



Expat Dinners

Information Pack

November 11
2010

Expat in Denmark

The national network for Expats living and working in Denmark

www.expatindenmark.com

If you are reading this you are probably attending one of the many Expat Dinners taking place around Denmark on November 11th 2010. You may be hosting a dinner or attending a dinner; you may be Danish or expatriate; new to Denmark or practically local; and you may be meeting people that are either quite similar to you, or very different. In any case, it might be a good idea to have a quick look through this folder.



You will find a short guide to arranging a successful Expat Dinner, a crash course in Danish dining culture, and finally, conversation tips and topics.

Velbekomme!

Craig Till
Expat in Denmark

Arranging the dinner

Once you have found a match, it is important that all participants agree on the dinner form. Although it may not be necessary in all cases, you may want to consider the following:

- When does the dinner start? Danes typically eat around 7 pm, but families with children may prefer to meet earlier.
- When does the dinner end?
- What's on the menu? Guests may have special needs (allergies, vegetarian), kids may not be fond of exotic spices or salads, etc.
- What drinks are involved? Most Danes appreciate a beer or a glass of wine, even at informal dinners, but milk, water, and "saftevand" (water with grenadine-like syrup) is also common.
- Should/can the guest bring anything along?

Also check out the gift giving and dining etiquette below. However, please remember that Expat Dinners are supposed to be **informal, relaxed, and "hyggelige"**, so make sure you share the same expectations, but don't make it all too complicated or tedious!

Culture Crash Course – Etiquette

Obviously dining culture varies greatly depending on the age group, whether families and kids are involved, geography, individual expectations, and so on. *Generally* speaking, however, it might be a good idea to make yourself familiar with the following etiquette, especially if this is your first time dining with Danes.

Gifts

If you're invited to a Danish home, bring flowers, good quality chocolates or a good bottle of wine. Alternatively you can bring a small gift that represents your own country or culture.

General dining etiquette

- Arrive on time plus 5-10 minutes. E.g. If you're invited for 19:00, it is polite to arrive between 19:00 and 19:10, but no later than that. Danes are punctual in both business and social situations. This also applies to eating out.
- Check to see if you should remove your shoes before entering the house.
- Offer to help the host/hostess with the preparation or clearing up after a meal is served.
- Danes enjoy showing off their homes (they have usually done the decorating themselves and are proud of their accomplishments!). Therefore, they are happy to give you a quick tour of the house/apartment.

General table manners

- Table manners are continental: hold the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right hand while eating.
 - Try everything.
 - Expect to be offered second helps – it is OK to say “no thank you”.
 - It is polite to finish everything on your plate, regardless of whether it is a formal/informal dinner.
 - It is polite to await a “skål” (cheers) from the host before eating.
-

Conversation tips & topics



The weather, public transport and vacations are popular conversation topics

Danes love to chat, and as many of you will have noticed in daily life, they can also be quite direct in their conversational approach. Be aware of irony and sarcasm, and keep conversation positive, humorous, and light. Also remember to compliment and praise before complaining, and only complain/criticise if invited to do so.

Usually it is a good idea to avoid business, religion and politics unless you know each other well, and are comfortable discussing sensitive topics, or topics of dispute.

Topic suggestions:

- The weather
- Infrastructure (public transport, biking, navigation tips, etc.)
- Vacation – where have you been, where would you like to go?
- Cultural similarities
- Cooking / Gastronomy
- Humour (what's funny?)
- How do Danes meet Expats, and vice versa?
- Kids and schooling (if applicable)

Most importantly – get to know each other, and have fun!