

The English Experience - Evening Meals

Although we are all very cosmopolitan in our eating habits nowadays, the English are known for certain foods and for eating in a certain way, so please think about this when planning your menus.

Eating together

Your students will arrive back from 6.30pm onwards and if you don't want to sit and eat with your them every night that is fine, but you **MUST EXPLAIN WHY** i.e. "In England we eat quite early, so what will happen is that we will eat before you get back, but one of us will sit and have a cup of tea and a chat with you whilst you eat dinner. Is that ok?" If you say and do this you won't get complaints, and the advantage of eating separately from your students is that:

- 1) You can plan the same foods every week and take advantage of batch cooking and bulk buying
- 2) You won't have to eat food that may not be to your taste
- 3) You can control your budget easier and ensure you don't overspend.

If you wish to eat with your students every night - or only on some nights - then that is fine too - just keep an eye on the budget and think about the "English Experience" please.

What to cook

The first night is a compulsory meal of a slice of CHEESE & TOMATO PIZZA, SALAD & CHIPS FOLLOWED BY ICE CREAM

Tip: Buy a large fresh pizza and cut into 4-6 slices before freezing. Each student then has one portion of pizza with chips and salad. You don't cook this meal until you all arrive home, so if they are very hungry just add more chips (as these are cheap and they love them), and if they aren't hungry just do less chips (so no wastage.) If your student does not like pizza they can have egg and chips, fish fingers and chips, or chicken nuggets and chips etc - but always offer the pizza first please.

The English Experience: Put a bowl of chips in the middle of the table so they can help themselves but also put a few chips in another bowl then say to your students "This is how the English eat chips." Now add salt & vinegar and let them taste the chips. As far as we are aware, we are the only country in the world who put salt & vinegar on our chips!

After the first night you can cook whatever you like - but remember your budget! Here are some examples that fall well within your budget but are tasty and satisfying - and very English:

The Cooked English Breakfast: Fried bread, a sausage, a slice of bacon, beans or tinned spaghetti, a fried egg, a potato waffle or chips.

The English Experience: Explain that we don't eat this during the week normally but you would like them to try one, so you will cook one as an evening meal. I bet they haven't had fried bread before!

Cottage pie and vegetables

The English Experience: Originally from the North of England, this dish is now found around the world - but nobody makes it like the British!

Toad in the Hole

The English Experience: Yorkshire pudding will not be something they will have tried before - and baked beans - you can't beat them.

Roast chicken dinner with Yorkshire puddings

The English Experience: Roast potatoes are typically English, as is gravy and add those Yorkshires to really enhance the experience.

Bangers & mash

The English Experience: Sausage, mash & beans (or onion gravy) is a traditional working man's meal and is filling and good value.

Fish (fish fingers or small breaded or battered pieces), peas and chips

The English Experience: They will all have heard about British Fish and Chips, now they can try some!

Other meals well within budget are:

Pasta bake with garlic bread & salad

Spaghetti Bolognese

Sweet n Sour Chicken and rice

Chicken nuggets and chips

Burgers and chips

Chicken casserole & mash potatoes

Desserts:

You MUST offer a dessert, but they may not always want one. Some cheap, simple and very British ideas are:

Jelly and ice cream

Instant whip

Rice pudding

Trifle

Apple pie/ crumble and custard

Individual yoghurts, chocolate mousse, crème caramels etc are a great idea as they can be brought out time and time again if not eaten - just watch for long dates. Look for the bargain reduced choc ices/Cornetto's too – great to eat in the garden after dinner.

Table manners

Table manners are very different in each country, so please provide the English Experience by explaining what we do in England:

- 1) **Knives and forks:** When we finish a meal we place these together on the plate. That signifies that the individual has finished
- 2) **Side plates:** The French particularly, use the table as a side plate, so will often put bread etc directly on the table. Show them what we do.
- 3) **Manners maketh man:** Explain that if they wish something to be passed we use please, thank you and you're welcome - and at the end of the meal we thank the cook.
- 4) **Household chores:** If you would like your students to help clear away the dishes, wash or dry up then just explain to them that this is what happens in your household. (I usually just get them to bring the plates etc to the kitchen.)

Important notes:

- * Your students will appreciate a jug of water on the table each night. There is no need to provide squash or fizzy drinks.
- * Rather than dishing up the food onto plates, please put the food in the middle of the table so the students can help themselves. There is nothing more daunting than a great plate full of food that you do not recognise - but this will also save you money as leftovers can be frozen and re-used.
- * If your student has an allergy or medical condition we will endeavor to tell you in advance so you can adapt your menu to suit.
- * Muslims are treated as vegetarians, as we don't expect you to buy expensive (and difficult to get hold of) Halal meat.
- * Any queries about special diets or food related matters - just ask your Coordinators. They are experienced hosts and will be happy to give you ideas as what to do, within budget.