



Thank you for your interest in being a host for dinners for international professionals! Home hospitality is one the best ways for international visitors to the US to gain true insights into how Americans live. For people not familiar with American culture, one of their only ways of learning about America is through what Hollywood and our media produce. Shows such as Desperate Housewives, Modern Family, Dallas, and Jersey Shore paint a picture of Americans and our culture that is, in the majority of cases, far from the truth. Through visits to the US and home hospitality, we as American citizens and residents are given the unique opportunity to dispel many of the myths and aggrandized images about America and our culture. You, as a new host, already recognize the importance of all of this in creating a better world, but you may still have some questions about what hosting may entail. This FAQ sheet is intended to answer many of the questions that you may have.

Q. What is the purpose of a professional dinner?

A. There is not one exact reason for hosting a dinner. The experience is meant to be holistic and encompass many things. It is intended to be a relaxed evening with easy conversation about a wide variety of topics. It is a chance for the visitors to ask questions about things that may not relate to the subject of their program. It is a chance for visitors to see a “real” American home and how a “real” American family lives. It is a chance for visitors to get an understanding of American culture at the most basic level. Please remember that this is not to be a “party,” but rather a relaxed professional dinner.

Q. How do the guests get to my house and what time does dinner begin?

A. We generally ask that hosts drive to meet their guests at their hotel. The hotels that GlobalPittsburgh uses are generally located in two places: Downtown or Oakland. The dinner time is determined by the individual host, but we ask that dinner begin after 5:30 pm on a weekday whenever possible. This allows the guests’ time to relax and re-compose themselves after a full day of professional meetings or traveling.

Q. May I take my guests out to eat at a restaurant?

A. We ask that hosts do not take their guests to eat at a restaurant. As previously mentioned, this is a chance for guests to see an American home and family. For many international visitors, the majority of their meals are at restaurants during the duration of their program. For these visitors, a home cooked meal is a welcome relief from the endless parade of restaurant food. If you must take your guest to a restaurant, please consider bringing your guest home for coffee and desert so that they may see your home.

Q. What if I don’t like to cook or can’t cook?

A. Feel free to buy prepared food and serve it at your house on your dinnerware. We do encourage everyone to prepare at least one homemade portion of the meal. If you feel you can’t cook or aren’t very good at it, try anyhow! Your guests will appreciate the effort and, besides, the only way to get better is by practicing!

Q. What should I cook?

A. Whatever you like! Please keep the following suggestions in mind. Please do not prepare food from the country of your guest. They have come a long way to try something new! Stay away from non-traditional food (e.g. liver paté, certain kinds of seafood, beef tongue, etc.). Prepare food that you enjoy and that you feel would be something you think your guest might enjoy. Please do not be offended if your guest does not eat a lot of food. There are differing world views about an evening meal and the amount of food that is to be eaten. Also remember something that is an American staple, for example corn, may be viewed in another country as strictly animal feed. In general remember that your dinner should be casual and does not need to rival something prepared by Martha Stewart.

Q. What about alcohol?

A. This is at your discretion. Be mindful of differing views about alcohol in different regions of the world. Further, some guests may choose to not drink alcohol because of their religious beliefs, but may not be offended if you choose to have a drink. If you have doubts, the best option may be to omit alcohol from the meal all together.

Q. Will I be compensated for dinner?

A. GlobalPittsburgh does not compensate dinner hosts. However, depending on how you file your taxes you may be able to claim the expenses for any food purchased, as well as the gas mileage from driving guests to and from their hotel. If doing so, please save your receipts for your records.

Q. What if my guest doesn't speak English?

A. If your guest/s do not speak English, we ask that you host an interpreter for dinner in addition to your guests. You will not be tasked with finding an interpreter. GlobalPittsburgh would ensure that there is some individual to facilitate and translate conversation during dinner, if the guest is not accompanied by an interpreter.

Q. What about food allergies or dietary restrictions?

A. GlobalPittsburgh will inform you prior to the dinner about any food allergies or dietary restrictions that your guests may have. While this information is largely correct, it is always good to check with your guests before sitting down to dinner about any allergies or restrictions that they may have.

Q. I have a pet. Is this an issue?

A. Generally not. Guests will inform GlobalPittsburgh if they have an allergy or are uncomfortable around pets. It is extremely important that you let our office know if you have any pets so we can avoid any conflicts that may arise. If a guest is uncomfortable around a pet such as a dog, you may be asked to put your dog in another room during the dinner.

Q. What do we talk about during dinner?

A. Whatever you like! Please remember that your guests may be from anywhere in the world and could have different views on a subject than you have. It is important to remember this and to keep an open mind. If you find that you have a disagreement about a topic, politely accept whatever view is expressed and move to a new topic. While the responsibility for a good dinner is upon both the host and the guest, you as the host have a huge impact on the success of the evening. Please remember this. Additionally, some topics may be taboo for discussion with some guests. GlobalPittsburgh will send you biographies of your guests prior to the dinner so you may appropriately prepare for the evening. Further, you are always welcome to speak with a staff member if you have any concerns. They can guide you to information about the country or countries from which your guests are coming.

Please remember that this list is by no means inclusive. Should you have any questions that are not addressed here, please feel free to contact Gail Shrott office at 412- 392-4513 or by email gshrott@globalpittsburgh.org. Once again, thank you for choosing to be a dinner host for international visitors! We know that it will be an enriching experience for everyone involved. It is people like you that make the concept of citizen diplomacy work, and remember it is the small actions that make a difference in our world and you have the opportunity to affect change!

Sincerely,

The GlobalPittsburgh team