

# DEALS AND MEALS

Bryony Taylor looks at the fundamentals of successfully negotiating the pitfalls of a business lunch.

**B**usiness lunches – they are where deals are made or, if you mess up, broken. If you're not au fait with the necessary etiquette yet, you no longer need to nudge your groaning colleague for tips, *USP* is here to get you up to scratch with the etiquette of the business luncheon a.k.a an afternoon spent schmoozing.

If it's your meeting then you are the star of the show, so if things go wrong the spotlight will always fall on you. A lunch meeting is often the killer stroke in getting business, but if you get the etiquette incorrect, that experience could be memorable for all the wrong reasons. It's not about whether you pass the salt to the right or left like the old days, it's about how you act and prepare for the situation. The most important thing to remember is that this is about

business, not food. Throwing your client off by choosing a quirky restaurant for the rendezvous is obviously a bad idea. Your aim should be to always make them feel comfortable.

Choosing a dish which doesn't have a potent, lasting odour is integral to keeping up a good conversation, but even if you think the odourless burger special would be the perfect choice, remember that looking a pillock when eating is equally unattractive. Concentrating and looking interested are important to engaging business. It's much harder to concentrate when you're very hungry, so to take the edge off eat something small before you go into the meeting.

Don't get drunk to take the edge off either. It's best to walk away remembering everything

that happened. Avoid being remembered as the drunkard, laughed at for all the wrong reasons. The business arena is supposed to be gender-neutral, so even if you are a female advisor who has invited a male prospect to lunch you should always pay the bill. The host should take care of every detail, and it's important you look in control of the situation. This includes the type of dress you wear; always ensure it's appropriate for the occasion.

Most of all you need to enjoy yourself and, in the off chance your dinner date is deadly dull, then at least appear to! Even if you don't take comfort by ordering the most expensive cuisine on the company account, knowing your colleagues will be suffering with their supermarket lunches should bring at least one smile to your face. ■

## RULE THREE:

Whoever eats first loses

