possibly eat another thing.
5. The host is the only person who can signal that the meal has ended - guests must not leave early. All guests should wait for direction from the host, and then leave in order of importance. The host will first escort the head guest out of the room and others can then follow.

