

CALIFORNIA CLOSETS®

How To Avoid Family Fights & Holiday Heckling Over The Dinner Table

How to get along—or just get through the meal—when there’s a cornucopia of relationship issues on the holiday table.

BY KATIE O’DONNELL



PHOTO BY CHET GORDON

The turkey’s burning, the in-laws aren’t speaking, and 20-years-sober Uncle Bob is eyeing the gin—not exactly the picture-perfect holiday you’d hoped for, huh? Take comfort: All families have their issues, and the pressures of the holidays can ruffle

even the closest, most harmonious kin. With that in mind, we asked a couple of local experts how to circumvent some common potential disasters when the family gets together.

New Guests

Meeting the clan all at once can be intimidating for new guests, notes Melissa Leonard, owner of Westchester etiquette and protocol agency [Establish Yourself NY](#). “Ask questions to get to know them, but don’t just interrogate. Tell them about yourself as well.” And set an example of inclusivity: “Don’t just stick to the usual crowd,” and help point out connections or common interests between old faces and new. When it comes to saying goodbye, she says, “It is okay to give them a handshake and kiss on the cheek. This will make them feel like their presence was a success.”

Elephants in the Room

To preempt any blowouts or meltdowns due to recent, rocky events or longstanding tension—like a couple in the midst of a divorce—Innes Frey, founder of Family Therapy of Westchester, advises preparing ahead of time: “Address the issue by calling each individual family member and explain, ‘Let’s be courteous and sensitive to each other during this special time, for the best of all.’” Embracing the holiday in respect, she says, “That’s number one.” If you’re hosting, politely add, “When you come to my place, please respect my boundaries.”

Heads Butting

If friction arises between guests, Frey advises, gently and discreetly ask the instigator (or both, separately) to leave the room with you for a few seconds and say something like, “We’re all gathered together as a family and we need to be comfortable with each other at least for a few hours.” Frey says it’s best to “subdue the conflict with a quiet talk—away from the main party—where people can calm down and relax, not a big conversation.” If you’re one of the aggressors, compromise with the other person by saying, “Let’s be in good spirits at least for today. Our differences can be talked about after the fact, not now.”

Hot-Button Topics

“Some family members may bring up your ‘strong views’ just to get a rise out of you, so be prepared,” says Leonard about your heated stance on politics or other controversial issues. “It takes a lot of self-control to not get sucked into the conversation.” Repeat a calming motto like “nice and easy” or sing *Frozen*’s “Let It Go” in your head to keep cool, she advises. To stick to “safe” conversation starters, “use the Eleanor Roosevelt A-to-Z method. ‘A’ is for animals—ask someone how their dog has been. ‘B’ is for baseball, and so on.” And “when in doubt,” Leonard says, “shut your mouth.”

What To Read Next

You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola 

Maple - Delivery Too Good To Be True?

Grubstreet | Maple

New York Drivers With No Tickets In 3 Years Are Surprised By This New Rule

Provide Savings Insurance Quotes

We Tried Blue Apron: Here's What Happened

Liberty Project for BlueApron

Salesforce Dominates Worldwide CRM & Other Q4 Highlights

Salesforce

Brilliant Mortgage Payoff Method Has Banks On Edge

Comparisons.org

Crowdfunding is Changing Real Estate Investing

TechCrunch | Realtyshares

The Production Print Guide to Workflow Automation: Part II

WorkIntelligent.ly by Ricoh

Thinking Of Buying A New Couch? Go To This Site First

Wayfair

You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola 

Maple - Delivery Too Good To Be True?

Grubstreet | Maple

New York Drivers With No Tickets In 3 Years Are Surprised By This New Rule

Provide Savings Insurance Quotes

Salesforce Dominates Worldwide CRM & Other Q4 Highlights

Salesforce

Brilliant Mortgage Payoff Method Has Banks On Edge

Comparisons.org

Crowdfunding is Changing Real Estate Investing

TechCrunch | Realtyshares

The Production Print Guide to Workflow Automation: Part II

WorkIntelligent.ly by Ricoh

I'm a Woman Who Joined Dollar Shave Club. Here's What Happened...

Dollar Shave Club

Thinking Of Buying A New Couch? Go To This Site First

Wayfair

WESTCHESTER MAGAZINE'S
**WINE & FOOD
FESTIVAL**

June 8-11, 2016

**CLICK HERE
FOR TICKETS!**

www.westchestermagazine.com/winefood

RELATED STORIES



Your Guide To Westchester's Top Summer Camps



Breaking Racial Barriers In WWII



14 For The 14th: The Ultimate Valentine's Day Dining Guide





5 Top Trails To Hike In The Snow In Westchester

iFLY
INDOOR SKYDIVING

Book Your
Party Now!
Mitzvahs, Corporate
and Birthdays

iFLY INDOOR SKYDIVING
914-358-4868
K992VERSE@IFLYWORLD.COM

Choose two
FREE APPLIANCES
VALUED UP TO \$3,798 with YOUR QUALIFYING PURCHASE

MONOGRAM.COM
MONOGRAM

LEIBERT'S
ROYAL  GREEN
APPLIANCE CENTER

Home

Eat & Drink

Life & Style

Arts & Culture

Insider Guides

Best of Westchester

Subscriber Services

[Advertise with Us](#)

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Magazine Archives](#)

[Newsstand Locations](#)

[Digital Edition](#)

Copyright 2016 Today Media. All rights reserved.

powered by **RIVISTA** | [Privacy Policy](#)