

## THE MEMES OF SERVICE

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### THE COMMANDMENTS EXPLAINED

#### 1. MAKE IT NICE

THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT IN THIS WHOLE GUIDE. The job is about keeping the illusion that the world is an organized, neat, tidy place where everything happens just right to make it perfect. So do things with this goal in mind.

+ Guest gets up? Fold the napkin, tidy up a bit (straighten things at the table), **make it nice**.

+ It's raining outside? Give them umbrellas (as they do at Gramercy Tavern).

The point is this: If it's dirty, clean it. If it's messy, make it tidy. If it's cluttered, declutter.

Sometimes you will have to get in front of the guest, or into their personal space. Remember that being smiley and gracious will let you get away with more intrusion. 'Make it nice' is also the motto for the best restaurant in the world (11 Madison in NYC, as of 2017). Should be good enough for you.

#### 2. LEARN THE DANCE, BE A BALLERINA

Every workplace has a flow of sorts. There are all kinds of steps to service that you need to learn. Greet, drinks, etc. You should know all the steps that make the guest experience forwards and backwards. This is useful for yourself, but also very useful for the team. Ideally everyone should know or at least sense where everyone is at in a particular night. Even better, you should be able to (and trust) that the team knows where you are as well. Make your every move count. When everyone is in tune, and the gears are turning, service becomes a beautiful ballet. You can practice these steps when the place is empty. Dishes go where, where is the bar, where is the coat check.

And then improvise steps along the way:

- +Going to the kitchen? Bring something in along the way (and something out if you can).
- + Comrade is buried? Help along the way.
- + Hostess is crushed? Go greet guests at least. Contact = comfort.
- + Bar is crushed? Don't order caesars!

### 3. ALWAYS BE LEARNING

This is a good lesson for work and life. There should always be room for improvement in work and in your everyday dealings. Learning new things makes you flexible when dealing with the unexpected and gives you perspective when you may not know you need it.

In our case, learning comes in monetary rewards (learn about wine!) and also in guest satisfaction. The more you know about cooking terms and culture, the better you will be able to relate to the guests —and even surprise them!— or to get ahead of the game before they can even say meep. Overheard that someone is devout Jewish? Don't even bring up the shellfish stew with pork cracklings. Someone is vegan? You know the deal in the menu. What wine is best with x? You should know.

Ultimately, I think learning is fun, and it's what separates the amateurs from the pros. Do you know what makes a very real difference between you being rich or poor? Access to information. But that is a rabbit hole that is neither here nor there (but it is useful to know).

### 4. STAY FLEX AND FLY

The temptations will be many, but along the path of life one has to stay limber and as fly as possible. In our case, staying active makes it much easier to deal with stress and physical demands. Staying fly is also in your best economic interest, as it is directly related to the tips you can make. Remember the proverbial saying, "Style is the man."

In life, there are very few things that are really under our control but these are two of them. You will thank yourself in your later years. We all get old, bro.

### 5. DO UNTO OTHERS

You should be always mindful of your actions, how will they affect others, and how they relate to how you would like to be treated. So don't be a jerk for the sake of getting your jollies. In our business one must even take it one step further: Treating guests or colleagues as long lost relatives has never been against my best interest. So do things right for them, do it with heart, watch them melt, and then come back.

### 6. KEEP BUSY

This is one of the most challenging parts of the waiter game. Sometimes there will be considerable amounts of spare time in between tables or before the show starts. Here is where you have to stay moving —find a project, ask questions, find something to do. Not only will it help you pass the time faster, you may learn something new along the way, or find a problem that you didn't know about, and now you have the edge to fix it. Most of this guide was written in such moments, at least initially in my head. But that is how great ideas or good innovations can come forth. Definitely beats gossip in the long run.

## 7. GOSSIP SINKS SHIPS

Related to the above. The temptation is great, but ultimately, what does gossip really do for you? Even worse, imagine yourself gossiping about a guest, and they just happen to overhear you. How would that reflect on the whole team? Not so good. I've never been a big fan of gossip, since it does nothing for morale, for guest appreciation, or self-improvement. Why bother with negativity? So I say no thanks, and walk away generally from any gossip. I suggest you do the same.

## 8. BIGGER IS NOT BETTER

Bigger portions, louder music, bolder wines. Is it really necessary? If all you do all day is loud music, salty, bold food, and pumped up artifices, you will end up missing on the subtle things that go on around you and anesthetizing or overwhelming your senses. Try it out, it is more work, granted, but less exhausting and more rewarding. Works the same on the floor. Subtle and ongoing gestures can have more mileage than grand actions.

## 9. WRITE IT DOWN

Another curious attribute of humanoids is that we retain very little of what we hear and see. So when you encounter a potentially profitable lesson or a new or challenging situation, WRITE IT DOWN. Guest wants this or that? Write it down. New menu items? Write it down. Meeting of the month? Write it down! Lord knows that if it doesn't stay in writing, legally speaking, it doesn't exist. Paper trails win.

## 10. SINGLES FIRST, DEUCES SECOND, THREES 3RD, 4+'S LAST

General rule of thumb. Waiting for something when you are only one person in the table makes the time seem so much longer and your needs more pressing than when you are in the company of others. So get to them first, then sort the others out. The larger the table, the less people will notice if the bread is taking long. True story.

## 11. SAVE IT, GIVE IT AWAY, TAKE AWAY

This is mostly for food in general. FOH would gladly eat scraps from kitchen and BOH would likely enjoy leftover wine, for example. Everyone wins.

## 12. ANTICIPATE TO WIN

Anticipating the needs of your clients will make your life much easier. Think of the steps that should follow as you sit down in a restaurant. What would you want next to happen? And then? And then? Keep in mind that this is part of the dance and that you will have to learn what makes different clients tick. So learn the steps, anticipate the next one, and lead with grace.

### 13. THINK OF THE PERSON AFTER YOU.

Again, as in life in general, if you use something, bring it back. If it's broken, fix it. If you can make it better, do so, and then leave it better than you found it for the next person after you. It is little things like this that will make your life easier, your workflow better, and the world a better place (please recycle!).

### 14. ORGANIZATION WINS BATTLES

This one took me much longer to learn than the others. Eventually you come around to the fact that it is much easier to deal with chaos or uncertainty if your life is somewhat organized and sorted out. Little things like having extra socks, getting ready earlier, knowing where all your gear is will make your job much simpler and enjoyable. . Same goes for the restaurant. Having your setup ready and systems in place before the guests show up is really a third of the battle.

### 15. DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY

It may happen that you did everything perfectly well and still things didn't turn out well. Such is life. Sometimes guest may not jive with you, sometimes you may have an 'unfunny' day . If the guests reject your every opinion and suggestion and ignore you it is OK. Their loss. Life goes on. No hard feelings ever eh?

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