

- (ii) Regrets only: unnecessary to reply if accepting;
- (iii) RSVP: a reply is required.

The "occasion" of the reception or meal may be indicated, if appropriate. It is customary in some countries to send the guest list with the reminder card.

(C) MENUS AND DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

Dietary customs vary with each country, and it is advisable to be acquainted with them before entertaining at home. Certain dishes are taboo: for example, one does not serve shellfish or seafood to Jews, pork to Jews or Moslems, or beef to Hindus. It is not unlikely, moreover, that there will be guests with different dietary customs present at the same time. A buffet dinner presents no difficulty, given the variety of dishes, but in the case of a more formal type of meal the situation is more delicate. To provide against any contingency, it is important to be flexible and ready to substitute any dish for another in case one of the guests cannot eat what is to be served. (Whether the replacement be steak, salad or eggs, the main thing is to react quickly!) In areas where the food is very different from Canadian fare, it is a good idea to include a local dish in the menu. One has to remember, of course, that menus will depend very much on the types of food available in the country concerned.

A good general rule with respect to entertaining abroad is to avoid complicated and costly menus (unless the necessary funds and staff are available). Other factors to consider are the possibility of hiring extra help, the size of the oven and the refrigerator, and one's own culinary skills if one is doing the cooking oneself. If in doubt as to the menu, the wisest course is usually to ask the guests if there are certain foods they do not eat for religious, medical or other reasons.

(D) PLANNING

The key to a successful dinner or reception is meticulous planning. This should begin even before the invitations are sent. It is a safeguard against last-minute panic and anxiety that leave the host too exhausted to enjoy the party⁶.

(E) DRESS

Dress varies according to country. It depends also on the desired degree of formality at the reception or dinner that is being organized. It is the host's/hostess' prerogative, therefore, to decide the dress to be worn. If the invitation gives no indication, a lounge suit is appropriate. To avoid confusion, however, the desired dress should always be specified.

In general, it is best to adopt a conservative style of dress and avoid gaudy colours and loud ties. On arrival in a new area, it is a good idea to take note of local customs with regard to dress and make inquiries of colleagues. Women should be particularly careful since, in some countries, the consequences of inappropriate dress (by the standards of the country) can be quite unpleasant.

⁶ Additional information is contained in the GUIDE FOR ENTERTAINING AT HOME WHILE ON POSTING, appended.