

THE VINSON VIEW

Quality maniac and Nick Vinson on the who, what, when, where and why



HOW TO GET CANAPÉS RIGHT

Almonds are always a good option for the plant-based purists, though they must be offered in a dish with a scoop to serve yourself, and with a napkin to hand.

Cheese toasties, with or without truffle, should not be more than 4cm square. And should be served warm.

Chunks of good Parmesan. The best is the Vacche Rosse Parmigiano Reggiano, made from the milk of an ancient breed in Emilia-Romagna.

Crudités are fine, but avoid cherry tomatoes as they might squirt.

Avoid anything too greasy.

Cakes, tarts and chocolates are not canapés. There is no need to offer sugar.

Focus on the quality of the ingredients, rather than the quantity of canapés.

Make sure that you have enough waiters with empty trays to take dirty glasses and used napkins away. Guests should never feel they must put them with the new drinks or canapés.

01 When Picky Nicky won't bite

Say no to canapés (unless they are monogrammed, of course)

You work in luxury goods, your brand or client is hosting an important event and you have hired a great catering company to serve champagne, wine and canapés. Why would you think that it is OK for you and your team to welcome guests while munching a mouthful of food?

Just recently, I was introduced to the new communications director of a luxury house by the CEO at an in-store event, and the new boy greeted me with a gobful of filo pastry. It's impossible to keep your mouth shut when you are speaking; all that munching and masticating is just yucky.

On an other occasion, at pre-dinner drinks for a very smart Mayfair restaurant that was launching its new private dining salon with an A-list crowd of tastemakers, I met with the company's PR, who was very happy to meet Picky Nicky – but would not shake my hand as he told me he had a chewed olive stone in his fist.

Rule No 1: If it's your event, leave the canapés for the guests, eat beforehand to make sure you have the stamina for the night ahead and tell your team that a no-canapé rule applies if they are working.

Jeremy Langmead, our editor-in-chief when I joined Wallpaper* in 2003, was a champion of the no-canapé rule, not only for hosts but for W* team members out and about. I must say I quite liked the idea

and adopted it. In those days, you might pack in 20 events a day. Today, it's a lot fewer, but on average there could be three to five a week (and hundreds during Salone del Mobile each April in Milan). I just drink water, and pass on the snacks, although I will Instagram a good-looking Prada tray with signature anchovy, lemon and butter sandwiches.

As to what to serve, I turned to the High Priestess of Party Planning, Fiona Leahy of the eponymous London-based creative event agency, to double-check the rules. We agreed: offerings should be bite-sized – a canapé is not a meal. Avoid anything that leaves guests with a stick or a stone, and anything on a fork or a spoon, as the last thing people need to do is to spend the evening gripping the remains of something or distracted by the search for an empty tray. No foam, no froth, no crumbling filo pastry; just keep it simple – no one needs an exciting canapé. Leahy served up my favourite bite (the one I break the rule for), a truffled cheese toasty, at the launch of the *Louis Vuitton Windows* book at Assouline. Hers were LV-monogrammed on a custom-made grill.

Napkins are a must, and should only be linen or cotton, and not much more than 15cm square. Black paper napkins are naff and finding discarded paper napkins of any colour among fine watches (as I did recently) is as bad as open-mouth masticating.



02

Cocktail hour

The 'Chin Chin' cocktail napkin is a 1950s design appliquéd by hand in Florence by TAF Ricami, a purveyor of fine linens. tafricami.com



03

Trays chic

My current obsession is used original pieces by David Marshall, who casts aluminium and brass into brutalist and abstract forms. pamono.com