

# Miss Manners isn't God

*Eating can sometimes be a socially unacceptable activity*

Calvin Jackson

My mother always told me that it was rude to talk with my mouth full and to never chew with my mouth open. Somehow my young mind got these two statements mixed up: don't chew with your mouth full: don't talk with your mouth open. For nearly a week no one in my family could understand just what the hell I was mumbling or why it took me nearly an hour and a half to devour a wheat thin.

As I'm sure you can imagine I was thoroughly ridiculed for this by my 'Family O' Comedians' for quite some time. The plain truth is that I was just trying to be polite. In actuality, I was acting extremely silly and not enjoying it one bit.

Ever since that fateful day I have realized that table manners are more trouble than they are worth, for one often encounters certain situations in which politeness is not achievable, and striving toward it becomes highly inconvenient. Here are a few I've noticed:

**Spaghetti:** If you are a pastafarian as I am, then I'm sure you can relate to the fact that there really is no polite way to eat spaghetti. Three methods are widely used.

'The Twirl'. The person eating simply sticks his fork into a large mound of noodles and begins to rotate the fork until it has accumulated the desired amount of

spaghetti. He neatly shoves the fork, and its contents, into his mouth and enjoys.

Regardless of how good the eater is at fork twirling, there are always some dangling strands that get sauce all over his face. Furthermore, during the actual twirling, sauce often flings off the spaghetti onto your dining companions. That's not very polite.

The second method I'm familiar with is the 'Lift and Slurp.' This is when a person sucks the entire length of each and every strand into his or her mouth. Not only does this look and sound very silly, but as you suck, sauce gets all over your lips, so that by the time you've completed your slurping it looks as if you have sprung a bloody nose. Talk about rude!

The third method is the 'Lift and Chomp.' Spaghetti is lifted to the mouth, and once the eater feels confident that a desirable portion has been placed there, he bites down and lets all the excess spaghetti fall back to the plate. Although this is not as messy as the other two methods, it is not a very pleasant sight. When the chomp has been completed and the spaghetti returned to the dish, it appears as if the person eating has just thrown up. That is, most definitely, not polite.

**Salad:** One requires intense precision and decision-making skills to consume a salad both neatly and politely. I have found it nearly impossible to keep every-

thing on the plate. No matter how careful or watchful I am, there always seems to be a wayward piece of lettuce or a fugitive cucumber behind the plate at the end of the meal.

Another intimidating, ever-present danger is smearing dressing on your face. Since using a knife to eat salad has been deemed

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socially unacceptable, we must devise a way to manipulate into our mouths a lettuce leaf that is five times the size of our head, and thoroughly saturated with thousand island or blue cheese.

Amazing as it may seem, we somehow make it fit by folding, bending, pushing, and strategically stretching our mouths beyond intended capacity. But even the grandest efforts cannot overcome the ultimate nightmare of salad eating, and that is 'The Hunk.'

The Hunk is a piece of lettuce so outrageously huge, it could feed a clan of obese rabbits for three

weeks. It cannot be bent. It cannot be folded. You could try to push it into your mouth, but chances are the fork would punch through the Hunk and jab into the back of your throat. Simply by looking at it you can judge that there is no way that sucker's going to fit in your mouth. Yet the unshakable standards of politeness state that you must clear your plate.

**Meat:** Sometimes meat may be ill-prepared, making it very tough in texture and hard to cut. This results in the need for vigorous and intense cutting procedures. When these procedures are combined with an unsteady table and/or a dull knife, a violent shaking of the table will most likely occur. Before the cutter even knows what is happening, drinks may have spilled, dinners dropped to the floor...etc. Perhaps a burning candle will fall over and catch the whole restaurant on fire.

**Corn On the Cob:** Eating corn off its cob is truly a table manners nightmare. Each bite unleashes an onslaught of greasy butter and lukewarm corn juice. This flood, accompanied by kernels, salt, and pepper particles thoroughly smear all over your mouth, lips, and cheeks. If someone were to get a good look at this



before you could wipe your face, it would appear you had just uncontrollably sneezed. Therefore, you must be quick with your napkin so that no embarrassing misunderstandings come about.

Table manners make many situations much more embarrassing and difficult than they should be. People often forget that eating is not a strict religious function or a dogmatic procedure, but rather an enjoyable way to satisfy a basic human need.

So, the next time you're in a fancy restaurant with your homecoming date and you've ordered roast duckling, go ahead and use your fingers. The next time you're eating dinner at home and feel the urge, go ahead and put your elbows on the table. And the next time you decide to enjoy a meal rather than being self-conscious and worrying about insubstantial things, go ahead! I dare you! Just don't gross anybody out.

*Jackson is a junior majoring in marketing and a writer with the Yellin' Rebel.*

# Just being informed is not enough

by Melissa Swoboday

Lately, everyone seems to be supporting save-the-world type issues. Although Earth Day was created some twenty years ago, it was only really observed extensively for the first time last year. Also, public service notices encouraging everything from planting trees to recycling have abounded on the airwaves in the past year. Even news programs have added to their schedules regular spots that deal with environmental issues.

Still, is anything changing with these issues? Are people really rearranging their lifestyles to accommodate the task of preserving the environment? Perhaps people are changing. Or maybe everyone is just using environmental buzz words so much that it only seems like progress is being made.

Media theory claims that people who are informed about issues begin to feel that being informed is the same as taking action. Have the many media messages of environmentalism had this effect? Possibly.

After all, hundreds of environmental offenses continue to be committed without much apparent disdain. Most department stores and grocery stores, especially, are still using plastic bags to package their customers' purchases. Also, several fast food res-

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taurants and convenience store are still selling food and drinks in Styrofoam containers. Moreover, most people are still driving to work alone. Few people carpool, and even fewer utilize alternatives such as walking or bicycling. Furthermore, very few trash receptacles can be found that are sepa-

rated into different compartments in such a way to encourage or to accommodate recycling. Indeed, the three different trash cans marked "glass," "plastic," and "paper," may only be a reality on the set of "Murphy Brown."

Are people really neglecting the tasks of environmental preservation? Are they dazed with the belief that their socially informed status is a suitable substitute for action? Perhaps some are. But probably most people are just struggling through the drudgery of transition. Making a concerted effort to preserve the environment has never been perceived as a major responsibility for mankind until recently.

Now, as people are faced eye to eye with these great new tasks, everyone is looking at how to get

started—much like when one realizes he must clean out his garage, or attic, after he's been haphazardly dumping junk in it for years. At first, the job seem insurmountable, and he drags his feet while hoping for motivation. Then, once he's cleared the first section, a plan materializes that makes the job seem not so intimidating. Soon his ambition and motivation have escalated. Now he sees it as only a matter of time before the room is clean and tidy like it should be.

Right now people are probably just trying to clear the first sections of their attics and garages. It will take time, but more than likely they will eventually get the job done.

*Swoboday is a communications student.*

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# Point of View

by Dustin Bermingham

*Is alcohol a problem with college students during Spring Break?*



**Gina Traficant**  
sophomore  
exercise physiology



**Walter Rego**  
sophomore  
computer science



**Mike Stojanoff**  
freshman  
geology

No, I think college students need a way of releasing energy after studying and midterms. These are the years that we (college students) get to party and have fun.

Yes, when I was younger I did a lot of it (drinking) and I see a lot of it on campus. The problem is that people don't know when to stop and they often use it as an excuse.

It will probably be a problem with people drinking and driving and there will probably be more accidents than usual.

