

The Maître d'

The maître d' in a restaurant, hotel, or cruise ship is responsible for ensuring that high standards of customer service are maintained for every diner. The full name, maître d'hôtel, is French and means "master of the hotel." This refers to the days when the maître d' worked for members of royalty or the aristocracy. Traditionally, they had to be masters of diplomacy and politics in order to provide the high levels of service for which they were known. See Figure 10.21 for a maître d' then and now.

Today, while the clients may have changed, the work is essentially the same. Maîtres d' are responsible for the smooth running of the establishment. They handle everything from customer complaints to straightening a busser's tie. Diplomacy is still a critical part of the job. After all, they have to negotiate the needs of *all* the guests at the same time—first-timers and regulars, happy and disgruntled. Like concierges, maîtres d' often find themselves called upon to address unusual requests. An experienced maître d' views these requests as opportunities to accommodate the guest, not as inconveniences.

Some maîtres d' work their way up through other front-of-house positions, while others come from different service industries. Some culinary schools offer related courses, and The Culinary Institute of America requires all students to serve as maîtres d' in its campus restaurants.

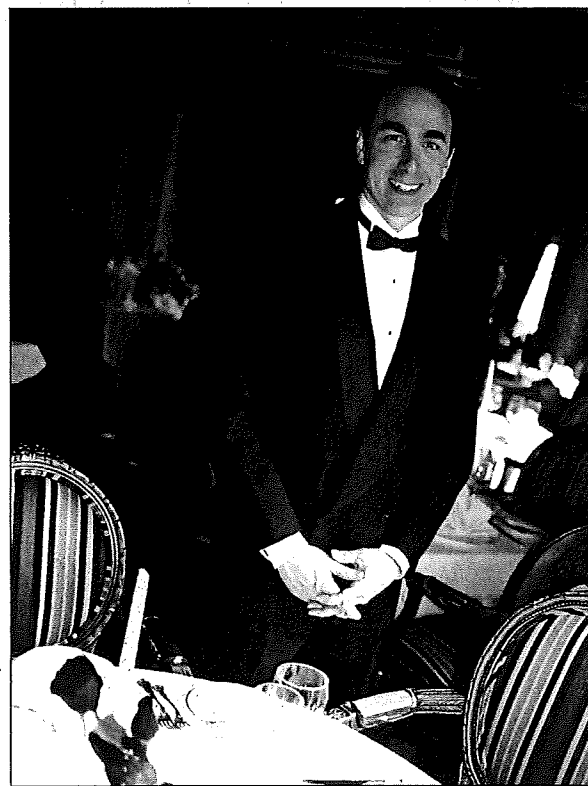
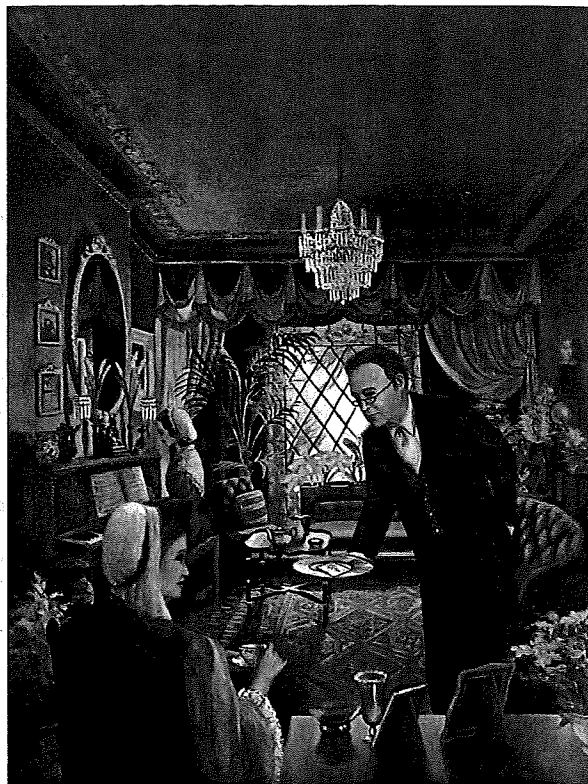


Figure 10.21: Maître d' then and now.

Service Staff Guidelines for Handling Food and Tableware

Just because service staff do not cook the food doesn't mean they don't have to be just as careful as the kitchen staff. Service staff can contaminate food simply by handling the food contact areas of glasses, dishes, and utensils, not to mention improper handling of ready-to-eat items. Following are guidelines all service staff should use when serving customers:

- Hold dishes by the bottom or very edge. Hold glasses by the middle, stem, or bottom. Do not touch the food contact areas of dishes or glassware.
- Hold flatware by the handle. Store flatware so servers grasp handles, not food contact surfaces.
- Use tongs or gloves when handling ready-to-eat items like bread or rolls. Do not use bare hands.
- Carry glasses on a tray to avoid touching the food contact surfaces. Stacking china and glassware can cause them to chip or break. Do not stack glasses when carrying them.
- Use ice scoops or tongs to put ice in a glass. Never scoop ice with bare hands because such contact can contaminate the ice. And never scoop ice with a glass because the glass could chip or break in the ice.

Service Tools and Stations

In full-service restaurants, servers usually carry many different **service tools** with them. They may carry a hand towel, a lighter, a corkscrew, change, a pen, an order pad, and sometimes a crumber, which is used to neatly gather and clear crumbs and debris from a table cloth. Figure 10.22 shows a crumber in use. These items are helpful to have on hand because servers use them so often.



Figure 10.22: Crumbers neatly gather and clear crumbs.

The **service station** is the area in which an operation keeps additional items such as napkins, silverware, cups and saucers, condiments, menus, and water glasses. A service station prevents servers from having to go to the back of the house to get them and is a good way to keep much needed utensils close by. Figure 10.23 shows an example of a service station.

Servers use different **serving utensils** when they serve food to guests. Use large serving spoons to serve many items, such as casseroles and vegetables. Use pastry tongs to serve individual pastries, such as cream puffs and small cakes. Cake and pie servers come in many shapes to match the size of the piece of cake, or pie. This keeps the dessert from breaking apart as it is served. Figure 10.24 shows how to properly serve ready-to-eat items such as bread or rolls.

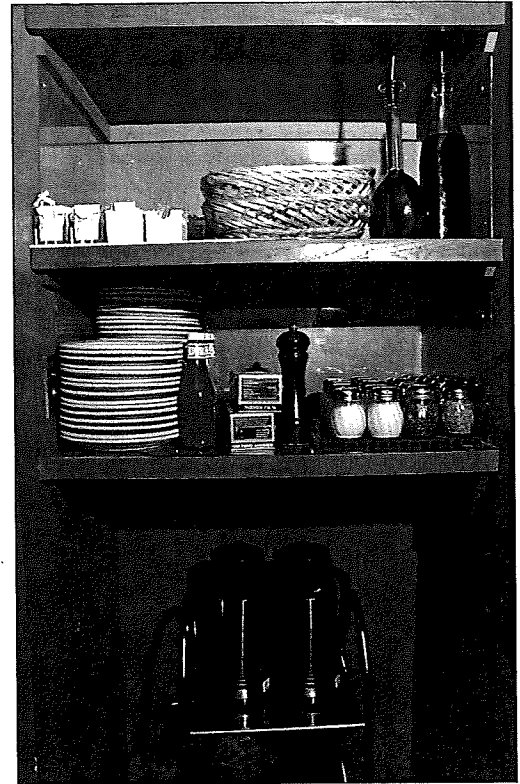


Figure 10.23: Serving station.



Figure 10.24: Use tongs or gloves when handling ready-to-eat items like bread or rolls. Do not use bare hands.

Essential Skills

Left, Right, Left—Proper Placements for Table Service

Not only are servers responsible for properly setting the table and serving the guests, they must also know how to remove items from the table while guests are still seated. And they must know how to do this so that they do not get in the guests' way and interrupt their meals. To accomplish this, servers should conduct certain table tasks from specific places.

Perform these tasks at the guests' left side:

- Presenting and serving from platters
- Serving solid foods, including salad and bread
- Clearing the table of extra utensils and crumbs
- Setting and clearing bread and butter
- Removing anything served from the left

Perform these tasks at the guests' right side:

- Setting and clearing plates (except for bread and butter)
- Changing flatware
- Serving soup and beverages

However, some exceptions to the rule exist:

- ① At corner tables, serve guests so as to disturb them as little as possible. This means serving from whichever side is most convenient.
- ② At rectangular tables, servers should stand at the head of the table when opening wine, taking orders, and assisting guests with the menu. Do this so all seated guests can see the server.
- ③ Servers should be careful in how they handle guests' plates and utensils in order to be as sanitary as possible. See Figure 10.25. Servers should carry glasses on a tray to avoid touching the food-contact surfaces.



Figure 10.25: Step 3—Servers should carry glasses on a tray.

Summary

In this section, you learned the following:

- Contemporary service, also known as quick-service, is an easy and fast way to dine and typically involves no servers. Instead, guests help themselves to food set up in food bars or order at a counter. Other forms of quick-service include drive-through service, buffet service, carry-out service, vending service, and cafeteria service.
- Traditional service style consists of four main influences: American, French, English, and Russian. Each service style varies depending on its menu, theme, and décor. American is one of the easiest and uses the fewest utensils. French is known as the most elegant, but is also the most expensive. English is the simplest and least expensive. Russian is the most complicated.
- Specific utensils are used for certain foods, and each table must be set accordingly. The variety of knives, forks, and spoons used in any given operation is huge.
- Many traditional, large, full-service restaurants have a formal service organization, or group of servers, to perform service-related tasks. Every one of the servers in the front of the house must work together to ensure that guests enjoy themselves. For formal service structures, the staff includes the maître d'hotel, the headwaiter, the captain, the front waiter, and an apprentice.
- For less formal services, the staff consists of the floor manager, server, food runners, and busers.
- Service tools can include a hand towel, a lighter, a corkscrew, change, a pen, an order pad, and a crumber. The service station is the area in the operation where additional items are kept, such as napkins, silverware, cups and saucers, condiments, menus, and water glasses. Servers use different serving utensils, which include large serving spoons, pastry tongs, and cake and pie servers.

Section 10.3 Review Questions

- ① Define contemporary service.
- ② What are the four styles of traditional service?
- ③ What are the different characteristics of each style of traditional service?
- ④ What is the traditional service hierarchy of a formal full-service establishment?
- ⑤ Would one service style be more likely to make guests feel welcome than another? If so, which one and why?
- ⑥ How would you describe Uptown Grille's service style? What are the pros and cons of such a style?
- ⑦ Look into the various service styles. What is the origin of each? How do these origins reflect the style of each service? That is, what does the style say about the culture from which it came? On a broader scale, how does service reflect the personality of the restaurant?
- ⑧ The efficiency of a restaurant's servers is integral to quality customer service. You're in charge of establishing what servers wear, the tools they are expected to carry, and the equipment stocked in their service station. Write a paragraph for each of these criteria describing your plan.

Section 10.3 Activities

1. Study Skills/Group Activity: Setting the Table

Working with two or three other students, identify the silverware needed to serve the following dishes properly:

- Grilled steak with baked potato and vegetables
- Garden salad with ranch dressing
- Chicken and dumpling stew
- Shellfish consommé
- Triple-layer mocha fudge cake with vanilla ice cream

2. Independent Activity: Making Sense of Style

Create a diagram (or diagrams) that present each of the four traditional service styles: American, French, Russian, and English. Be sure to take into account kitchen versus tableside plating, degree of complexity, expense, and popularity in the United States.

3. Critical Thinking: Service with a Style

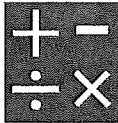
You're starting up a new mid- to upscale restaurant and need to determine what service style to use. You can choose one of the four traditional styles or combine aspects of different ones to create your own. Write up a one-page description of the service style you would employ. Why did you choose this style?

Case Study Follow-Up ***Wanted: Customer Service***

At the beginning of the chapter, Uptown Grille was having trouble with customer service. Linda and Chef Jean were trying to figure out what to do.

1. As noted previously, Uptown Grille has recently lost some long-term employees. How can their absence affect customers? How can their absence affect the current staff?
2. Linda and Chef Jean are ultimately responsible for customer service, but obviously they can't be watching their staff all of the time. How can they ensure that their employees are providing good service even when they're not around?
3. What program can they employ to ensure that employees make a positive first impression, both on new customers and on customers who have previously had negative experiences at Uptown Grille?

Apply Your Learning



Training Service Staff

Just how expensive is it for an operation to have a high turnover rate for service staff? To answer this question, you'll have to figure out how much it costs to train a new employee. Research the training costs involved in hiring a new staff member, from putting out help-wanted ads, to conducting the interview process, to teaching the new employee the operation's policies and procedures. It may be helpful to speak with the owners of one or two local operations to get a feel for the work and costs that are involved. When you've completed your research, propose an average cost for having to hire a new employee.



Mission Accomplished

It can sometimes be difficult to ensure that all the employees at a large restaurant or foodservice establishment are maintaining the same high levels of customer service. To make this task easier, restaurants often adopt mission statements, which define an establishment's overall goals and philosophy. Write a mission statement for a restaurant you want to start, making sure to address customer service. Then, write an additional paragraph identifying the specific steps you can take to make sure that you and your employees are treating your guests in ways that match your mission statement. For instance, if your mission statement asserts that you will provide friendly service, then you should explain specific ways in which you will provide such service.



Allergies

It is estimated that up to 2 percent of U.S. adults suffer from food allergies, some of which may be fatal. So, it is critical that servers be well-informed about the ingredients in each dish. Identify and research a food allergy or sensitivity, such as peanut, soy, or gluten, and prepare a two-paragraph summary of your findings. Identify some foods that contain these ingredients, particularly those that you might not suspect. One example might be the wheat in red licorice.

Critical Thinking A Selling Script

You own a local restaurant. Prepare a three-minute oral script that will welcome guests to your establishment and suggestively sell an appetizer, entrée, and dessert to them. Once you and your classmates have completed your scripts, perform each, and vote on who did the best job of selling and why.

Exam Prep Questions

- ① Quality customer service will most likely result in
 - A. lower payroll.
 - B. higher turnover.
 - C. better customer loyalty.
 - D. increased marketing costs.
- ② When rival restaurants share similar menus and food quality, a competitive advantage can most easily be gained through
 - A. creating a unique menu.
 - B. moving to a better location.
 - C. improving customer service.
 - D. underselling other operations.
- ③ An operation ensures that the exterior of the facility is spotless and well-kept, and the staff frequently rehearses the restaurant's greeting script. What is the most likely outcome of this operation's efforts?
 - A. Table service will become slower but more thorough.
 - B. Staff turnover will increase due to the script requirements.
 - C. Customers will have a positive first impression of the operation.
 - D. Profits will decrease because of costs to maintain the exterior of facility.
- ④ For servers, wearing _____ will help to create a positive first impression.
 - A. a clean, ironed uniform
 - B. brightly polished jewelry
 - C. expensive, strong perfume
 - D. a hat or head-covering for sanitary purposes
- ⑤ What is a helpful service tip for addressing the needs of parents with small children?
 - A. Treat the children the same as the adults.
 - B. Avoid going to the table unless necessary.
 - C. Bring out crayons and paper before service.
 - D. Serve children's food in take-out containers.
- ⑥ What does a POS machine do?
 - A. Compiles feedback from comment cards
 - B. Creates weekly shift and cleaning schedules
 - C. Lists acceptable substitutions for menu items
 - D. Sends orders into the kitchen from service stations
- ⑦ When checking to see whether a guest is of legal age to drink alcohol, a _____ is an acceptable form of identification.
 - A. passport
 - B. college ID
 - C. birth certificate
 - D. credit card with signature

- 8 What are mystery shoppers?
- A. Repeat guests who frequently complete comment cards
 - B. Guests who report a positive dining experience but never return
 - C. Anonymous diners hired by an operation to critique the service
 - D. Customer appreciation programs that are run during the holidays
- 9 What is the most immediate way to gather customer feedback?
- A. Mailing surveys
 - B. Talking to diners
 - C. Holding focus groups
 - D. Distributing comment cards
- 10 Which service style is considered simple and inexpensive, but is not as frequently used as the others?
- A. French
 - B. English
 - C. Russian
 - D. American