TEN HOSPITALITY-DO'S AND DON'TS IN RURAL ARMENIA

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By Lucine Kasbarian, New Jersey, USA, 22 December 2025

Since joining a Diaspora-Armenia tent camping and hiking cooperative operating in Bjni, Armenia, I have become a regular visitor to this ancient hamlet. Upon observing the Armenian practices among the residents of this 4,000-person village, I found that some were universally Armenian habits, a few practices were largely forgotten from years of Diaspora living, and yet other traditions were relatively new. How many of these customs resonate with you?

1. It is polite to greet elders first when encountering them on the street.
2. It's still common practice to show up unannounced at someone's home, but making advance plans is becoming more acceptable and even preferred, especially among the younger generations.
3. People telephone to confirm plans with others a few times before the actual date. A week before, the day before, and the day of.
4. Residents do not let calls from familiar people go to voicemail. If it's inconvenient, they pick up anyway and say that they cannot talk but will call back later.
5. When celebrating birthdays, it's the person having the birthday that organizes a gathering and pays for everyone.
6. When guests arrive at someone's home, even if they are construction workers, the hostess must serve coffee before anything commences. Guests (not service workers) should bring gifts such as flowers, candy or sweets.
7. If you are a female guest in someone's home, the first order of business is to ask the lady of the house how you can help in the kitchen. It is also common for the men and guests to start eating before the women have finished their kitchen work and join the table.
8. Hosts place all foods for guests on serving plates. Nothing is served from a store-bought container. When serving lavash with a meal, the large oval "loaves" are cut into squares and bagged to prevent dry-out. It is poor form to put uncut "loaves" on the dining table.
9. Local mineral water, tahn, juice-compotes and alcohol, preferably vodka, are served with dinner. At special occasions, cognac will appear. The host keeps everyone's glass full. All should be prepared to make meaningful toasts about the participants, the occasion, the motherland and their ancestors.
10. Foreign guests who have received local hospitality should leave parting gifts, preferably from their country of origin.

Photo: Lucine enjoying singular hospitality from the Davtyan family of Bjni in July 2025. From L-R: Alvard, Lucine and Tatik.

Lucine Kasbarian *is an author, syndicated journalist, book publicist, and political cartoonist who regularly contributes to Keghart.org.*

There are no comments yet.