

WARM UP

1 Look at the picture and answer these questions.

- 1 Which of these uniforms would you expect waiting staff to wear in a café or fast food restaurant?
- 2 Which would you expect them to wear in fine dining restaurants?

A waiter's uniform: from cafés to fine dining restaurants



The once classic waiter's uniform – a white shirt; a black tie; either a waistcoat or a jacket; trousers or a skirt for women, complete with a long apron – is now as diverse as the types of food outlet available in the hospitality industry. Today, restaurants or hospitality companies often choose their waiters' uniforms to reflect their own particular style. More casual environments, such as cafés, fast food outlets or bars, often adopt simple uniforms such as a plain T-shirt with the company logo, a pair of jeans and an apron. While waiters in restaurants that want to project a more sophisticated image may still be dressed in the more classic shirt and tie style. It is however important that waiting staff do not look a lot smarter than their customers, who are increasingly dressing more casually to go out to eat at a restaurant.

When choosing waiters' uniforms, style and image are not the only factors that food outlets consider. Waiting tables is hard work, so waiters' uniforms also need to be functional and comfortable, particularly the shoes. A uniform needs to stand up to the wear and tear of the job and to frequent washing, without making it look worn, old or discoloured. So the secret seems to be a uniform which is casual and comfortable, yet at the same time fashionable and appropriate to the restaurant or café style. Recently, top fashion designer Bruce Oldfield restyled the uniforms for the staff of the multinational fast food chain McDonald's, in an attempt to portray a new 21st century cool and modern image.

ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text about different types of waiting staff uniforms and answer these questions.

- 1 What is the traditional waiter's uniform?
- 2 How do restaurants choose the uniforms for their waiting staff today?
- 3 Nowadays, what can you expect to find staff in cafés, fast food outlets or bars wearing?
- 4 What can increasingly be the problem with staff uniforms in fine dining restaurants?
- 5 What other considerations should a food outlet make when selecting uniforms for its waiting staff?
- 6 What is the new uniform style of McDonald's fast food chain?

SPEAKING

3 Work in pairs. You are the food and beverage manager and the head waiter of a café, fast food outlet, ethnic restaurant or a fine dining restaurant. Discuss and decide together on a new uniform for your waiting staff, which reflects the correct image for your food outlet. You can also create a logo and produce some rough sketches if you wish. Use the following words and phrases to help you.

We should choose something ... casual/sophisticated/modern/traditional/simple.
 I agree with you. I like the idea of ... • I don't agree with you. I prefer a ... classic/modern image.
 The waiters should/could wear ... dark/straight/casual/smart/long ...
 The waitresses should/could wear ... short/long/dark/light/casual/smart ...
 What do you think about this logo? • Have you got any ideas for our logo?
 I really like it./I quite like it./It's not bad, but ... I think/don't think it works really well!

- A I think we should choose something modern but sophisticated.
- B I agree with you. I like the idea of the waiters wearing jeans and light shirts without a tie.

4 Present your uniform designs to the class. Then vote for the design you prefer.

Our uniforms are designed for a fast food pizza outlet. We like the idea of a modern, sophisticated image, so...