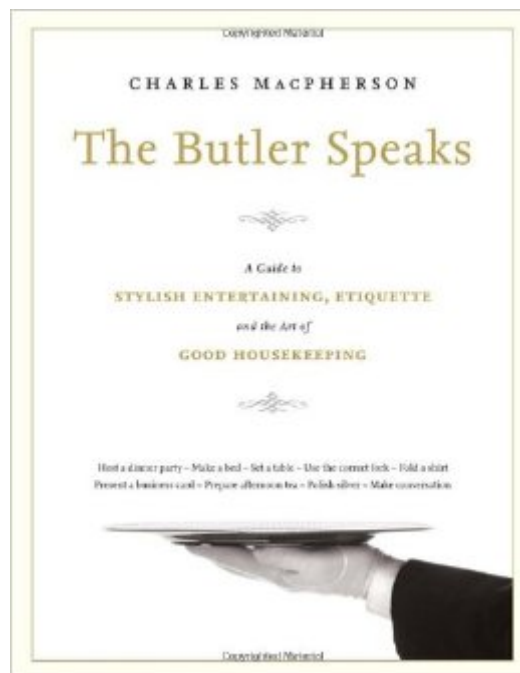


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The Butler Speaks: A Return To Proper Etiquette, Stylish Entertaining, And The Art Of Good Housekeeping



Synopsis

Host a dinner party * Make a bed * Set a table * Use the proper fork * Polish silver * Prepare high tea * Present a calling card * Make conversation * Fold a shirt ... all with the charm, ease and sophistication of a butler. In a clear, straightforward style, Charles MacPherson lays out the essentials of entertaining and household management in this beautifully illustrated style, etiquette and entertainment guide. For anyone who rents or owns--be it a small urban condo or a lavish country estate--The Butler Speaks includes everything you need to know to simplify, organize and care for your home. It also offers modern advice on personal style and etiquette--how to receive guests; present your business card; make polite dinner conversation-- and advice on entertaining at home--how to make a cheese plate; hold your cutlery; set a table--all with the flair, charm and unpretentious grace of the butler.

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Customer Reviews

While I have not finished reading this wonderful tome, I can unequivocally state that it is by far the most complete, up to date and informative book of its kind. I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. MacPherson speak at a meeting of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Domestic Estate Managers Association in the fall of 2011. He was witty, informative and completely charming, he translates his personality very well to his book. All who wish to know how to plan dinner parties, choose the correct vendor, lay a table, open a bottle of champagne, use proper etiquette with guests simply must read this book. Mr. MacPherson covers the art of housekeeping very well. I am most grateful that Mr.

MacPherson shares credit with Mr. Robert Roberts, a butler of the 18th and 19th century, Mrs. Isabella Beeton, the first professional housekeeper and Mr. Charles Pierce, a 18th century household manager. History abounds in the Butler Speaks; Turning the table, menu cards, seating boards, the correct usage of cutlery and many more knowledgeable facts. Most of all, I am grateful that Mr. MacPherson lends credence and recognition to my mentor, the late Mr. Ivor Spencer, who single-handedly revived the art of butlery by inaugurating the very first butler school in the world in Great Britain. I say to all who read this review, that Mr. MacPherson is worthy of being the heir to Mr. Spencer's legacy. This is a purchase well worth the price, for one cannot put a price on knowledge.

First and foremost, this is not a "tell-all" book, disclosing the secrets of the high net worth families like the fictional accounts described in "The Help" by Kathryn Stockett. Instead, this is a guide to entertaining, etiquette and good housekeeping. What makes the book really stand out is that it makes these arts relevant in today's 21st Century modern home, not just the formal households of the ultra-rich from the Victorian or Edwardian eras. The book does cover in detail the specifics of housekeeping and entertaining, such as the proper way to iron a shirt or how to carve a standing rib roast in front of a table of hungry dinner guests. The instructions are easy-to-follow, accompanied by to-the-point graphics. The writing is direct, but not as a boring text book. It flows well, and held my interest even though I am probably one of the worst housekeepers in the world. Fortunately, I learned a lot of new techniques that make cleaning more thorough without taking tons of extra time. One of the most beneficial parts of the book is the modern etiquette lessons. In particular, specifics of business etiquette are critical, from presenting business cards to how to behave during a business lunch. As MacPherson states in the book, "Etiquette is not a set of classical rules for the rich, famous or snobby - rather, it's a way of understanding other people and having consideration for their needs." In this way, we all need an etiquette lesson, and MacPherson does an excellent job of teaching this perspective.

When I set out on the long arduous journey to .com to buy this book, I have to admit that I was a bit leery. Technical books can be very dry, and a bit tough to follow for me. I absorb much better hands on and find it difficult to focus if the written word doesn't grab me. However Mr. MacPherson puts some very interesting, insightful and valuable knowledge in one quick and easy read. Making it less of a technical book and more of a nice stroll through the basics of our profession. In order to provide the epitome of service in these modern times we need to know where it all started. Mr. MacPherson seamlessly incorporates history with modern technique, laying out the foundation any

private service professional should have in a light, easy to read format. He wastes no time in giving little tidbits of knowledge by explaining what role the white glove took in the early 20th century and how itâ€™s role has changed; and the proper etiquette on how a Butler should stand with them in hand. Right there on page 5. He goes on to explain the traditional roles and titles of household staff and how they have morphed into what they are today; all while entertaining with tidbits of knowledge and skills. From there he covers topics such as Tea Service, Bar Setup, Entertaining Etiquette (including the various tools such as plates, silverware, glassware, and service vessels) to cleaning a room and how to properly iron and fold a shirt. Once you have read it you will be surprised at how much I failed to include in the list, like table manners and how to eat sushi. Throughout his book Mr. MacPherson mentions "The Butler's Toolkit", yet he fails to mention that this book should be a part of any Private Service Professional's standard toolkit. However he does list some additional books in the back that are also must haves.

I just finished reading this book after borrowing electronically from our local library, and I intend to buy a hard copy to keep as a reference. I cannot think of a single scenario that was not covered in this book, and there are many tips on topics I never considered at all, such as how to hand someone your business card. I generally just like etiquette books for my own edification because manners matter to me and it irritates me how far we have slid as a culture from any sort of propriety in most areas. However, while I was reading this book, I was struck also by how useful it would be for my children. Having recently begun homeschooling our kids, two of whom are teens, it has been on my mind to include life skills and etiquette as part of their education. Simple things like knowing how to set a proper table, iron their clothing, clean a bathroom - all of these are discussed in this book. Some of these things are straightforward and I can teach them myself; others, I was not sure I really knew how to do correctly. Part of our motivation for homeschooling in the first place is that we felt we did not have enough time together as a family to teach the children certain life skills, and this book could practically be a textbook for that. The author's writing style is not at all stuffy, very clear, and presents etiquette not as showy and pretentious, but rather as a means of showing those around you care and respect in order to ensure their comfort. And if all of that weren't enough, the list of suggested wine pairings with certain foods at the end just completes this very thorough manual on how to live gracefully and present a relaxing and considerate home to your guests.

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