

rituals of table service observed. In some countries, breakfasts may be organized; these are usually working meetings and spouses do not attend. Luncheons are also organized for the same reasons. The luncheon, in fact, may be more common than dinner in certain countries. It is easier to give and less time-consuming. The menu is simpler, the table setting less complicated and the meal must be served more quickly so that those who are returning to the office can do so.

Dinner is a more social event. Greater importance is attached to the quality of the meal. Everything is on a more elaborate scale, and participants dress accordingly. *Punctuality* is very important: one may not be late (more than five minutes) for a luncheon or a dinner. It is simple courtesy as well as a mark of respect to be on time.

3 Invitations

Before starting to send out invitations, it is important to draw up a guest list; this is a key factor in successful entertaining and it is essential when a meal is planned. The list should be drawn up with care, taking into account the countries the guests represent and ensuring that they will form a stimulating and interesting group. A factor to remember is that diplomatic relations are non-existent between certain countries and that it would be very awkward for their representatives to find themselves seated at the same table. There is also the problem of language; all the guests should have at least one in common. It is advisable to avoid having too many dignitaries since they must be given special attention and it is not possible to look after one and all at the same time.

As a rule, a diplomatic agent does not invite to his receptions the head of a mission other than his own unless he knows another ambassador very well and thinks the event will give him pleasure. The etiquette of international protocol requires that an invitation be received at least two weeks in advance. Invitations are sent by mail unless the two-week deadline cannot be observed, in which case they are delivered by messenger. An invitation may occasionally be extended first by telephone; if it is accepted, a written invitation is sent as a reminder.

The person who receives an invitation must reply *immediately*, either accepting, or declining if unable to attend. If one is uncertain about being able to attend, it is preferable to decline the invitation rather than put off replying until the last minute. When a reply is unduly delayed, the host is placed in the embarrassing position of being unable to decide on the preparation of the meal or the arrangement of the table and is prevented from taking advantage of the situation to invite someone else. Anyone who delays his reply until his host has to ask for it, and particularly, anyone who fails to reply, is guilty of a serious impropriety.