

# 7 In the Restaurant

## CATERING IN THEORY

### The restaurant staff

#### Service brigade

The service brigade is responsible for the smooth running of front-of-house.

- The **food and beverage manager** or restaurant manager has overall responsibility for the bar and the restaurant.
- Next comes the **head waiter** who oversees the day-to-day running and service in the dining room.
- The **station waiter** is in charge of particular areas of a restaurant with a number of tables and staff to supervise.
- The **waiters** serve and look after customers at their tables.
- **The busboy** or training waiter works behind the scenes preparing the dining room for service and clearing it after service.
- The **bar manager** is responsible for the bar and its staff.
- In larger restaurants, there might be a **head barman** who deals with the running of the bar and its staff.
- Specialist bar roles include a **barista**, who prepares coffee and hot drinks, a **cocktail waiter** mixing cocktails and a **sommelier** who recommends and pairs wines with the customers' food.
- The **cellar man** is responsible for stocking the bar's cellars.
- In big hotels **lounge waiters** serve drinks to customers sitting at tables in the bar area and a **host** meets and greets customers and deals with bookings.
- The **banqueting manager** deals with the catering needs of conferences and private functions managing a team of banqueting staff, which might include a **buffet assistant**, serving food or drinks from a buffet.

#### A waiter's uniform

The classic waiter's uniform is smart and business-like: a white shirt, a black tie or bow tie, a jacket or waistcoat, a pair of trousers or a skirt for women, a long apron and a napkin over the arm to carry hot plates safely.

Nowadays restaurants are choosing their waiters' uniforms to reflect their own style and the style of their customers and many restaurant uniforms are becoming less formal.

The uniform also needs to be functional and comfortable, particularly its shoes, furthermore it has to stand up to the wear and tear of the job and to frequent washing.

To innovate their staff image some restaurants have recently turned to fashion industry.

## Preparation and service

### Preparing for service

#### Linen

The tablecloth should be laid over a silence pad or an undercover. The corners should fall at an even distance from the floor on all sides. The folded napkins should be placed to the left of the forks, with the open corners bottom right and about 2-3 cm from the front edge of the table. The napkin may be folded and placed on the service plate.

#### Cutlery

Dinner plates should be easily placed between knives and forks. Forks are placed on the left side of the cover and knives on the right side of the cover while spoons are laid on the right of the knives.

#### Glassware and China

The bread-and-butter plate is placed on the left of the cover; the water glass should be placed on the right of the cover while wine, spirits and beer glasses are placed on the right of the water glass.

Sugar bowls and salt and pepper shakers are generally placed at the centre of small tables or on the side nearest the wall or the room when wall tables for two are set.

### Table setting

1. A table covered with a fabric cloth indicates a formal dinner.
2. A formal table setting means all of your dishes, cutlery and glasses are on the table at the beginning of your meal. The use of a charger plate is fashionable now.
3. Forks are placed on the left side of the plate while knives and spoons on the right of the cover.
4. Contemporary table setting only requires two glasses on the table, one water glass and one wine glass.
5. It is better to fold and lay napkins in the centre of the plate instead of placing it inside water glasses.
6. The room should not be too light nor too dark, you can use a candlelight for a romantic touch. Fresh flowers arrangements are pleasant but flowers should be small not to block the guests' view of each other.

## Special settings

Formal dinner settings should be elegant to reflect the excellent food and drinks and fine porcelain, crystal glasses, perfect linen and polished silver cutlery can help achieve this.

**Contrasting colours, shapes and textures** are also important to create interest while **unusual elements** such as leaves, twigs or petals (natural elements) can reflect the time of year or the place the event is hosted. Our sense of smell (fresh flowers, scented candles, etc.) helps to **create mood and ambience**. You can find a **theme** (classical, romantic, rustic, vintage) for your dinner service and you can **surprise** guests with dual purpose items (for ex. napkin holders which become jewellery).

## How to serve

1. **Taking orders:** welcome customers, take them a menu as soon as possible, take the orders of ladies and old customers first and make notes about any special request.
2. **Serving drinks:** drinks are usually served before food and should be placed and removed from the customer's right side. To refill glasses, you should leave them on the table and not pick them up.
3. **Serving food:** place and remove food from the left, holding plates in your left hand. Never reach in front of a guest when serving or removing dishes from the table.
4. **Clearing tables:** only clear the table when all the guests have finished eating. Customers will place their cutlery on the table in a parallel position. Use your left hand to remove the plate, move it to your right hand, leaving your left hand free to remove the next plate.
5. **After dinner:** the last part of the meal is generally desserts, liquors, teas and coffees. Do not keep a customer waiting for the bill, place it at the centre of the table in a bill cover.

## Different types of service

Service technique	Characteristics
<b>English service</b> or <b>Silver service</b>	quite formal and elegant, all the food is prepared and arranged on formal or silver platters in the kitchen, then the waiter brings the platters on a tray and serves each guest
<b>Pre-plated</b> or <b>Italian service</b>	less formal than English, the most used style in many restaurants today; the food is plated in the kitchen and served to the table. Very fast, economical and efficient service
<b>Family service</b>	Food is prepared in the kitchen on big serving platters and bowls which are brought to the dining room for guests who serve themselves the portion they want. Cheaper, informal and efficient style of service
<b>Gueridon service</b>	Formal and elegant, the food is brought from the kitchen on silver platters to a trolley called "gueridon", where food can be cooked or completed in front of the guests and served on heated plates. This service requires skill, restaurant space and takes a lot of time
<b>Host service</b>	Waiters bring food to the table on platters and show it to the host for approval; the host carves the meat and gives the plates to the waiter to offer to guests. This service, used in the private dining rooms of restaurants or by serving staff in private homes, takes a long time and keeps the host very busy

## Brief flambé history and flamed dishes

1. Flambé is a cooking method in which food is covered in alcohol and set fire in order to create an elaborate visual effect and a smoky flavour. The word "flambé" comes from the French word for flamed. Many dishes, traditionally flambéed, include Steak Diane, crêpes Suzette, etc.
2. The history of flambéing probably dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the Moors, but it became popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Flambéing requires skill; you need a flambé pan, the food and the alcohol must be warm, the alcohol is added to the food and set alight, the flame is lit from the edge of the pan, it is allowed to flambé for less than a minute and it is then served.
4. Alcohol should never be poured directly from a bottle to avoid the risk of combustion or explosion. In general, brandy is used to flambé fruit or desserts, whisky or cognac to flambé meat, but other alcoholic beverages can be used too. The alcohol should have around 40% alcohol volume.

## Buffet service and finger food

A **buffet** is a meal consisting of several dishes ready-prepared and displayed on serving tables which guests serve themselves from, sometimes assisted by waiters. Buffet service can be found in hotels, especially at breakfast, weddings or parties. On these occasions **finger food** is popular. In the Western world, finger food is often either appetisers or main course items served in miniature pots or dishes and meant to be eaten directly using the hands.

Many ethnic restaurants also offer a form of buffet service: Chinese "dim sum" shops, Japanese sushi bars, Spanish tapas bars and traditional Swedish buffets called "smorgasbord".

The term "buffet" originally comes from the French word for "sideboard". Recently buffets have become popular forms of catering outlets all over the world.

## Pairing food and wine

Pairing food and wine is not always easy.

You should begin a meal with a light wine or sparkling wine rather than a cocktail.

White wines generally go with fish, poultry and vegetables and reds with meat and game, but it is important to enhance and balance the flavours of the food and vice versa.

In general, sweet, light white wines (Riesling) or young red wines (Beaujolais) work well with white meat, cheese or with spicy Asian or South American cuisines. Dry white wines (Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio) pair well with creamy, shellfish, fish or vegetable-based dishes, but also with Chinese food. Light rosé or red wines such as Zinfandel or Primitivo go well with lamb, pork, sausages. The drier rosé or red Cabernet Sauvignon works better with pizza or beef carpaccio. Dry medium-bodied red wines like Barbera or Chianti pair well with duck, rabbit or venison as well as tomato-based sauces. Fuller-bodied red wines like Shiraz go well with goose, steak or roast beef.

Spanish cava or Italian Prosecco are a good match with fish, Japanese sushi or sashimi, olive or nut appetizers and cheese platters.

## Serving and pairing desserts with wine

A wine should be sweeter than the dessert it accompanies, this is why sweet sparkling wine or liqueurs go well with sweet desserts, but also rosé wines or light floral red wines such as a nouveau are a good match for sweet desserts. You should work with both aromas and flavours of your wine to match it with your desserts by looking for similar levels of acidity, intensity and even colour. Custard or vanilla desserts require light and mild flavoured wines (Asti Spumante or a late harvest Riesling); fruity or spicy desserts work well with late harvest Gewürtztraminer or pink Champagne while a caramel flavour and a chocolate taste require dark, buttery, rich and caramelised notes (Pinot Noir, a port or a grappa). In general, you shouldn't try to pair a dessert with a dry white wine.

## Serving drinks

In fine dining restaurants stemware is placed on the table before service and positioned at the top right of the plate and should be arranged either in a triangle or a diamond shape.

The first glass, placed in a position closest to the hand, is the **water goblet**.

**Champagne flutes** are either placed to the right of it or in the appropriate position depending on how it is used (as an aperitif, with the dessert course or as an after-dinner toast).

**Wine glasses** are placed on the table in the order of the service of wine, but red wine glasses, larger than white wine ones, are positioned first.

The **sherry or liquor glasses** can be placed on the table on the right or in front of the white wine glass or brought to the table when liqueurs are served.

**Other glasses for spirits**, like brandy or whisky or fortified wines, like Port, might be brought to the table only when requested.

## Welcoming and serving

### Phone bookings and welcoming guests

Some fine-dining restaurants or those with celebrity chefs are often booked up for a year in advance.

Nowadays many people book tables online; it is important to book as early as possible to get the requested day and time, especially for a large party or at the weekend.

Restaurants can organise their service at lunchtime or dinner time into two or more sittings and they like to know in advance any cancellations.

Repeated bookings often enable customers to be eligible for loyalty or reward coupons and get discounted meals.

When taking bookings, it is important to note the day and time, the number of people, any special needs, the name and a contact of number of the person booking.

When the customers arrive, the host will meet and greet them, show them to their seats, take their coats and bring them the menus.

### Taking and carrying out orders

1. The waiters are often the first point of contact for customers and they should be helpful, welcoming and attentive to their customers' needs.
2. In taking drinks orders, waiters should fully understand the wine, spirits and soft drinks menu to provide help and advice and should pay special attention to details.
3. In taking food orders, waiters should have a full understanding of the food on the menu and be able to explain and describe dishes. The waiter should bring each course to all the people on the table at the same time.
4. It is necessary to find a balance between being attentive and intrusive, checking customers are happy, but not interrupting the enjoyment of the meal or their conversation.
5. The waiter should monitor all the food and drink consumed by a table in order to avoid complaints at the end of the meal.

## Problems and complaints

- **Slow service:** never ignore an angry, hungry customer! Always tell guests you will be with them as soon as possible to help them.
- **Food not arriving:** do not avoid customers. Check with the kitchen how long the food will be and let the customers know apologising for the delay.
- **Food not being served as the customer ordered it:** avoid this by carefully noting the customer's order before passing it to the kitchen.
- **The wrong food is served to the wrong table:** double-check orders before they leave the kitchen. If a mistake happens, apologise and resolve the situation.
- **The portion size is too small:** do not argue with the customer, apologise and offer additional food (side orders, starters).
- **The bill contains items the customer did not order:** take the bill away, check it and bring it back corrected, apologising for any inconvenience caused.

## Presenting the bill and the guests' departure

1. If the bill is brought in a leather or plastic folder the customer should generally place payment in the folder on the table. If the waiter only brings a paper bill, it can be paid directly at the cash register.
2. A bill can be paid in cash, by credit or debit card but customers should check before if their card is accepted at no extra charge (the logos are usually displayed near the cash register or on the door of the restaurant).
3. Customer with a discount coupon or voucher should present this to the waiter before he brings the bill.
4. Fine dining restaurants offer complimentary food and drink at the end of the meal. A good waiter should ask the customers for feedback, bring them their coats, thank them for coming and wish them a pleasant evening.

## CASE STUDY

### The best restaurants in the world

El Celler de Can Roca, the Catalan restaurant, is officially the best restaurant in the world 2015.

The restaurant, run by three brothers, uses ingredients typical of its native region of Catalonia in Spain and it is famous for its 14-course "culinary experience" paired with wines from the Iberian Peninsula. This restaurant can hold 55 covers, but you really need to book far in advance to get a table.