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# RESTAURANT SERVICE *basics*

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SECOND EDITION

*Sondra J. Dahmer*

*Kurt W. Kahl*



JOHN WILEY & SONS, INC.





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WILEY

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***Restaurant Service Basics, 2nd edition***, is a practical guide for those who want to learn the core skills of professional table service in restaurants. Actual and prospective servers, as well as managers, supervisors, and teachers who train servers, will find this an invaluable resource for classroom use, restaurant training, or self-training.

This book discusses the server's job, types of establishments, and different types of service, including French, Russian, English, American, banquet, family-style, buffets, and more. Current issues such as embracing diversity, preventing harassment, and maintaining a drug-free workplace are also discussed. The text walks the reader through the dining experience from taking reservations, preparing the dining room, and greeting and serving guests to presentation of the check, and instructs the server on how to troubleshoot potential problems that may occur along the way. Safety, sanitation, and medical emergencies are addressed. Current information on ever-changing restaurant technology has a chapter of its own. The final chapter covers alcoholic beverage service, with all of its ramifications to the restaurant business.

***Restaurant Service Basics, 2nd edition***, will enable readers to develop the consummate service skills required to handle all phases of providing quality service, increasing their tips, and capturing repeat business for the restaurant. This is a great training tool for new servers and a reference tool for veteran servers. Servers can learn the techniques of serving that will perfect their job performance and guarantee success.



## ***Note to Teachers and Trainers***

This text is intended for use in a classroom or for training servers employed by a restaurant. Assigning chapters, key terms, review questions, or relevant projects from the text will help trainees gain a firm grasp of the fundamentals of providing

competent service to guests to ensure their guests have a pleasant dining experience. You can also help your trainees use the case at the end of each chapter to build competencies through group discussion. Additional resources at the end of the book provide definitions of key terms, pronunciations of menu terms, and information for further reading. The key terms, review questions, projects, cases, and exam can all be used to evaluate the trainee's knowledge of serving procedures.

An *Instructor's Manual* (ISBN 978-0-470-25736-4) can be obtained by contacting your Wiley sales representative. If you don't know who your representative is, please visit [www.wiley.com/college](http://www.wiley.com/college) and click on "Who's My Rep?" An electronic version of the *Instructor's Manual* is available to qualified instructors on the companion Web site, at [www.wiley.com/college/dahmer](http://www.wiley.com/college/dahmer).



## *Note to the Server or Trainee*

You can use this manual as a text or self-training manual to help you learn how to serve competently or increase your serving knowledge and skills. After reading the chapters, you should define the terms and answer the review questions to gauge your understanding of the key concepts discussed and complete as many of the projects and cases as possible to review proper serving procedures. Use Resource B to look up menu terms.

The opportunity for employment as a server in a restaurant is favorable and can be a lifetime occupation. The challenge is great, but with hard work and a determination to succeed, you will be rewarded not only financially, but also with a sense of accomplishment.

Web site links, chapter objectives, and definitions of key terms are available at the student companion Web site, at [www.wiley.com/dahmer](http://www.wiley.com/dahmer).



## *New to This Edition*

This edition provides updated material about the server's job and the trends and practices that have emerged since the first edition, such as:

- An updated description of a server's job
- A comparison between service and hospitality
- A detailed discussion about types of establishments
- New and updated information on the role of technology in taking reservations
- Updated information about food allergies and food trends
- A discussion about coffee and tea service

- A presentation of the most up-to-date food safety and sanitation guidelines based on the most recent guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Model Food Code
- A detailed discussion of emergency procedures for various situations, including severe weather
- The most current first-aid procedure for conscious choking emergencies, provided by the American Red Cross
- An expanded and updated chapter on technology in restaurants, including handheld order terminals, reservation management and seating software, and guest paging devices
- A discussion about the responsibilities associated with serving alcohol in restaurants
- A new ***Instructor's Manual*** (ISBN 978-0-470-25736-4), which includes lecture notes, final exam and answer key, chapter quizzes, and additional activities.

Specific changes to this edition include the following:

**Learning Objectives** have been included to provide the reader with a road map of the key points covered in each chapter. They help highlight what the reader should be particularly focused on throughout each chapter.

**Bolded Key Terms** are included within each chapter and defined as they appear. They are then listed at the end of each chapter in the order in which they appear. This list indicates the terms the reader should understand from reading each chapter.

The **Review** at the end of each chapter can be used to reexamine the chapter content. The questions cover the salient points in the chapter material. Review questions can drive discussion in class or be assigned for homework.

The **Projects** at the end of each chapter are one of the greatest strengths of the text because they are applied in nature. The projects have been updated to address current issues servers encounter in today's foodservice industry.

The **Mini-Cases** included at the end of the ***first edition*** are now included at the end of each chapter. These scenarios have been updated to reflect current issues encountered at a foodservice establishment, such as handling harassment, addressing a problem at the buffet, handling a reservation error, reacting to a guest complaint, and addressing an emergency situation. These mini-cases are intended to help students apply what they have learned in a particular chapter to situations they might encounter as a server in a restaurant operation. Each

case includes a set of questions that instructors can either assign as homework or use to engage students in the classroom and drive discussion.

The **photos and drawings** have been updated to more effectively illustrate key concepts, reflect the current restaurant environment, and add to the visual appeal of this edition.

Additional materials include a new Resource A: Definition of Key Terms from the Text; Resource B: Definition of Menu and Service Terms; and Resource C: Recommended Resources for Further Information.



## Acknowledgments

Our goal with this revision of *Restaurant Service Basics* is to provide our readers with an accessible, reader-friendly guidebook on the fundamental skills required to provide guests with the best service possible. We could not have completed this edition of *Restaurant Service Basics* without the help, directly and indirectly, of many people. We are grateful to Cindy Rhoads, our developmental editor, for her excellent advice and encouragement to bring our manuscript through to completion.

We would also like to acknowledge the help of our reviewers, who carefully reviewed *Restaurant Service Basics* and suggested updates for our second edition to ensure it provides the most up-to-date and accurate information about the server's valuable role in the overall restaurant operation:

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## *Objectives*

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- ✓ Define the job of a server.
- ✓ Distinguish between service and hospitality.
- ✓ List the advantages of the job as server.
- ✓ Understand the job qualifications.
- ✓ Realize the importance of good personal appearance.
- ✓ Understand how a server fits into the restaurant organization.
- ✓ Understand the importance of getting along with coworkers.
- ✓ Value diversity in guests and coworkers.
- ✓ Handle harassment on the job.
- ✓ Keep violence and drugs out of the workplace.
- ✓ Understand the importance of safety and sanitation in a restaurant.

**Servers**, also referred to as **waitstaff**, are restaurant employees who create a dining experience for guests in a restaurant by making them feel welcome and comfortable, taking their orders, serving the meal, clearing the area, and setting the table for the

next party of guests. Servers also maintain the service areas of the dining room and the kitchen so that everything is ready for smooth, efficient service (see Job Description for a Server, Figure 1-1, and [www.nraef.org](http://www.nraef.org) for descriptions of related jobs). This chapter discusses service and hospitality, the advantages of a server's job, the qualifications necessary to become a server, the importance of the server's personal appearance on the job, the server's position in the organizational structure of the restaurant, and the server's role within a team of fellow employees and supervisors.

Although the server's tasks may seem clear, many aspects of the job involve issues of great concern to the guest and the establishment, as well as the server. In this chapter, we will discuss issues that include recognizing the diversity of coworkers and guests, preventing harassment on the job, deterring violence and drugs in the workplace, and practicing restaurant safety and sanitation. Some of these issues are discussed in greater detail later in this book.



## *Service and Hospitality*

While a close relationship exists between service and hospitality, there is a distinct difference between the two. **Service** is the act of filling the needs, wants, and desires of the guests. Service is what servers provide to meet the expectations of the guests when they come to dine. Guests expect a clean table, clean dishes and utensils, safe food, hot foods served hot, and cold foods served cold.

Hospitality goes beyond the service guests expect of servers. **Hospitality** means creating a pleasant dining experience for your guests with small gestures like giving a friendly greeting, smiling—even when very tired, remembering names, hanging up coats, pulling out chairs, remembering a returning guest's favorite drink, knowing exactly what is ordered, and anticipating what the guest needs next. It is paying close attention to detail. It is acknowledging guests promptly, making friendly small talk, and saying a pleasant goodbye when the guests leave the restaurant. It is reading the guests and always making them feel comfortable, welcome, and important. Hospitality is a key element to bringing guests back and to increasing the amount of your tip.



## *Advantages of Being a Server*

Despite tired feet, unruly guests, and job demands, there are many advantages to holding a job as a server. These include:

- Monetary benefits
- Flexible hours

**JOB DESCRIPTION FOR SERVER**

- PREPARE RESTAURANT FOR DINING** by
- Cleaning tables in an assigned area of the restaurant
  - Arranging the china, silverware, napkins, glassware, and centerpieces
  - Stocking and maintaining serving area
- MAINTAIN FOOD AND RESTAURANT SAFETY AND SANITATION** by
- Adhering to safe handling of food and utensils according to Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) guidelines
  - Attending to accident prevention
  - Being prepared for unforeseen accidents and emergencies
- INITIATE THE DINING EXPERIENCE FOR GUESTS** by
- Making guests feel welcome, comfortable, and important
  - Maintaining an atmosphere of hospitality
  - Working as a team member with coworkers for smooth restaurant operation
- HELP GUESTS MAKE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SELECTIONS** by
- Presenting the menus
  - Suggesting special food and beverages
  - Offering cocktails and suggesting wine
  - Answering questions
- SUBMIT FOOD AND BEVERAGE ORDERS TO KITCHEN AND BAR** by
- Taking the order
  - Identifying dietary requests
  - Submitting the order to the kitchen and bar
  - Timing the meal
- SERVE THE MEAL** by
- Staging meal according to prescribed rules of service
  - Serving beverages, cocktails, or beer
  - Opening and serving wines
  - Picking up, garnishing, and serving food
  - Providing any meal accompaniments
- MONITOR THE MEAL IN PROGRESS** by
- Inquiring of needs
  - Replenishing utensils
  - Refilling water, reordering more beverages
  - Removing completed courses
  - Adhering to alcohol control policies
- CONCLUDE THE DINING EXPERIENCE** by
- Totaling charges and presenting the guest check
  - Accepting and settling payment
  - Taking leave of guests and inviting them back again

**FIGURE 1-1** Sample Job Description for a Server: Management looks for employees who have the qualifications to become good servers and perform the tasks required of them.

- Contact with people
- Minimal investment in wardrobe
- Pleasant surroundings
- Job satisfaction

One of the advantages of being a server is that you may be compensated well for providing good services to the guests you serve in a restaurant. In elegant restaurants and restaurants with quick turnover, a server who provides good service can make more money in tips and wages than a cook, administrative assistant, police officer, flight attendant, or schoolteacher. You may also be eligible for free or reduced-priced meals from the restaurant.

Restaurant establishments operate for several hours extending over the periods for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and into the evening. You might consider working weekends and evenings a disadvantage, but the flexible hours allow many people to work around another job or family responsibilities.

As a server, another advantage is that you can meet many interesting people as you serve your guests. You have the chance to interact with people of all ages and from all walks of life. Occasionally, you may even serve a celebrity.

Unlike a job in an office, which requires a large investment in business clothing, as a server, you are only required to buy a few uniforms and comfortable shoes.

Some people also find working as a server in pleasant surroundings advantageous. Many restaurants have a very elaborate decor and atmosphere. You may also have an opportunity to sample a variety of food.

Finally, you can gain personal satisfaction from doing a job exceptionally well and making people happy. Compliments and tips from the guests and words of praise from your manager are your rewards for providing good service. Take pride in your job. Waiting tables can be a rewarding part-time position or a full-time career that provides you with a very good living. The skills and knowledge you acquire will translate to all aspects of your life.



## *Qualifications for the Job*

Management looks for employees who are:

- Reliable
- Cooperative
- Personable
- Healthy
- Clean and neat

- Knowledgeable
- Persuasive
- Attentive
- Diplomatic
- Good managers

People who have these qualifications make good servers. To qualify for a waitstaff position, you must be:

1. *Reliable.* Management must feel confident that you are capable of fulfilling your job responsibilities. You must report to work on time, serve the guests properly, and complete all tasks assigned to you.
2. *Cooperative.* You must have a good attitude. You must be willing to work hard with your coworkers to complete the work assigned. If you are a good team player, and strive to make your team successful, you will be successful at your job. Being cooperative also means adapting to the policies of management. You should work hard and learn and stay focused on your job even under pressure and time restraints.
3. *Personable.* A server is chosen for his or her pleasant personality, comfort around people, ability to make small talk, and social skills. Take the initiative to be friendly, patient, and courteous to guests, coworkers, and management, and never be rude. A server should have a good sense of humor. However, never be familiar with guests or use terms such as “folks,” “honey,” or “you guys” when addressing guests.
4. *Healthy.* Because a serving job requires the server to be in close contact with guests, coworkers, and food, you must maintain good health. Staying healthy helps you to avoid spreading disease and to maintain a good appearance. A healthy server looks good, performs well on the job, and is able to lift and carry heavy trays.
5. *Clean and neat.* A server may be one of the only restaurant employees that the guest sees and must present a tidy appearance that reflects the image of a clean and neat restaurant. Particular attention should be given to hair, nails, uniform, and shoes. A server should be clean and neat in both appearance and with respect to handling food and serviceware in the restaurant.
6. *Knowledgeable.* A good server must know the appropriate methods for serving tables and how to apply them in a seamless and efficient manner. You must have an extensive knowledge of the menu so that you can answer guests’ questions intelligently, suggest foods, and help increase sales. To complete the guest’s order and total the guest check, you must know basic math and have simple

computer skills. Make note of local history, events, and cuisine trends so you can make conversation with guests.

7. *Persuasive.* You must have the ability to sell yourself, the restaurant, and menu items as you serve your guests. To do this, you must be able to communicate well. Your persuasive talent ensures that the guest's wants and needs are met, and **suggestive selling**—that is, suggesting additional food items—adds to the pleasure of the meal, as well as increases the size of the check, the restaurant profits, and your tip.
8. *Attentive.* Guests may need their server at any time during the meal, so a good server always concentrates on the job and never leaves a station unattended for long. You must be aware of the progress of the meal at each table and anticipate needs as they arise. When guests toy with an empty glass, gaze into space, or peek at their watches, they are sending signals that they need something. If a guest tastes the food, puts down his or her fork, and pushes the plate away, something is wrong and servers need to remedy the situation. Refill empty water glasses and coffee cups, but do not hover to an excessive degree. Take pride in the appearance of the dining room by keeping it orderly as you work.
9. *Diplomatic.* Servers should handle complaints in a diplomatic way to assure the guest is satisfied and will come back again. A good server must be thick-skinned and not take criticism personally.
10. *A good manager.* You must know how to manage your time well. Prepare your area in advance, do the most important tasks first, multitask so you address your guests' every need, and do so in a quiet, controlled manner that is not interruptive to the dining room.



## *Personal Appearance on the Job*

Your appearance as a server on the job gives guests their first impression of you and, consequently, a lasting impression of the restaurant. Because you are one of the few members of the restaurant staff a guest sees, a guest may judge the restaurant largely on your appearance and service.

### THE UNIFORM

A **uniform** is a garment that identifies the occupation of the wearer. Nurses, police officers, pilots, and members of the armed service, as well as servers, wear uniforms. The appearance of your uniform leaves an impression on your guests (Figure 1-2). A clean and neat uniform reflects an image of a sanitary restaurant. If your uniform is soiled or wrinkled, you will not impress the guests favorably, and the guests,



**FIGURE 1-2** Server in Uniform: You are the main restaurant employee the guest sees so be sure your uniform is clean and neat. Your appearance can help create a good impression for the entire operation.

Courtesy of PhotoDisc/Getty Images

deciding that your uniform reflects the standards of the whole operation, may never return.

A server should wear a clean uniform each workday and keep an extra one at work in case of emergency. Skirts, pants, jackets, and ties should be neat, clean, and pressed. Most uniforms today are made of synthetic fiber blends that are easy to maintain. If you do spill food on a uniform, remove the stains as soon as possible and launder the garment according to the manufacturer's directions. Uniforms in disrepair are as unacceptable as soiled uniforms. Repair torn hems and seams, and replace buttons before you wear the uniform again.

A uniform should fit well; if it is too small, it restricts movement. Pants should fit smoothly and not be too tight. If a female server wears a skirt as part of a uniform, it should have a fashionable hem length, but not be so short that she feels conspicuous when reaching or bending.

Shoes are part of the uniform and should receive daily attention. Buy sturdy shoes with closed toes, low heels, and arch supports. Shoes should have rubber soles to minimize slips and falls. Replace shoes or have worn heels and soles repaired, and be sure your shoes are clean and polished for work. Have a second pair of shoes at work, especially if you are a full-time server, and change your shoes occasionally to prevent foot and back problems.

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