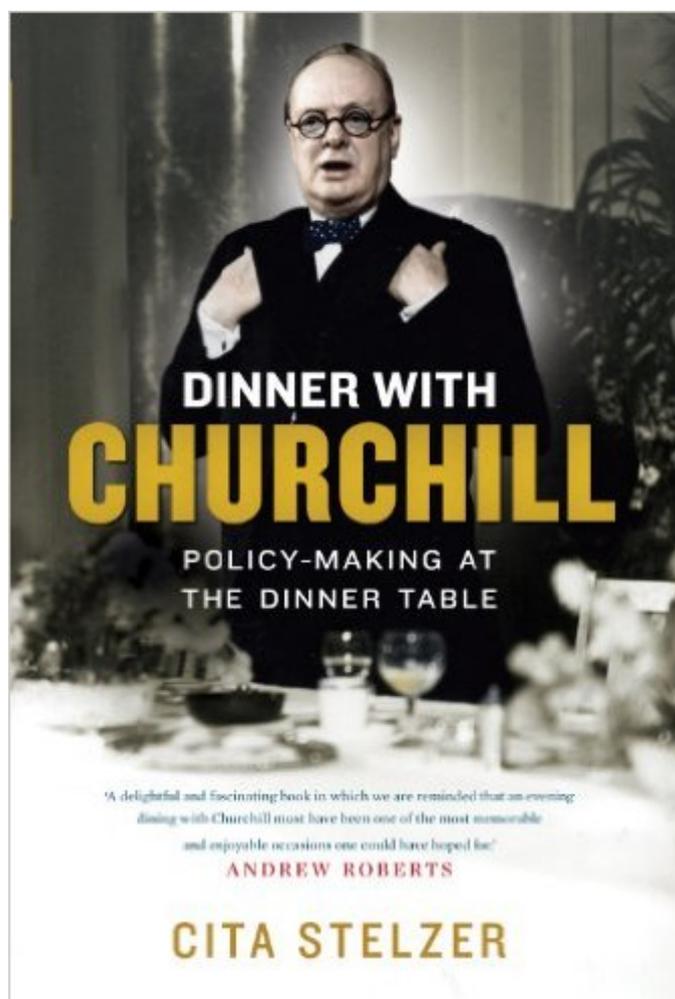


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Dinner With Churchill: Policy-Making At The Dinner Table



Synopsis

A friend once said of Churchill "He is a man of simple tastes; he is quite easily satisfied with the best of everything." But dinners for Churchill were about more than good food, excellent champagnes and Havana cigars. "Everything" included the opportunity to use the dinner table both as a stage on which to display his brilliant conversational talents, and an intimate setting in which to glean gossip and diplomatic insights, and to argue for the many policies he espoused over a long life. In this riveting, informative and entertaining book Cita Stelzer draws on previously untapped archival material, diaries of guests, and a wide variety of other sources to tell of some of the key dinners at which Churchill presided before, during and after World War II - including the important conferences at which he used his considerable skills to attempt to persuade his allies, Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin, to fight the war according to his strategic vision. With fascinating new insights into the food he ate, the champagnes he loved, as well as original menus, seating plans and unpublished photographs, Dinner with Churchill is a sumptuous treat. The next best thing to being there yourself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Enroute through Scotland to Newfoundland for his August, 1941 meeting with Roosevelt, Churchill ordered a grouse hunt outside Perth for the Presidential dinner that would come later aboard HMS Prince of Wales. Is that interesting? Yes it is, along with a hundred other details showing Churchill's extreme care in planning and carrying out dinner parties as instruments of statesmanship. When Pearl Harbor was attacked four months later, the US public was in a rage against Japan. Contrary to the American mood, Churchill wanted a "Germany first" policy. So he got himself invited to the White

House and stayed for three weeks. The President and the Prime Minister dined most nights, with brandy, tobacco, and talk until 2 or 3 am. The policy that emerged was "Germany first." Author Cita Stelzer whirls us through the great conferences, Casablanca, Adana, Teheran, Yalta, Potsdam, describing the structures, the décor, the place settings, the hors d'oeuvres, entrees, and desserts, the spirits, the wines, and the music, illustrating with photos and reproduced menus. She has found a little-examined corner of the copious historical record, and researched it diligently. All this is fairly interesting, sort of like a museum tour, but has the nourishment content of a soufflé rather than a roast. There are repeated quotes about Churchill's wit, charm, and persuasiveness, but scarcely a word out of his mouth. We are given the stage settings, but none of the performance. This is a "fill out the details" book. Seasoned Churchillians will be fascinated; novices will be lost. Stelzer devotes a chapter to the much-discussed issue of Churchill's drinking.

The importance of personal contacts is the lesson of a sparkling new book by Hudson Institute scholar Cita Stelzer on former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. It also holds lessons for us today. At the end of 2012, America was saved from going off the fiscal cliff by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Vice President Joe Biden, who had spent decades together in the Senate--on opposite sides of the aisle. They negotiated a last-minute tax bill on December 30 and 31. Stelzer tells the story of what former Prime Minister Winston Churchill accomplished through personal interaction over meals all over the world. Complete with descriptions of menus, guests, Champagne, wine, whiskey (Churchill was not an alcoholic, Stelzer tells us), and cigars, the book is a window into a vital historical period where Britain and America triumphed over Germany and together won World War II. Using examples from the 1900s to the 1950s, Stelzer explains that Churchill made it his business to get to know friends and opponents alike by inviting them to dinner. She writes, "No matter the circumstances--whether in the dining room at Chartwell or on a picnic chair in the desert--Churchill's profound belief in the importance of face-to-face meetings, and his unshakeable confidence in his ability to get his own way in such intimate encounters, never wavered." For example, at dinners in 1941 aboard American and British ships in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, Churchill persuaded President Franklin Delano Roosevelt that Britain would not collapse as had France, and convinced him to gear up war production, which kept Britain afloat until America entered the war in December 1941. Not all dinners showed such success, as Stelzer admits.

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