



Welcome Dinner FAQ

Information for the guest

Arrival

Berlin is a new city for you and it's natural that you don't know your way around yet. Ask for a detailed description of the best way to get to your host's apartment and find out about nearby bus stops or train stations. If you feel unsure, maybe ask your host to pick you up. You could for example arrange a meeting point near a station or even at your place.

Punctuality

Please try to be on time for the dinner. Your host will have prepared dinner for you and expects you to be there at the arranged time. In case something happens and you expect to be late 30 minutes or more, please let your host know via phone or text message.

Hostess gifts

Your host does not expect a gift, but he will of course be pleasantly surprised by a small present. If you want to say thank you for the invitation a nice way to do so could be to bring flowers, sweets like chocolate or pralines or a bottle of wine.

Greeting

Since you probably have been in Berlin a little while, you will have noticed that Germans tend to greet each other with a handshake or among friends even with hugs and kisses. Also it is customary to look the person you are talking to in the eye. This is seen as polite, attentive and appreciative. Please don't be surprised when somebody gets closer to you than you are used to. If you feel uncomfortable, mention it out loud or let your partner know through a little gesture.

Arriving at the apartment

Most people in Berlin take their shoes off when entering other people's homes. The easiest and most polite way would be to simply ask your hosts whether he wants you to take your shoes off.

Food

There may be certain types of food that you do not eat. There are many allergies and food intolerances, but also cultural and religious reasons for certain food taboos. The host may not be familiar with all the rules. For that reason, please explain to him before your dinner what types of food you don't eat. Your host will consider that when he prepares the dinner. There are also many people in Berlin that cook vegetarian, that means without meat. Tip: If you want to keep it simple, just ask for a meal without meat and alcohol - that way you run the least amount of risk.

A regular dinner table will be set so that everyone eats using his own plate and cutlery is used unless fingerfood is explicitly mentioned

Information for the host

Arrival

Berlin is an unknown environment for your guest, maybe the guest doesn't immediately find the right way. He may also not know the front and rear building structure typical for apartment blocks in Berlin. For that reason it is important that you explain in detail to your guest the best way to get to your place. Maybe pick him up from a predefined meeting spot like a bus stop or train station or even from his accommodation.

Punctuality

Please be aware that not everything may go according to plan and your guest could be late. Also German punctuality is not an international trait.

Hostess gifts

Your guest may present you a gift as a way of saying thank you for the invitation. Please accept it with joy and appreciation. In case the gift is wrapped, it not always expected that they are opened straight away but rather after the guest has left.

Greeting

A Welcome Dinner is also a little cultural adventure - other cultures have different rules and customs. If you feel some reservation, it could be due to the fact that in many cultures it is not customary for women and men to touch - or even shake hands. Some cultures even try to avoid eye contact between men and women. In any case, no one needs to go through an intercultural prep course. When in doubt, simply ask...

Arriving at the apartment

It will most likely be the first time for your guest to enter a private home in Berlin. He may be insecure about the correct conduct. Welcome him or her openly and show him what is customary in your home. He will realise quickly that it's actually very similar to what he knows. For instance it is customary in many parts of the world to take one's shoes off when entering someone's home.

Food

Your guest may not eat certain types of food. There are many allergies and food intolerances, but also cultural and religious reasons for certain food taboos. It is a very personal decision about how strict one follows such rules so that we can't make any general statements. While we requested that information during registration, maybe ask your guest once more before the dinner. Halal is food prepared in line with Islamic rules. Officially that excludes alcohol and meat is only allowed if it bears an official Halal-Seal. Many muslims do not take this particularly seriously and often eat everything but pork. Best way would be to simply ask your guest for his preferences. Tip: If you want to keep it simple, just prepare a meal without meat and alcohol - that way you run the least amount of risk.

Based on our experience, many guests eat very little. That could simply be due to them being a little reserved. However, in many cultures it is common for the host to offer a second helping 2 to 3 times before the guest accepts since an immediate "yes" would be considered impolite. To be sure simply ask your guest a couple times more !

Conversation / Language

If it turns out to be difficult to start a conversation, the following ideas might help:

- Show your host photos and ask to see some from him or her
- Let your host show you on a globe or atlas where they are from or where they would like to travel to
- Tell your host about your hobbies, do you play an instrument, what are your favorite movies? Do you have things in common with your hosts?
 - Or simply play a game: Card or other games are a good way to overcome any language barrier
- Your hosts are very aware that there are parts of your story that have been very difficult for you. It is not required nor expected to talk about everything and nobody has to explain oneself for the situation in their home country. If there is a topic that you do not want to talk about, please mention that clearly. It will be no problem that way.
- There are many picture dictionaries or vocabulary tables on the internet especially for the communication between refugees and volunteers. A translator-app on your smartphone like the google translator could also be helpful <https://translate.google.de/?hl=de>

Questions, Consulting

Maybe you have questions regarding language courses, finding an apartment or a place to work, or maybe regarding asylum law in Germany. Don't hesitate to ask your host - but please be aware that your host may not know an answer to many of these topics without first researching them. Don't be disappointed in case your host cannot offer immediate advice. Maybe he can give you tips about where to find a competent support person.

Further information can also be found on the following pages:

<http://umap.openstreetmap.fr/en/map/arriving-in-berlin-a-map-made-by-refugees-english-42855#12/52.4992/13.4922>

<http://www.fluechtlingsrat-berlin.de>

<https://netzwerkfluechtlingeberlin.wordpress.com>

[http://www.start-with-a-](http://www.start-with-a-friend.de/app/download/10084651521/Hilfsangebote%20f%C3%BCr%20Fl%C3%BChtlinge%20in%20Berlin-%C3%9C%C3%9Cbersicht%20und%20Adressen%2017.09.15.pdf?t=1442482770)

[friend.de/app/download/10084651521/Hilfsangebote%20f%C3%BCr%20Fl%C3%BChtlinge%20in%20Berlin-%C3%9C%C3%9Cbersicht%20und%20Adressen%2017.09.15.pdf?t=1442482770](http://www.start-with-a-friend.de/app/download/10084651521/Hilfsangebote%20f%C3%BCr%20Fl%C3%BChtlinge%20in%20Berlin-%C3%9C%C3%9Cbersicht%20und%20Adressen%2017.09.15.pdf?t=1442482770)

Conversation / Language

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- Let your guess show you on a globe or atlas where they are from or where they would like to travel to
 - Show them your favorite music or videos and talk about your other interests and activities
 - Or simply start a game: Jenga, Mikado or card games will overcome any language barrier.
- You may ask yourself whether there are any taboo topics. Please be sensitive discussing religion, medical condition or the financial situation of your guests. It may be uncomfortable for your guests to be asked questions about the political situation in their home country, since they love and miss their homes, yet do not want to justify their government or the situation at home.
- There are many picture dictionaries or vocabulary tables on the internet especially for the communication between refugees and volunteers. A translator-app on your smartphone like the google translator could also be helpful <https://translate.google.de/?hl=de>

Questions, Consulting

It's possible that during your conversations questions regarding language courses, find a place to stay/work or asylum law come up. No one expects you to know the answers to all of these questions and to be able to offer advice in these areas. It's important that you do not make promises that raise expectations. There are many information centres, initiatives, and online support offerings. If you want to support, it can already be of great help if you connect your guest to a competent support contact.

Further information can also be found on the following pages:

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By having a dinner together, both of you, guest and host, contribute to better understanding, integration and finally peaceful social interaction. The guest feels welcome and enjoys insights into the Berlin way of life. For the host, the anonymous group of New-Berliners becomes more personal, he gets to know a person that was previously only known to him through media as a "wave" or "mass".

This is a great contribution and we are thank both of you.

We, as Welcome Dinner Berlin, want you to be able to get to know each other on a level playing field. To achieve that challenge, you must approach each other openly, friendly and with respect. Many things will be "strange", or more optimistically "new" to you. Some things may seem odd or even make you laugh. There may be topics that have not played a role in your life before or topics that were seen or judged differently in the environment that you grew up in compared to your dinner partner. This could be regarding politics, justice, way of life, religion or Family and gender questions. You don't have to share the views of your dinner partner and you most certainly don't have to adopt them, yet we ask for mutual tolerance. By having dinner together you get the chance to find out what you have in common despite the above mentioned differences.

Your Welcome-Dinner-Berlin-Team