




# Flatware Purchasing & Care Guide



While flatware is often selected after china and glassware patterns are chosen, it is still an important decision to be made with great care. There is an intimate connection made with utensils since guests touch and hold flatware throughout their meal. To keep a favorable sensory experience for your patrons, read on for tips on choosing, caring for and storing flatware.

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## Choosing Flatware

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While choice in flatware ultimately comes down to personal taste, your pattern selection should still consider the following:

### Look and style of your dining room

Since flatware is often chosen after china, you'll want to select utensils that complement the style of your dinnerware to create a harmonizing look.

### Handling and feel

Consider the weight, shape and texture and target clientele when testing the feel of forks, spoons and knives in your hand. Guests will be handling these pieces the most throughout their visit. Flatware with thinner stems may be the preferred choice for a more elegant setting where heavier, larger pieces are a better fit in a rustic display.

### Your menu

While all flatware lines include five main pieces - [dinner fork](#), [salad fork](#), [oval bowl spoon](#), [teaspoon](#) and a [dinner knife](#) - not all have the more specialty items like a [cocktail fork](#) and [butter knife](#). When service includes appetizers, soups or desserts that require a specific utensil, choose a flatware pattern that has all essential tools. View our [Tabletop Setting Guide](#) for an overview on when to set which flatware pieces.

### Is it magnetized?

Magnetized flatware can help to reduce loss when used in combination with [flatware retrievers](#). Using both will reduce reorders, prevent shortages, and improve your bottom line.

### Weight

Typically the heavier the weight, the sturdier the utensils. However, the heavier weight means a higher price point. Consider your budget and take loss into consideration when choosing a weight.

### Material

Most flatware used in restaurants is made from stainless steel. It's very rare for eateries to use genuine silver or even silverplated stainless steel utensils due to the amount of time and care required to keep pieces looking pristine. You'll likely choose between 18/0, 18/8 and 18/10 S/S. Get more details on the differences between the three materials later in this guide.





## Flatware Material



There are several different types of materials - some even have types within types. Each one has its own pros and cons.

### **Sterling Silver**

Flatware made from sterling silver is commonly used for fine dining and in formal settings. Composed of at least 92.5% silver and 7.5% other metals (usually copper), these utensils have intrinsic value. If cared for properly, the metal will not easily tarnish. See tips for avoiding tarnished silver in the care section of this guide.

### **Silverplated**

Silverplated flatware is a great alternative to sterling silver to maintain a high-end appeal while lowering overall cost. Silverplated pieces have either a nickel, copper or zinc base and coated in a layer of silver. If not treated properly, this type of utensil is vulnerable to tarnishing and corrosion. When handled poorly, the silver coating may scrape off, exposing the base and leaving it susceptible to erosion.



### **Stainless Steel**

Perhaps the most common material found in restaurant flatware, stainless steel is made from a mixture of steel, chromium and nickel, making it resistant to wear and tear. The chromium increases the product's hardness and makes the pieces tarnish-resistant while nickel resists rust and corrosion and allows for a polished look. There are four grades of stainless steel flatware: 18/10, 18/8, 18/0 and 13/0.

#### **18/10**

18/10 flatware is comprised of 18% chromium and 10% nickel. Of the three types of stainless steel, 18/10 is the most durable and the most expensive. It also has a higher luster than 18/8 and 18/0 and offers maximum protection against corrosion, food and cleaning.





### **18/8**

18/8 flatware is comprised of 18% chromium and 8% nickel. This option is somewhere between 18/10 and 18/0 in terms of quality and price point.

### **18/0**

18/0 flatware is comprised of 18% chromium and 0% nickel. While at a lower price point, 18/0 flatware is not as lustrous or resistant to stains and rust as stainless steel with a higher nickel content. Utensils made from 18/0 stainless steel can be used with magnetic flatware retrievers and scrap blocks.

### **13/0**

13/0 flatware is comprised of 13% chromium and 0% nickel. While most flatware patterns are made from 18% chromium composition, knife blades are commonly made from stainless steel with a 13% chromium composition.



## Care & Storage

Proper care and storage of your flatware will extend service life and help cut back on how often you order replacements. Below are easy tips to implement for care of your flatware.

### Do's:

- Load flatware into presoak containers immediately after use
- Change the presoak solution frequently
- Store flatware in a dry area away from cooking fumes and corrosive materials
- Wash flatware in a [vertical position](#) in temperatures above 135°F, and rinse in clean water at 180°F
- Use a nonabrasive, noncorrosive cleaning agent and a water softener or wetting agent
- Dry immediately after washing
- Remove tarnish with an [aluminum pan and baking soda](#)

### Don'ts:

- Presoak flatware for longer than 15 minutes
- Load flatware into aluminum, copper, or copper alloy containers for presoaking; use only [plastic or stainless steel](#)
- Put flatware into glasses or cups for transportation and storage; use [cutlery boxes](#) or [cylinders](#)
- Leave flatware soiled overnight