

The restaurant industry is booming, but it also is extremely challenging. Trying to keep up with trends and what consumers really want often is tedious. The National Restaurant Association says restaurants in the United States generate about \$2 billion in sales on a typical day.

The Diner at Creek Travel Plaza (CTP) does extremely well against the competition, and not just in the money category. A quick look at the reviews alone will show how pleased customers are when they visit here. Some will praise how delightful the food tastes while others compliment the friendliness and quickness of the staff. Word of mouth is another indication CTP is thriving. But as with any customer service industry, waiters and waitresses take the brunt of the criticism.

Food servers are among some of the hardest working employees in the food service industry, but sometimes their efforts go unrecognized. The following are a handful of ways patrons can show their appreciation to the men and women who work hard to ensure their customers enjoy their dining experiences. You just might make someone's day a little brighter.

1. Recognize that waiting tables is no easy task. Remember the saying "If you've never walked in my shoes, you have no room to talk"? Think about it ... Waiting tables is both physically and mentally demanding. Servers spend hours on their feet carrying and balancing plates of food during their shifts. They also must anticipate the needs of patrons and do their best to accommodate them. Guests should realize the job is not a cake walk.

2. Understand that slow food often is not the servers' faults. Very often a food server has no control over how fast the food comes out of the kitchen. Don't blame the server because the food took longer than expected to arrive on your table. If you're in a hurry, let the server know in advance so he or she can work with you to find quick serve items.

3. Acknowledge your server. Eye contact shows respect, and it will help get your order across clearly, reducing the likelihood of a mix up regarding your order. If you don't even glance at your waitress while you rattle off substitutions and add-ons, it shows you don't care about the person taking your order.

4. Put down your phone. Your server is a person, not a robot. Treat them like one. The dining experience should be a pleasant one for all involved, including the servers. Customers' use of cell phones have been reported to slow table turnover from one hour and five minutes to one hour and 55 minutes. Taking pictures of food, texting before ordering or asking a server to take a group photo can contribute to slower service. And don't get annoyed when your server comes back three times to see if you are ready to order yet. They are being attentive to making your experience quick and manageable.

5. Tip with courtesy and respect. Tips are important to servers because their income might not be steady. Some restaurants pay servers less than the minimum wage, expecting their earnings to increase by tipping. Tip according to how the service was, not the taste of the food or beverages. A 15 percent tip is customary, but you might want to tip 20 per-cent for exceptional service. Or call in and get your order to go instead.

The restaurant business is a fast-paced and rewarding line of work. Patrons can do their part by being patient and showing their servers the respect they deserve. And here at Creek Travel Plaza, we value our customers and we aim to provide exceptional customer service every time.

5 ways to be kind to restaurant servers

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