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## How To Be A Matchbook Snob

*[From Universal Hi-Lights, May 1972]*

It's a cheap thrill being a matchbook snob. This is oneupmanship in its most economical form. The trick is to impress someone with the matches you carry. In other words, if your clothes are a little tacky and your car is showing rust, you have a tough time strutting your self-image before your peers.

So, let's say you and the neighbors are out for dinner, Dutch-treat, of course. You're at a spaghetti joint which is all you can afford. The wife should pipe up at the appropriate moment: "Light the candle, sweetheart. I do so enjoy candlelight while we dine."

The husband should forget the Zippo in his right pocket, the lighter he found on a golf course in 1958. He reaches instead for the little book of matches in his shirt pocket and laboriously lights the candle, casually tossing the book--face up--onto the tablecloth. It's from the Blue Horse or the Rosewood Room.

The wife follows up immediately. "I love coming here. Such a change of...pace. And no fuss or bother. One can really relax in an atmosphere like this."

Start collecting matchbooks for upcoming tablecloth-tossings. We have them from the Lexington, the Blue Horse, Lowell Inn, Charlie's, Camelot and several others. Otherwise, you may be embarrassed in your innocence.

Suppose, for example, you are having lunch with a prospective employer and the employer is fumbling for a light. Impulsively, you pull out a book of matches and light up said prospective employer, tableclothing the matches. He looks down and sees "Never Finished High School?"

My wife has a nightmare once a week where she is offering a match to Julia Child, the French chef, and all she has is a matchbook advertising "Hunt's Tomato Sauce" with a recipe for instant tacos on the jacket.

A serious matchbook snob, of course, has elevated himself to a more heady plateau. He or she will carry matches with no advertising at all. To impress a date or friend, the elite matchbook snob whips out a petite box of wax-coated matchsticks, scratching furiously across the side striking panel of the box. The match bends and sputters and never lights: "Damned Italian matches..." the snob mutters, reaching for the candle of the headwaiter for assistance.

Matchbook snobbery can fit a particular individual. Skiers comes to mind immediately. While stumbling around the gentle pastures of local ski resorts, a ski snob could brandish flames from the most celebrated and expensive resorts of the western world.

Salesmen, on the other hand, may require two sets of matchbooks from hotels. One is for the clients, showing his prosperity and success and insinuating he is at the Waldorf. Upon his return to the home office, however, he quickly changes to matches from the Hotel Hoot Owl, giving his boss the illusion of frugality.

*[Thanks to Sue Steinnerd, MO, for sending this in]*