

## 67 - Utensils

You probably use a fork, spoon or knife every single day -- but who invented them? Did you know knives are thought to be the oldest utensils -- and that forks were once considered... bad luck?

While the knife and spoon have been used as eating utensils since prehistoric times, eating with forks is relatively new. Though ancient people had used forks for cooking, it was rare to see one at the dinner table. But then something happened at a wedding feast in a region now known as Italy.

The niece of the Byzantine emperor had married the Lord of Venice. The guests were enjoying their meals, and since this was the year 1004, they were eating it with their fingers. That's when the Bride pulled out a new, golden utensil the noble people in her country had been using to eat with. It was... a fork. The bride was ridiculed by local leaders who believed her fork was an unnatural, extravagant luxury at a time when such luxuries were considered works of the Devil.

In fact, forks became associated with the Devil -- which is why your Devil Halloween costume comes with a plastic pitchfork; and why most drawings of the Devil show him holding a long fork with two or three points at the end. When the Bride died tragically a few years later, people actually blamed... the fork! They became nervous about using the utensil, and some places banned it altogether because of its sinister reputation.

## What You Will Learn

1. How did people eat before utensils?
2. Why did a French King make pointed knives illegal in 1669?
3. Why was the 'spoon' invented and what does the word 'spoon' mean?

## Activities

1. Do you have younger children learning how to use utensils -- or, older kids who are struggling to master table skills? [This](#) article has some great suggestions for making dinner time less stressful and a wonderful learning experience.
2. Utensils are an important part of our daily lives. They are also a great way to introduce chores and incorporate sorting. If you have a dishwasher, ask the kids to unload it and put the dishes away! If you wash dishes by hand, have the kids dry and

put away the dishes. Keep a sticker chart and plan a fun family activity when they get a certain number of stickers.

3. Looking for some sensory play? Beans or rice in a large container make a wonderful sensory bin. Give the kids some plastic cups, spoons, plastic utensils, or small, plastic dishes to practice scooping, pouring, and pretending. If they invite you to their new restaurant, play along and order a burger.

## Additional Resources

If you have older kids, ask them to help set the table. Plan a sit down dinner as a family and discuss table manners. You could cover talking with your mouth full, keeping elbows off the table, sitting properly in a chair, how to order off a menu, and tipping. Bonus points for having the kids calculate a pretend tip!

## Kid News

Have you ever tried to get your dog to do something it didn't want to do? Did you pick it up and move it? Did you bribe it with a treat? How would you convince a giraffe to get on a boat? Conservationists in Kenya needed to move a herd of giraffes to a safer location by boat. The only problem was the giraffes did not want to get on the boat. Read about their heroic efforts to save an endangered species [here](#).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast [www.WhoSmarted.com](http://www.WhoSmarted.com)