

# Smartphone-free dining thanks to signal-blocking tablecloth

This smart tablecloth will silence your smartphone

These days, we don't seem to be able to function without our phones. This phenomenon triggered designer Ralf Lambie to create SAMEN: The social tablecloth that encourages people to ignore their phones while eating. The special pockets in the tablecloth work like a Faraday Cage: no messages or calls come in, and there are no vibrations or illuminated screens. No quick googling or sharing pictures of your meal on Instagram, just focusing on your dinner partners.



SAMEN, copyright Lucie Beck

## SAMEN, the world's first Faraday tablecloth

In Dutch, the word 'samen' means together. And that is what this tablecloth is about: reuniting people around the dinner table. SAMEN blocks your phone's distractions and promotes face-to-face interaction. It encourages you to temporarily store your smartphone in one of the signal-blocking pockets during a dinner party. This allows you to talk to your lover, friends, or family without being interrupted. The rest of the world can wait.

### **The New Luxury: back to old-fashioned dining**

Our phones play increasingly important roles in our lives, even at the very dining table. Look around any restaurant, and you will notice straight away that many people are interacting with their smartphones. They seem more interested in what's going on in the outside world than right at their own table.

And that's such a shame. Researchers at British Columbia University<sup>1</sup> discovered that people who use their smartphones during dinner with family or friends enjoy it less than those who don't. And research conducted at Virginia Tech<sup>2</sup> showed that the mere presence of a smartphone, even when it isn't used, has a negative impact on the quality of one-on-one conversations. People are less likely to open up to the other person and have more difficulty expressing their deeper feelings.

1 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022103117301737>

2 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0013916514539755>

### **Results (so far)**

SAMEN was presented as a prototype in April 2019. Since then, the signal-tablecloth has been widely reported by both national and international press.

SAMEN clearly takes a stand and uses the power of innovative design to put the subject of our excessive smartphone usage on the agenda. We believe that this innovative design offers a powerful solution to a problem that will become increasingly urgent in the years to come.