



THE WHAT, WHEN & WHERE OF



# DINNERWARE

A RESOURCE GUIDE FROM TRIMARK

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**Dinnerware is more than a simple collection of plates. It's a reflection of your restaurant's menu, theme, décor, and overall concept. When it comes to selecting dinnerware, there's a lot to think about, but we're breaking it all down here to make your decision easier.**

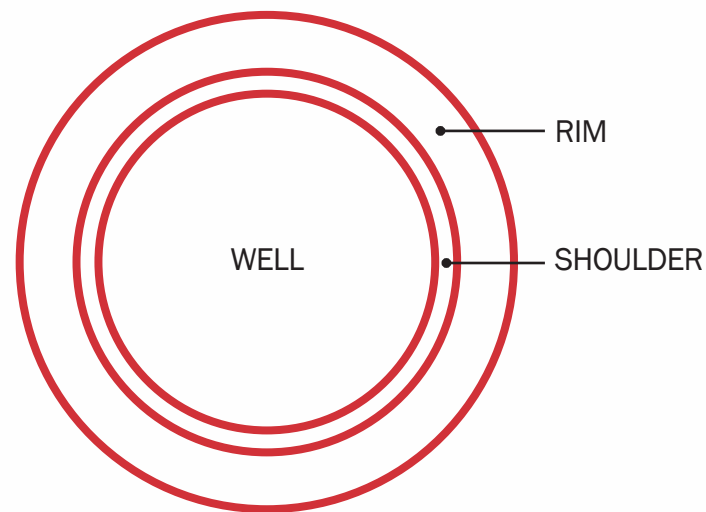
There's a whole world of dinnerware to choose from. Take a look at the different sizes, styles, shapes, and types of plates that are out there, and then narrow it down to what you like and what you need.

Think about the message you want to convey to the customer. That will help you select the dinnerware that's best for you. For example, if you want to convey that you're serving good value for the money, then you may want to choose smaller plates to make the portions look bigger. On the other hand, a fine dining restaurant may select larger plates to give a more artistic presentation to the food. The color, texture and size of the dinnerware can also be a way to compliment the ambiance and décor of a restaurant.



## TYPES OF DINNERWARE

Dinnerware is commonly referred to as “china”. Technically, china is vitrified porcelain. But now, the word “china” is considered a generic term representing all types of ceramic dinnerware and even some types of glass dinnerware.



### The Anatomy of a Plate





## Pottery

Made from lower grade clay, and fired at a lower temperature, pottery is more durable than earthenware and often used to make mugs and baking dishes. It is not vitrified.



## Earthenware

Similar to pottery, earthenware is also made from clay. It is fired at a lower temperature, often more than once, and is not vitrified. It will absorb moisture and water, making it easier to break and chip. It is more porous than other types of china, and usually has a smooth, glazed texture. It is affordable and available in a wide variety of colors. Although earthenware tends to be lightweight, it has excellent heat conduction.



## Terracotta

With its bold reddish-brown color, terracotta is a type of earthenware referred to as “baked earth.” It’s fired clay that contains high amounts of iron, giving it a reddish-brown color. Terracotta may be harder to maintain than other types of china. Because it is fragile, it is not commonly used in foodservice. It is recommended that terracotta be washed by hand.



## Stoneware

Extremely durable, high fired, fully vitrified, stoneware is commonly used for casual dinnerware and tabletop accessories. Stoneware is oven and dishwasher safe, chip-resistant and durable. It is fired at very high temperatures, making it hard and sturdy. Stoneware is used in a variety of foodservice environments.



## Porcelain

Made from higher quality clay, porcelain is vitrified and nonporous. It is a mix of kaolin, flint and feldspar. It is fired twice at the highest kiln temperatures possible making it very hard. Porcelain is used in all types of foodservice settings.



## Bone China

Bone china is high quality, refined clay combined with bone ash in production. Adding bone ash (at least 25%) allows vitrification to happen at a lower temperature and the result is dinnerware that is somewhat translucent and durable. Bone china is whiter in color, lighter in weight and less brittle. It is commonly used in hotels and fine dining restaurants.

- Robust body
- Fine, delicate and lightweight
- Elaborate and complex production process
- Tends to cost more than traditional china
- Fewer varieties of shapes



## Melamine

Melamine is a non-toxic resin that is break-resistant, chip-resistant, dishwasher safe, and has the appearance of traditional china. It tends to be more durable and long-lasting than other types of dinnerware, and comes in a wide variety of colors. It is cool to the touch; however, melamine should not be placed in the oven or microwave. It is commonly used in B&I and fast casual restaurants.

# Shapes Of Dinnerware

Dinnerware comes in four basic shapes: narrow rim, wide-rim/rolled edge, mid-rim and coupe. While the plate shape plays a big part in the overall tabletop presentation, it's also important to consider the amount of physical space that's available on a restaurant table.



## Narrow Rim

Narrow rim plates are commonly used for high-volume operations such as fast casual restaurants and large banquets. Dinnerware with a narrow rim takes up less space on a table than wide-rimmed plates.



## Wide-Rim/ Rolled Edge

Wide-rim dinnerware takes up more table space than narrow rim, but it offers plenty of room for decoration along the rim. Fine dining restaurants are more likely to use wide-rim dinnerware for creative plate presentations.



## Mid-Rim

Mid-rim dinnerware is probably the most versatile shape. It allows flexibility in portion control, and can be used effectively in nearly any type of foodservice operation for many different menu items.



## Coupe

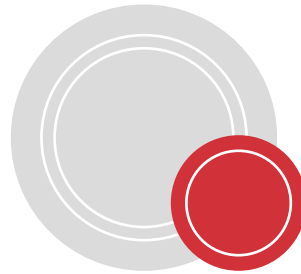
Modern and contemporary, coupe shape dinnerware has virtually no rim, which provides the most usable surface area. Coupe shape patterns are popular for buffets and banquet service.

## Dinnerware Shape Tips



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When choosing the shape of dinnerware, make sure you factor in whether or not it's easily stackable. Stackable plates save space in the back of the house.



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Recent food trends indicate that shared plates and tapas-style dining is becoming increasingly popular. Consider selecting smaller size plates to appeal to these types of menu items.



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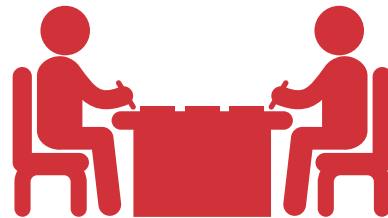
Some restaurants will choose one size plate for many different menu items.

## Dinnerware Shape Tips



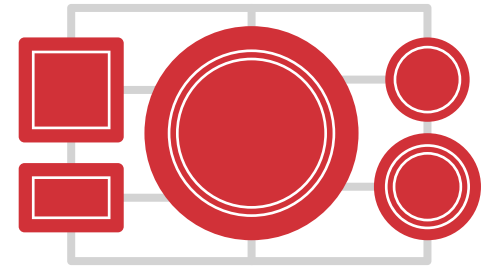
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Using a combination of round, square, rectangular, triangular and other assorted shapes gives the tabletop a more modern and eclectic appearance. There are a wide variety of geometric and free-formed shapes available.



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Take a look at your menu. Are there a lot of side dishes and appetizers? If so, you may want to select dinnerware that's a bit smaller, to allow for all of the menu items to fit on the table.



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Experts recommend that dinnerware body types and styles be similar, and that the dinnerware be color coordinated. Dinnerware trends are now moving toward whiter body colors.





## Colors & Shades of Dinnerware

By far, white is the most popular choice in commercial dinnerware. White makes for a good backdrop and canvas for any menu item.

But did you know that there are many different varieties of white? There's *American White*, *Bone White*, *Ivory White*, *Bright White*, *European White*, and many more.

Colored dinnerware is available in just about any color of the rainbow. But colorful plates are not for everybody. Some restaurants steer clear of colored dishes because they believe they detract from the overall food presentation, while other restaurants will select a vibrant selection of colors to add personality and life to the tabletop setting.



## Some Things to Consider When Selecting Dinnerware

Before you begin to select dinnerware, ask yourself the following questions:

- *What kind of restaurant is it?*  
*What's my concept?*
- *What's on the menu?*
- *What's the cost of the average menu item?*
- *What's the average check size?*
- *Who's my typical customer?*
- *What's the volume of customers?*
- *Does my restaurant offer catering, special events, holidays, or Sunday brunch?*
- *Do I need plate covers?*
- *What's my budget?*

While hospitals, hospitality, schools, B&I, and entertainment venues may have different considerations than restaurants, some things stay the same: analyze what's on the menu, factor in the volume of meals prepared and take a close look at the budget.





## Customizing Dinnerware

To help showcase your establishment's brand, theme and menu, you may want to consider customized dinnerware. Customized dinnerware features a unique design, colors or logo of a particular establishment.

Whether it's a quick serve restaurant, independent restaurant or business, customized dinnerware is a way to make your customers' overall dining experience more positive, memorable and enhance brand recognition. Plus, it can help give more eye appeal and drama to the overall dining experience.



Make a real splash on the entire tabletop by adding customized dinnerware, glassware, flatware, and accessories!

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# How Many Do I Need?

## Opening Orders & Reorders

It's crucial to order enough dinnerware to serve your customers, and have enough in stock when inevitable accidents happen. Here are some suggestions for opening orders, and reorders that will help you keep your dinnerware inventory fully stocked.

*To determine the quantity of each item needed, multiply the number of seats at your restaurant by the ordering factor shown for each item below. Quantities vary depending on whether it is casual, semi-formal or formal dining.*

*Example: An 11" Dinner Plate for a 125-seat Formal Dining venue is 375 pieces (3 x 125).*

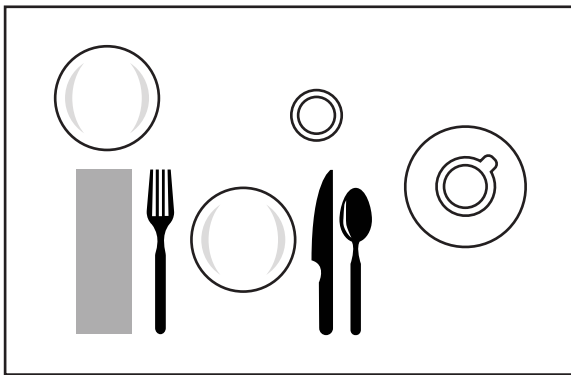


Be sure your dishwasher is fast enough to handle multiple loads of flatware, especially during peak periods.

	CASUAL DINING	SEMI-FORMAL DINING	FORMAL DINING
6" Bread Plate	-	3	2
7" Salad/Dessert Plate	2	2	2
9" Luncheon Plate	2	2	2
11" Dinner Plate	3	3	3
12" Oval Platter	-	1.5	1.5
Coffee/Tea Cup	2	2	3
Coffee/Tea Saucer	2	2	3
Bouillon Cup	3	1.5	1.5
Fruit Bowl	3	6	3
Grapefruit Bowl	2	1	1
Soup Bowl	-	-	0.5
Pasta Bowl	-	1	1
Creamer	1	0.5	0.5

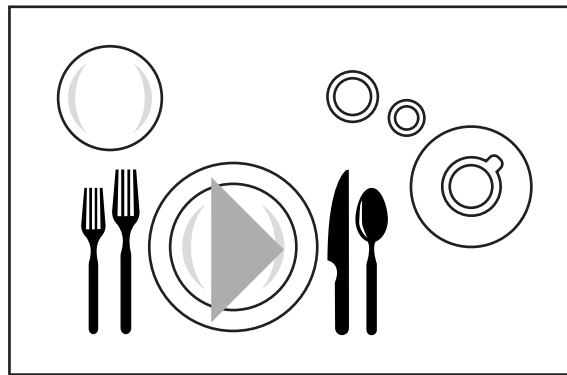
# A Proper Table Setting Will Maximize Your Investment...

- 1. Number of Place Settings** - Place settings should match your daily usage and the types of specialty pieces should match your menu. Too many items are unnecessary, too few mean extra warewashing.
- 2. Control Sanitation Costs** - The correct place settings for each meal during the day will eliminate warewashing of unnecessary pieces, saving you money.
- 3. Create The Proper Ambience/Atmosphere** - Your customers' first impression is their last impression. Make it a good one with a tablesetting presentation that complements the menu and decor.



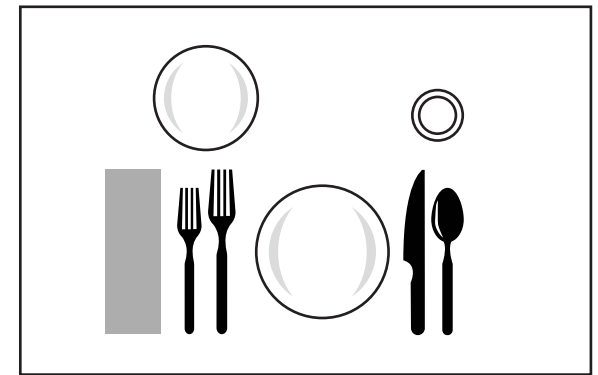
## BREAKFAST SETTING

- **FLATWARE:** Dinner Fork, Dinner Knife, Teaspoon
- **DINNERWARE:** (2) Bread & Butter Plates, Dinner Plate, Cup & Saucer
- **GLASSWARE:** Water Glass, Juice Glass



## BANQUET/BRUNCH SETTING

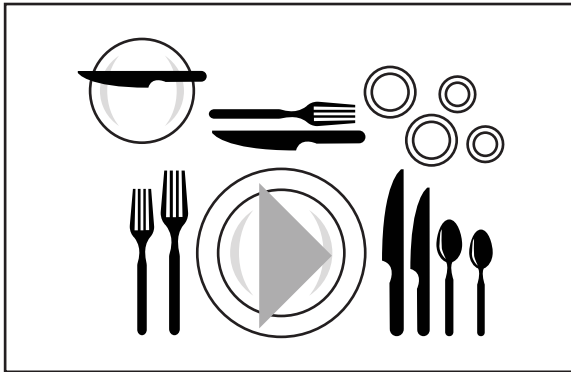
- **FLATWARE:** Salad Fork, Dinner Fork, Dinner Knife, Teaspoon
- **DINNERWARE:** Bread & Butter Plate, Salad Plate, Dinner Plate, Cup & Saucer
- **GLASSWARE:** Water Glass or Water Goblet, Wine Glass



## LUNCH SETTING

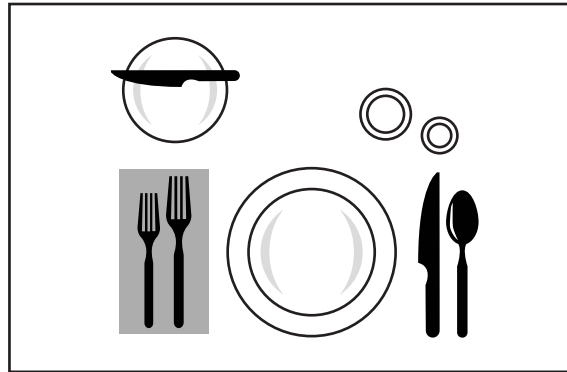
- **FLATWARE:** Salad Fork, Dinner Fork, Dessert or Dinner Knife, Teaspoon
- **DINNERWARE:** Bread & Butter Plate, Luncheon Plate
- **GLASSWARE:** Water Glass, Wine Glass

# A Proper Table Setting Will Maximize Your Investment...



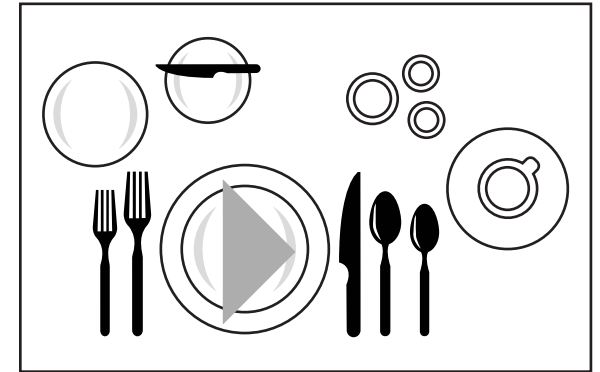
## EUROPEAN TABLE SETTING

- **FLATWARE:** European Size Dinner Fork, U.S. Size Dinner Fork, European Size Dinner Knife, Dessert Knife, Oval Bowl Soup/Dessert Spoon or Dinner Spoon, European Size Teaspoon, Butter Knife, Fish Knife, Fish Fork
- **DINNERWARE:** Bread & Butter Plate, Salad Plate, Service Plate
- **GLASSWARE:** Water Goblet, Champagne Flute, (2) Wine Glasses



## TRADITIONAL DINNER SETTING

- **FLATWARE:** Salad Fork, Dinner Fork, Dinner Knife, Teaspoon, Butter Knife
- **DINNERWARE:** Bread & Butter Plate, Salad Plate, Dinner Plate
- **GLASSWARE:** Water Goblet, Wine Glass



## FORMAL DINNER SETTING

- **FLATWARE:** Salad Fork, Dinner Fork, Dinner Knife, Oval Bowl Soup/Dessert Spoon or Dinner Spoon, Teaspoon, Butter Knife
- **DINNERWARE:** Bread & Butter Plate, (2) Salad Plates, Service Plate, Cup & Saucer
- **GLASSWARE:** Water Goblet, Champagne Flute, Wine Glass





## Dinnerware Care & Maintenance

Let's face it, dinnerware breaks. It's not uncommon to see chips, scratches, smudges, or discolorations on your dinnerware. But there are some things you can do to prevent dinnerware from damage—and even prolong its life.

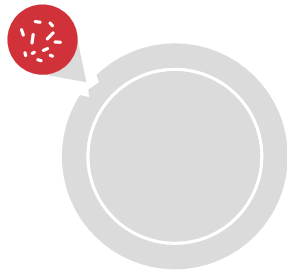
Below is a reference guide to preventing the most common dinnerware issues: mechanical shock; thermal shock; breakage, chips; scratches; stains; and discoloration.

### Mechanical Shock

Mechanical shock in dinnerware is the direct result of contact with another object, such as flatware, glass, or another piece of china. This kind of contact can cause a minute abrasion, invisible to the eye, but a source of weakness in the dinnerware, making it more susceptible to breakage from impact or thermal shock.

## Breakage/Chipping

Chips and breaks can be avoided by proper cleaning, storage and contact with other dinnerware, glassware and flatware. Overloading bus boxes, stacking china too high and abrasive cleaners can all lead to broken or chipped dinnerware.



Always discard chipped china. Once china becomes chipped, bacteria can seep into the dinnerware, which presents a potential health issue. Chipped china detracts from the image of quality that the operator is trying to convey to the patrons.

## Thermal Shock

Thermal shock is the result of glass experiencing a sudden temperature change. Rapid changes in temperature can result in breakage. For example, a plate warm from the dishwasher should not go directly into service; and cold water or ice should not be put into a warm bowl or dish. Dinnerware needs to reach room temperature before being taken to the other extreme.

## Stains or Discoloration

Dinnerware is more likely to become stained or discolored due to improper cleaning procedures. China should not remain unwashed after use; or pre-soaked in water over 160° degrees. Avoid using improper detergent concentrations. Hard water, iron or lime content in old equipment, can all cause dinnerware damage, along with clogged or eroded spray nozzles.





## General Handling Tips:

- Never overload bus trays.
- Never carry more dishes than you can handle.
- Bus china directly into racks, or use divided bus trays with flatware baskets.
- Always make sure you have an adequate supply of china for rush periods.
- Keep adequate supplies of china to prevent recently washed items from going directly into service.
- Place guides on scrap table to place glass, china, and flatware in separate areas.
- Check dishwasher temperature twice daily.
- Replace worn rubber and plastic china scrapers.
- Color code racks for different glass, china, and flatware items.
- Remove severely abraded china from service.
- Always keep receiving area neat and clean.
- Always remove scraps carefully with rubber scraper or water spray.
- Never load loose, mixed items in dish racks.
- Never stack dishes more than 16" high.

## Care and Use of Melamine

Melamine is a non-toxic resin that is break-resistant, chip-resistant, dishwasher safe, and has the appearance of traditional china. It tends to be more durable and long-lasting than other types of dinnerware, and comes in a wide variety of colors. It is cool to the touch; however, melamine should be not placed in the oven or microwave. It is commonly used in B& I and fast casual restaurants.

- Do not use melamine in an oven or microwave.
- Dishwasher safe: for best results, use a high-alkaline base solution for regular dishwashing.
- Avoid using abrasive scouring pads when removing hard food or stains.
- Avoid chlorine or chlorine-based products when attempting to remove stains.
- Do not place on top or under flame or grill.
- Discard of the product if it begins to split or crack.
- Avoid using sharp knives around melamine.



# Conclusion

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Dinnerware sets the stage for what's to come. It's an opportunity for you to showcase your food in the most positive light. It tells the customer who you are and complements your concept, décor and brand. It doesn't matter if you are opening a brand new restaurant, or have one that's been in business for a while; it's always good to evaluate your dinnerware.

Once you know all of the different types, shapes, sizes, and styles of dinnerware available, you can examine your menu, concept, typical customer, and average check size. At that point, you can begin to narrow down your options. But in the end, it comes down to one basic question: *what's best for my business?*



## Are you ready to take your tabletop to the next level?

Let TriMark help you take your tabletop vision to the next level. Our experienced team can help you select dinnerware that's right for you. Whether it's a restaurant, hospital, educational institution, country club, or large scale entertainment venue, we can guide you toward choosing dinnerware that suits your needs and business.



TriMark offers foodservice operators a new level of service by combining the hands-on support and local market knowledge of a strong regional supplier with the purchasing strength, industry expertise, and delivery capabilities of a national company. We work closely with our customers; who include national restaurant chains, independent restaurant operators, healthcare facilities, entertainment venues, and many other segments; to provide the products and services that will help them operate more efficiently and realize better bottom line results.

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Special acknowledgement to Libbey® Foodservice for providing much of the content found in this resource guide