

Tips for hosts & guests



Who can be host or guest?

The initiative Eat & Meet connects East-Belgians (locals) and newcomers as hosts and guests. Your guests might come from East-Belgium, Europe, Latin America initiative, Africa, Middle East, Asia or any other place in the world. It is possible that they have never been guests of locals or newcomers. The purpose of the initiative is that locals and newcomers get to know each other during a delicious meal and in a relaxed atmosphere; and to ensure that immigrants and refugees are welcomed and accepted to our society.

In case that your guests or hosts came to Belgium as refugees, please consider the following:

We understand your interest in their story and current situation. But please consider that some people don't want to talk about it or might feel highly uncomfortable with this topic. Everybody has hobbies, family/relatives, professions/career aspirations, an interest in history, politics, or other subject areas, dreams and goals in life – which are all excellent topics for conversation.

If you came to Belgium as a refugee:

It is possible that your hosts or guests will ask you about your situation as a refugee in Belgium and how you got here. If there is anything you don't want to talk about, or you feel at some point that they should stop asking, please let them know. They will be glad that you did, as they don't want to offend you, make you feel uncomfortable or be impolite.

Before the Welcome Dinner

First Contact

We connect you to your guest or host and communicate date and time of the meal, as well as name, phone number, address and an email address. If you wish to contact your guest or host beforehand, please consider that some people may have no mobile phone credit (left) and thus are unable to call back or answer to text messages fast enough. Please keep trying to call until you reach someone.

Food preferences

Let your host know if there is something that you DO NOT EAT, if you have an allergy, only eat halāl meat, don't drink alcohol or if you have any other food preferences.

Tip: If you want to be on the safe side when hosting Muslim guests and you don't know where to buy halāl meat, you can prepare a vegetarian dish, and refrain from serving alcoholic drinks.

(Halāl-meat is meat of animals that were slaughtered in a specific way.)

Punctuality & arrival

Please consider that certain things may not run smoothly. Some cultures have not the same concept of time and punctuality than you do. But please try to be on time. If your hosts invited you for 7pm, they expect you to arrive at 7.15pm the latest. If by any chance you can't make it on time, let them know by writing a text message. If your house or your apartment is hard to find, please provide your guests with directions.

For guests: What you DON'T need to bring.

First of all: the welcome dinner is free. You don't need to pay for it. You don't have to bring any presents for the hosts either!



During the Welcome Dinner

Culture, greeting and leaving

Eat & Meet is also a little cultural adventure - different rules and customs apply to different cultures. Please ask if there is any ambiguity, or in case something seems strange to you.

It is therefore important to ask in case of uncertainties and ambiguities. This is the only way to avoid misunderstandings and both hosts and guests will have a great time together!

When meeting for example, Belgian people shake hands (and sometimes greet with a kiss), but in some Arabic cultures, men and women do not touch one another (neither by hand) when greeting.

So if your handshake is not returned, it is not a sign of disrespect. Talk about it – if you like – and enjoy a great evening!

Language barriers

If it is difficult to start a conversation with your guests or hosts, the following ideas might help you:

- Use Google translate or another (online) dictionary, e.g. on your phone.
- Exchange expressions in your native languages. Teach your guests/hosts (if they don't speak German well) new phrases or typical expressions.
- Show each other your home country/city on a map, in an atlas or on a globe.
- Ask your hosts/guests for pictures and show pictures of your family, home country, etc.
- Show your favourite music, dance, talk about the sports you like to do. Ask your hosts / guests to do the same!
- Play easy games such as (typical) card games, Jenga, Mikado or Memory, and any language barrier will be overcome.
- **Take a picture of your hosts/guests, you and/or your meal and send it to us by email. With your approval, we would love to use it for our Facebook page.**

After the Welcome Dinner

We hope you had a fantastic evening together! Everything else is up to you now: If you do feel comfortable and you had a great time, you definitely should meet again! But there is no commitment!

We would love to receive a photo and some feedback of the shared meal, so we know if you enjoyed it and what we can improve!

Have a good time! 😊

If you have any questions, please contact:

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* The initiatives Meet & Eat and Begegnungsorte.be only connect host and guest. Hosts and guests are solely responsible for a successful evening. Eat & Meet is an initiative of the campaign Begegnungsorte.be as well as the social venues Animation Centre Ephata in Eupen and the non-profit organisation Patchwork in Sankt Vith.